

Study Skills for Social Studies

- Everyone studies. Studying is the way people learn new ideas. Studying means learning. Learning is different from memorizing. Learning involves your whole attention. It means making sense of new ideas and thinking them over. Learning happens most easily when students have a confident attitude and take interest in their work.

Tips for Studying

How To Do It-Here are some tips for studying:

- **Give your whole attention to your study.** Find a quiet spot to work. Bring all of your study aids: WOWs, books, a pencil, some paper. Sit upright in a chair at a desk or table. Turn off the television. Let yourself concentrate.
- **Organize what you need to learn.** Think about your subject. What do you know and understand already? What do you still need to learn? If you can bring together what you already know, with what you still need to know, your study will go smoothly. Try organizing like this:
 - **Make a list** of important ideas, key people, terms, and events.
 - **Make an outline** of key concepts in the chapter.
 - **Make a timeline** showing important people and events.
 - **Make a map** showing important information.
 - **Take notes** about the things you think are important.
 - **Highlight** information that you need to know, so you can find it again easily.
- **Make sense of what you know.** Now think about the information you have organized. Does it make sense to you? Ask yourself questions to test your understanding. This is different from memorizing. Make sure you are thinking deeply. Do you know why an event is important? Do you understand how a key person influenced an event? Do you understand the ideas behind the events? Do you understand the ideas that influenced people to act? Keep reading and studying until your questions are answered.
- **Rehearse what you know.** Now that you understand the subject, you'll need to remember it. This takes practice. It means going over what you know. You might reread your notes or book. You might memorize some information. Be interested in your studies. The subjects you are learning link you to human beings from the beginning of time. People everywhere think about the things you are being asked to learn. If you relate what you learn to yourself and to others, you'll find your studies take on new interest, even fun!

Tips for Remembering

- Now that you've studied, how do you remember what you've learned? Understanding what you study is the best way to remember. But you will also need to memorize. Here are some tips to help you memorize.

How To Do It- To memorize an idea, a fact, a date, or a name, you need to repeat the information to yourself until it sticks in your head. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. Here are several ways to do this:

1. **Read the information.** Then look away and try to repeat it. Read the information again. Then look away and try to write it.
 2. **Practice repeating.** Go over the information more than once. Practice at the breakfast table. Practice on the way to school.
 3. **Check yourself.** Ask a friend or relative to test you. You need to be sure you truly remember what you've been working on!
 4. **Overlearn.** To remember information for a long time, review many times. Review on different days. Practice until it's easy to recall.
- Here are some tricks to try if you need to memorize a series of things or some complex ideas or dates:
 - **Rhymes** Try creating a rhyme to help you remember very specific information. For example, students over the years have learned the dates that Columbus sailed to the Americas by remembering this rhyme:

Fourteen hundred and ninety-two,
Columbus sailed the ocean blue.
Fourteen hundred and ninety-three,
Columbus sailed the bright blue sea!

- **Memory Devices** You can also make up special memory devices to help you remember. For example, to remember the order of the planets, students sometimes create a silly sentence to help them. Each word in the sentence starts with the letter of the name of the planet. Like this: My Very Early Mother Just Saw Us Near Paris. This stands for Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto. Try this for information that you need to remember in sequence.

Tips for Taking Tests

- Believe it or not, not all students enjoy taking tests. Of course, some do. Here are some tips to help everyone have a more relaxed and confident attitude toward test-taking.

Before a Test

- Here are some tips to help you get ready for a test:
 - **Be prepared.** Study before the test! If you understand the subject, you'll be less anxious and more confident.
 - **Study with a friend.** Discuss the subject with a friend. This can be a good way to figure out tough concepts.
 - **Ask questions during class.** If you don't understand, raise your hand and ask a question.
 - **Ask questions after class.** Arrange to meet your teacher to talk over the subject outside of class.

During a Test

- Try these tips during a test:
 - **Come to the test prepared.** Bring the supplies you need to take the test.
 - **Relax and concentrate.** Keep the test in perspective. Set aside your distractions. Do your best, but don't worry about it. You can do this!
 - **Read the directions and questions carefully.** Make sure you understand what you're being asked to do.
 - **Make notes in the margin or underline key ideas.** Feel free to write on the test. Jot down notes and ideas, or underline important parts of passages.
 - **Answer the questions you know first.** If you don't know an answer, skip the question. Come back to it after you've worked through the rest of the test.
 - **Focus on correct answers by eliminating incorrect answers.** If you know an answer is incorrect, finding the correct answer is now easier.
 - **Get points for partial knowledge.** If you know anything about a subject, write it down. That way you can get partial credit.
 - **Guess! Never leave an answer blank.** Blank answers receive no points. If there's no penalty for guessing, guess!
 - **Work at your own pace.** Don't worry if others finish before you. Ignore them and concentrate.
 - **If you have time, go over your answers.** You probably shouldn't change your answers, just check to make sure you actually gave the answers you intended to.

How to Answer Multiple-Choice Questions

How To Do It- Here are some tips for answering multiple-choice questions:

- When you are taking a multiple-choice test, the first thing you need to do is read the question CAREFULLY. Make sure you understand what kind of information you are looking for. If you know the answer right away, you should mark the correct answer and move on to the next question.

- If you don't know the answer, you might be able to figure it out. The first thing to do is to cross out answers you know are wrong. If you end up with two answers left and you aren't sure which is correct, you should probably take a guess. You are just as likely to guess the right answer as the wrong one

How to Answer Extended-Response or Essay Questions

- Extended-response or essay questions take care and thought, but they are nothing to fear. In fact, the more you show what you know about a topic, the more credit you are likely to receive on a test.

How To Do It-Good extended-response answers have three parts: a beginning, a middle, and an ending.

Beginning

- The first paragraph introduces your main idea or position. It begins with a topic sentence. The topic sentence states plainly the point you intend to make in your answer. Often it simply restates the question.

Middle

- The second paragraph provides information, examples, and details to support your main idea or position. This is where you show in detail what you know or think about the topic. If the answer calls for a great deal of information, you may need more than one paragraph.

Ending

- The final paragraph sums up your main idea or position. It restates your topic sentence, this time with more feeling.
- **Step 1** Read the question carefully. Take a moment to think about it. What exactly is it asking? Are you being asked to argue a position or to show what you know about a subject? Be sure you know what you are being asked to do before you begin writing.
- **Step 2** Decide on your main idea or position. You might simply want to restate the question. Write it down. This will be your topic sentence. Then add any extra information that will help explain your topic. That's your first paragraph.
- **Step 3** Now think. How can you fully explain your idea or position? What details and examples support your main idea? Choose the most convincing details and examples. Write them in separate sentences. Try to write the most important information first.
- **Step 4** Take a moment to review what you've written. Does it fully answer the question? Do you need to add any more information? Add what you need to and then move on. (Don't worry too much about grammar or spelling. Your answer will be graded on content rather than style. However, do be sure that your writing is neat!)
- **Step 5** You can breathe easily now: your final paragraph will be a snap! Write a sentence that summarizes your main point or position. The sentence should restate your topic sentence. This time, however, give it some zest. Then add any information that emphasizes what you've written. That's your final paragraph. You're done!

Tips for Questions with Maps and Other Visuals

- On social studies tests, and throughout your life, certain skills can be very important. These skills may help you read and understand the information on maps, charts, graphic organizers, and other visual aids.

How To Do It-Even if you've never seen a particular kind of map or chart before, you can still figure it out. Here's how.

-First:

- **Read the question.** What information are you being asked to discover on the map, chart, graph, or other visual?
- **Look at the visual.** Are you familiar with this type of graphic item? If so, find the answer. If not, read on.

-Second:

- **Look closely at the visual.** Pay attention to what you're looking at. That seems simple, but many students don't really notice the details of the maps and charts they look at. Noticing takes thought and effort.
- **Find the title.** Most maps, charts, and graphic organizers have titles. The title sums up the kind of information that is being shown.
- **Read the map key, headings, or labels.** The general information provided in the key, headings, and labels helps you understand where to find the specific information you're looking for.
- **Locate the information you need.** Use the map key, headings, or labels to find the answer to the question.

Tips for Questions with Reading Passages

- Tests may ask students to interpret information in a particular passage. No matter what the question, the key is to know what the passage actually says.

How To Do It- Here are some tips for handling questions with reading passages.

-First:

Concentrate. Put aside your worries and distractions. Get ready to get down to business!

Don't rely too much on prior knowledge. Although you may know about the subject, the information that is presented will be the source from which your answer should come.

-Second:

- **Read the question first.** Why read the question before the passage? Because it saves time to know what you are reading for!
- **Make sure you understand the question.** What kind of information will you need to gather when you read? Will you be looking for facts? Or will you be using the passage to come up with your own answer?
- **Read the passage.** Read the passage as quickly as you can. Look for the answer as you read. When you find it, take notice of it, but -- and this is important -- don't stop reading yet! Read to the end. That way you can be sure that your answer is the best, most complete answer possible. If you are reading the passage in order to provide a written response, read more carefully. Make sure you understand everything.
- **Providing the answer.** Feel free to look back at the passage to double-check your answer.