Study checklist

The study checklist is a strategy to help you build habits that promote focused attention. By walking through the same routine every time you plan to do school work, you train your brain to zero in on the task. Ideally, you would go through this checklist every time you sit down to a task. If you lose focus, go through your checklist as a means of getting back on track. This is a basic outline. If you have other things to add to your study checklist, go for it!

1. Go to my place

Your place is where you are able to get work done. Unsuccessful study time often happens when we try to study in places that don't work for us. Your place is a structured environment that limits visual/auditory distractions (i.e., other people, music, technology, other tasks) as much as possible. It's great to have a backup place if your usual place isn't available.

2. Write down a SMART goal

Specific: *I will read chapter 7 for BIOL 430.*

The task is clear. "Study for BIOL 430" is not specific because it doesn't identify the exact task.

Measurable: *I will read the first 5 pages of chapter 7 for BIOL 430.*

At the end of your planned time, you should be able to say, "Yes, I accomplished this" or "No, I didn't finish."

Attainable: *I will read the first 5 pages of chapter 7 for BIOL 430.*

Reading 60 pages in 30 minutes is not an attainable goal and sets you up to fail. Set goals you know you can reach.

Relevant: *I will read the first 5 pages of chapter 7 for BIOL 430.*

If you've got two papers and an article to read that are all due before you need to have chapter 7 finished, it's not a relevant goal. Try to work on the things that are most pressing time-wise.

Time-bound: *I will read the first 5 pages of chapter 7 for BIOL 430 starting at 4:00 until 4:30 when I   have to leave for work.*

Have a clear window with an end point at which you can assess whether you accomplished the goal. Setting small goals is a way to experience incremental progress and can help prevent feeling overwhelmed.

3. Get out only what's needed

Once you know what you're working on, any other school materials are a distraction. Put away anything that is not directly related to your identified SMART goal. Productive procrastination is still procrastination.

4. Electronics off, away, or blocked

Can you leave your phone in another room? Can you put away your laptop if you're reading a textbook? Can you try a self-control app or plugin if you're working in the course D2L site to help minimize distractions online?

5. Plan the breaks

Pick an activity that's easy to stop. A five minute break can easily turn into an hour break if you don't decide what the activity will be. Examples: go grab a snack, walk to the bathroom, do 20 pushups

6. Set a timer

Setting a timer can help sustain your energy. Knowing that you've only got to do this for more 20 minutes can sometimes help you power through. It can also help you build up you attention span by gradually increasing your window of focused attention.

N.B. The best timers are ones not connected to the internet: an oven timer, a digital watch, etc.