How Smart People Do It

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Studying is like puberty: everyone has to go through it at some point, but that doesn’t make it any more fun. We all know the feeling—it’s late at night, you’re falling asleep, but you’re still trying to feign interest in your surprisingly challenging Geology 101 book. It feels like you’re reading the same sentence over and over. It feels like you’re reading the same sentence over and over. Luckily, studying doesn’t have to be this way. We’ve put together a few unique studying techniques that will help you ace your tests without killing your soul.

1. Reward yourself.
This one involves treating yourself like a dog—in a good way. The general idea is to place a gummy bear (or some sort of treat) at the end of a paragraph or line in a notebook, and when you get to that point, you are free to consume the treat! This relies on a decent amount of self-restraint, but the waiting just makes it taste that much better. Tip: To save money and preserve your life, do not try using lines of cocaine for this method.

2. Write a story.
English majors, this one could be for you. “I once tried making everything I had to know into a story, with characters, a plot, everything,” says freshman Kourtney Kostecki. This sounds entertaining, and who knows, you may just write the next “Harry Potter” series while studying for chemistry. Unfortunately, it’s not the quickest method. Kostecki explained, “It worked, but it took way too long to do for every little test or quiz.”

3. Dance it out.
All right, so you don’t have to go full-on Hannah Montana’s “Bone Dance” for this, but some people find that assigning movements to particular phrases or words helps with memorization. These movements don’t have to be elaborate—it could be something as simple as a hand gesture. Although, if twerking in the library will help you study for an upcoming biology exam, go for it. (Just be prepared to star in a few strangers’ Snapchat videos.)

4. Procrastination.
It’s not the most effective, but it’s definitely the easiest. More on this later.

5. Immersion.
If you’re studying for a foreign language class, this could be beneficial. “I used to watch Spanish soap operas and news in order to prepare for Spanish oral exams,” says Hallie Golay, graduate student in political science. Computer science majors, feel free to try speaking in only ones and zeros. It might not help, but it would definitely be entertaining.
6. Write a song.
We’ve all had to sit through some of those painful educational parody videos, but sometimes making a song, chant or rap out of your study material can really help it sink in. Tip: To get a lot of “A”s, try studying to the tune of Rihanna’s “Umbrella.”

7. Turn your room into a study guide.
“I put Post-it notes up all over my apartment to study for the GRE vocabulary,” recalls former Iowa State student Julia Hetzel. “I had them everywhere...even my shower. They were in places that were associated with their definitions so I could remember them during the exam. Gullible was literally on the ceiling.” This one sounds like a lot of work, but it may just be worth it in the end—if nothing else, you’ll have some new decorations!

Not all of these study tips may work for you, but hopefully one or two will be helpful. If not, there’s always the most fun and least stressful method: not studying at all.

THAT’S WHAT THAT MEANS?!

WORDS ARE WEIRD.
Check out the surprising origins of a few that are frequently used.

Definitions are courtesy of the Online Etymology Dictionary; the etymological roots of these words may change the way you think about them.

Jeans
Have you ever wondered why we call our favorite denim pants “jeans”? Originally spelled “Gene,” they are named after the first city to manufacture denim cloth: Genoa, Italy.

Muscle
Next time you show off your guns, do your best not to imagine mice under your skin. The Latin musculus, or a “little mouse” running beneath the skin when you flex.

Whiskey
When you’re pouring yourself a drink this weekend, consider that the word “whiskey” originates from the Gaelic uisge beatha, literally translated as “water of life.” Be wary—eight cups a day of this water may not be recommended.

Third Degree
What exactly does giving someone the “third degree” mean? The phrase likely originates with Freemasonry, in which the third degree of Master Masons is the highest. The initiation for this ranking is rigorous and intense.

Don’t be the person who...

Comes in like a wrecking ball... that was so 2013
Hogs the beer pong table
Brags about their awesome internships
Asks graduates what they’re doing with their lives
Spoils TV shows, movies, books, etc.
Is a compliment whore

Posts the same picture with different filters
Gets attacked by the crows
Still plays Flappy Bird
Eats loud food in the library
Tweets every second of your life
Retweets every compliment you get
Moonlights as a Facebook philosopher