

Learning how to learn. Unit 1 – summary

Part 1

So you're new at IDC? When did you learn how to study? What to do during lectures, how to plan a schedule that really works? Do you know what neuroscientists say about studying? Academic success, particularly when studying remotely, requires many academic and management skills.

Some understanding of the human brain, learning and self-management, as well as coping with challenges of procrastination, problems getting started, multitasking etc., will give you a significant edge in academia and in the competitive career market. **"Fact-sheets" with techniques and tips on studying and management are available for all students on the Lea and Naftali Ben-Yehuda Accessibility & Study Skills Center website.** [Click here.](#)

Academic studies are like a long marathon where one must manage, regulate and conserve resources (mental, physical and emotional) over time. Academic learning and management skills start with the **four principles for a successful marathon**:

The first principle is preparation, which includes planning out an academic study routine. Maintaining habits and a routine conserves mental resources, aids studying, helps meet goals and creates a sense of achievement. Preparing for each course by familiarizing yourself with its requirements and methodology will prevent surprises and setbacks. You should also decide in advance on a system for organizing your study materials in folders, to prevent chaos and wasted mental resources on searching for those misplaced notes.

The second principle is personalized adjustment. Oftentimes remote learning is just the thing you needed to adjust studying to your personal style and improve your learning skills. Plan viewing times for when you're most focused and your surroundings are quiet (if you still don't know when that is, trial and error is the way to find out). Pick your viewing pace (stop, rewind, write down bullets and establish your understanding). Your study environment should fit your needs: what kind of lighting? What kind of desk? Which music? Your learning environment affects focus and information retention. For more information, [click here.](#)

Much like in a marathon, preparation for the run and personal adjustment aren't enough. You need to get down to the track and start running. **The third principle is participation and involvement.** A remote-learning class is not a blow-off class! Neuroscientists agree that the path to academic success is being an active learner, involved and participating. More information can be found on our website – [click here.](#)

Your mission during the semester is to be 'on it' at all times. Just like a marathon runner has a trainer or nutritionist, so should you have someone else to stay on top of things – maybe a classmate who knows you have a paper due; just having someone else with you who is involved and keeps track ('accountability friend') can really help with your tasks.

Have you ever run a marathon? A sprint? One of the key differences is the mental ability to stay driven and manage all of the resources required for facing the challenges ahead. That's why **the fourth principle for a successful marathon is motivation.** Neuroscientists and learning specialists stress the importance of

Learning how to learn. Unit 1 – summary

motivation management. Our brains need breaks, re-energizing, regular exercise and healthy eating in order to study. Planning your free time with friends and family is part of managing your weekly academic routine. All of these are far from privileges. To conserve your motivation over time, write down what drives you, what do you aspire to achieve in each class? What can sabotage your motivation (overly complex tasks, unclear instructions, uncertainty, boredom)? Put it up somewhere visible.

Part 2

Think back – have you ever been taught how to plan things? Manage your time? Overcome the challenges on the path from plan to execution? Studies show that one of the most crucial talents for academic success is the ability to manage our learning and ourselves. This is always true, and doubly so when it comes to remote learning.

“fact-sheets” with techniques and tips on studying and management are available for all students on the Lea and Naftali Ben-Yehuda Accessibility & Study Skills Center website. [Click here](#). We are here to make sure that you acquire the finest methods and come well equipped to the career world.

Self-management in studying is comprised of planning management, execution, challenge management and attention management.

- 1. Planning management – the first goal is to create an academic routine, set goals, and manage your time.** This is done by developing regular habits that conserve energy and mental resources. Three anchors throughout the day can really help you meet your goals (getting up at the same hour each day, a set time for lunch, exercising daily). What things in your life are permanent? Which habits can help you build a new routine? Check out these techniques daily and for planning a weekly schedule. Writing down specific, timed and realistic goals is critical for success. [Click here](#) for more information. Time management is a significant challenge in planning – check out these principles for successful time management.
- 2. Performance management and personal study cycle** – successful execution starts with a ‘blind date’ with the task: don’t start writing, reading or solving before you understand the instructions, span, material, etc. A study cycle is individual and affected by many factors. What *is* important is that your planning fits your study cycle. Don’t know what that is? It’s time to find out. Read more about the Pomodoro study method [here](#).
- 3. Challenge management, restart and procrastination, breaks and multitasking.** How do you reduce the gap between original planning and execution? By managing the challenges in your path. Procrastination – why do we procrastinate? Which of the following are true for you? “it’s hard to start writing/answering/solving,” “nobody knows what I’m doing, anyways,” stress and anxiety, “I’ll never be able to learn this... it’s too much for me,” or rational and convincing excuses such as “if I’ll start studying for the quiz now, I’ll forget everything by the time I do it...” Procrastination is a habit; it provides a momentary relief from reality, but the cost is high. [Click here](#) to read about tips for restarting and coping with procrastination.

Learning how to learn. Unit 1 – summary

Breaks are another challenge. Most of us know what neuroscientists keep reminding us: we have to take breaks and be weary of overlearning. Has anyone ever taught you what a good break can do to your brain?

How to take a break? And most importantly, how to come back from a break? Here are a few tips: you decide when to take your breaks beforehand (not when your brain/'battery' runs out), and good quality breaks can consist of a short walk, mindfulness exercise, cooking, painting, gardening, listening to music or even just staring – just not screen time that drains the brain. Click here for more excellent tips.

4. **Attention management and attentiveness** are our most valuable resources in management and studying. Every action we've talked about so far requires our attention. Our brains are naturally distracted by internal and external stimuli, and our attention strays. When you sit down and read an article or watch a video lecture, how long does it take before your mind is distracted? A minute? Five?

The truly interesting question is how long do you think it would take for you to realize you got distracted – your eyes are there, but your mind isn't? That's our brain's natural tendency. With mindfulness exercise you can strengthen your attention 'muscle', just like a gym exercise. Sounds simple? It's not, but just think how incredible it is that your brain is elastic, and you can train it!

Finally, remember that you don't train for a marathon all by yourself, and you don't run 45K in one day! Give yourself time to adjust to academic learning and take all the help you can get.

Part 3

We have two main goals when we're listening to lectures, whether online or on campus: one is to stay focused for as long as possible, and two, to leave the lecture knowing more than we did going in – at least 50% more. There are some difficult challenges on the way, an overload of visual and verbal information, fast pace and more. The guiding principle throughout this part is being as active as possible.

Mental preparation before a lecture can significantly boost focus and information retention. You can look at the syllabus/presentation and see what was taught in the previous lesson, and what will be taught in this one. Learning is the creation of links between old information and new. One way of staying active, focused and not get lost is global learning. The global learner tries to contextualize, understand the whole picture – what's the story, where is the lecturer headed? The details can be filled in later, but only by understanding the bigger picture. For more tips and information on preparing for a lecture, [click here](#).

Three types of active listening: Chaptering, Cornell, Visual Mapping. Click here to learn more about these and other techniques. Chaptering – the idea is that during the lecture you will write down 'headlines', a table of contents just like a book's, to generate a hierarchic order of the information you're receiving. Cornell has a set page layout. There are several different page layouts to choose from – [click here](#) for more information. The idea is that once the page is laid out in a specific manner, you would need to stay alert and focused to

Learning how to learn. Unit 1 – summary

fill it in. Visual Mapping is the graphic processing of the information received throughout the lecture. This helps link between ideas and utilize personal associations.

Staying focused during lectures is a challenge for every student. Here are a few tips from neuroscientists and learning researchers: Fidgeting – research shows that fidgeting or doing something with our hands keeps us concentrated: draw, color, squeeze a stress ball, anything to keep your hands occupied and prevent you

from opening new browser tabs; Fitball – our brains struggle with our bodies being static for long, the need movement. Sitting on a fitball during a lecture can satisfy this need for movement. Many people in the professional world work on fitballs in their offices. It's also great for break times – a set of exercises on the ball will get your body moving without taking you far from the study area; Doodling – studies show that doodling helps concentration and memory! Grab a pen and paper and doodle during the lectures.

Lecture Fatigue. Lectures (online or on campus) can be exhausting and require multiple cognitive, physical and emotional resources. Try out different techniques for coping with fatigue: for a-synchronic lectures, plan the optimal viewing periods (quiet time, focused time), and maintain good quality breaks in between lectures. Avoid screens on breaks and multitasking during lectures, as these truly drain our brains. Perform mindfulness exercises throughout the day, short bouts of exercise and walking outside. In addition, create a well-ventilated, naturally lit and distraction-free learning environment. Good planning, self-management, and trial and error are key to coping with lecture fatigue. Click for all the skills.

Remember, this is a marathon, one step at a time towards the final training session and a successful race.

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