

HOW TO STUDY JOYFULLY

The article provides a comprehensive set of suggestions. However, it is essential, to begin with just a few simple ones you think are most vital for you and do not take much time. Try these for a week or two. After you see beneficial results of these, you may like to include some more.

My 40 years of experience show that students who consistently perform much better than their apparent capability across the academic spectrum have this unique capability of studying with passion, irrespective of whether they think that a particular course is helpful for their aspirations or not.

Studying most efficiently is an essential skill that must be learned from wise and successful mentors. First, pray for knowing such mentors. Ask many persons about them. Then pray for their happiness and success. Seek their appointment and politely appreciate them and request help. Express sincere gratitude for their help. Keep in touch with them with feedback on how things are going.

Study for what you want to be in life, not just for grades. This long-term focus helps you in overcoming distractions. Keep reminding yourself about this daily.

It is not the most intelligent or most hard-working persons are the most successful. Some degree of intelligence and dedicated work is essential. However, along with that, the most balanced and having robust processes are the most successful. This article discusses precisely these aspects.

Check Motivation and Goals:

Have a dialogue with yourself every day, particularly when you don't feel like studying or don't find joy. "Coming to IIT was a dream, and I am very happy to be here. My studies here are an investment for a brighter future. I am committed and obsessed with doing my best and getting the best out of teachers and all the resources here. I love to study joyfully because this habit is essential for improving my capacity in many ways. This capacity to joyfully study subjects that others find boring is my strength, and it gives me tremendous satisfaction. My studies improve my knowledge base, analytical skills, and concentration skills. These prepare me for good-quality jobs. If a teacher is bad, I need to be more self-reliant and put in some extra efforts." These things bring a fundamental identity change to a sincere, confident, wise, and happy student. This is the foundation of everything good in life, not just studies.

When you don't feel like studying, write down the reasons to clarify the exact reasons. Then ask yourself: "Do you choose to find solutions to improve matters taking you towards your dreams, or choose to allow things to worsen, taking you away from your dreams?" You must visualize the future scenarios with a bright future resulting from good studies, and bleak, depressing scenarios with bad study habits, where getting even a low-paid job is difficult, and your image with parents and others, and difficulties in finding a suitable one partner.

When you don't feel like studying, coax yourself to do it only for today. If the study period appears too long, persuade yourself to do it only for an hour. If you are comfortable, request yourself to continue for 15 minutes more. Keep on doing as long as comfortable. It is important to pat yourself on the back by saying, "Good job! Keep it up!"

If you can study, but the concentration is not good, reducing the efficiency of the effort, coax yourself to be curious and mindful just for 15 minutes. If you are comfortable, request for doing it for another 15 minutes. Pat yourself for each period of the concentrated study saying, "Good job! Keep it up!"

These incremental challenges help you in dividing a big task into easily achievable and very small sub-tasks. Moreover, the feeling of completing small tasks is like a reward that automatically makes you try for more. This overcomes the brain and mind resistance and builds up positive momentum.

If you are in a particularly bad mood and find all subjects or a specific subject, some chapters boring or tough, or problems tough, accept that feeling without argument. After a while, ask, "this is true, but what do I choose? Remain passive and negative and allow things to worsen and get off the track towards my dream, or take some small steps to improve matters, so that I remain on track towards my dreams?"

Being Positive towards Studies:

Apply the serenity principle to Studies. Since you are now registered for the courses, you have to have exams/viva/ reports and assignments. The most efficient way to do these is by dropping all the negativity about them like The Course is boring. It is of no use. The teacher is bad. The evaluation is bad. The questions are very tough. It is too much of a workload. I have other important things to do. The teacher and TA don't cooperate. Instead of a 'complaint factory,' start a 'gratitude factory.'

Once you decide to do it, the entire responsibility of finding joy in these efforts is yours. You need to change your attitude towards this objective. It is a reprogramming of the mindset. Use prayers and affirmations of the following type, and do it as many times a day as is practically possible. Do it with immense feelings (even if it may not be true right now). Slowly it will happen.

Use positive Self-Talk Visualization of past good study efforts before sleep, after waking up, and just before commencing studies.

Sincerely believe that you can improve in every respect with hard work. Be curious to see how you cope up with incremental challenges. If you have made mistakes in the past (small or big), learn lessons but be extremely compassionate and loving towards yourself. Remind yourself about seeds of excellence lying dormant within you and that your improvement can start anytime and from anywhere. It's just a matter of consistent choice to be positive. This is the best way to motivate yourself.

Being lovingly mindful in studies can improve efficiency tremendously. Before sleep, after waking up, and before a study session, affirm intention regarding the same.

In addition to doing the following at other times (before going to sleep and after waking up), do these compulsorily at the beginning of your preparation.

1. May God give me the strength and wisdom to find joy in this study and the wisdom to do my best.
2. I love being mindful and creative in my studies.
3. Through my love, I attract adequate, appropriate help in this preparation. I am grateful for the same.
4. I feel energetic, peaceful, and confident.
5. May all the students also do well and find joy in these tasks.
6. I love this preparation/task; it is very interesting and useful.
7. I love the teacher; he/she is doing his best.

8. Show immense gratitude for the teacher, TAs, helpful friends, books, and other resource material.

Change your thoughts using the slide or substitution strategy described in the main article whenever you detect worries, anxiety, or negativity about the future performance or when the past bad performance haunts you. Lovingly, come back to the present task as quickly as possible. If nothing works, do deep breathing with a smile to become peaceful. Always learn from the past to see what worked well and what didn't and why.

Study Planning: Please read an article on Goal Setting, Planning and Time Management

Do proper planning for all tasks: For all the courses, understanding concepts, preparation of notes, solving problems, writing lab reports, assignments. You must also factor in time for exercise, meditation, entertainment. Have weekly, daily, and hourly plans with specific allocations for all activities. During implementation, you can be flexible with plans if it is helpful. But balance out all activities over a week.

Boredom is the biggest enemy of efficient studies. Hence, bring in some variety in the studies, both in content and approach.

It is better to keep the place and time of study fixed for forming a good habit. You must choose a place which is most effective for efficient study. Keep the study place clean and only the material required for the specific study module on the table. Arranging this much before the commencement of study creates serious intention. Having a fresh flower and lighting an incense stick also improves your mood. You can also use a headphone not for listening to the music but for improving your concentration.

It is best to study alone. You can, of course, seek help from friends in understanding concepts or solving problems later on.

Before you commence studies at the allocated time slot, review what exactly you want to achieve and how in this period. Break up the total time into modules to have a detailed idea about the same. The activities may include reading lecture notes and books to prepare brief notes, solving tutorial or book problems, writing lab reports, or doing assignment or project work. Pray for joyfully completing the tasks as per plan. Pray for others doing well in the same. Visualize how you will feel when you are very happy with your study efforts in the short term and the bright future in the long term. This lifts your mood for studies. Always keep all the material required ready before beginning the activity. It is very important to pick up the modules of study having the maximum impact on the desired best outcomes for the day as per plan. You must give the best time (when you feel most cheerful and energetic) to these activities. Another important thing is to strictly stick to the allocated time for each module even if you cannot complete it to satisfaction. In the beginning, you may feel this to be ridiculous. However, very soon, you will learn the most important skill of completing things in allotted time rather than the luxury of exceeding the same and disturbing the plan for other activities in a chain reaction.

You will use the good/bad experiences for improving planning. Keep separate time for taking help from friends rather than rushing to them during planned study time. These things help in keeping sharp focus and avoiding distractions. You must keep the phone and laptop off and sufficiently away during this period to avoid distraction. Tell relatives and friends

about not disturbing during study hours, unless it is essential. You can find innovative ways to avoid distractions because you only know your weaknesses best.

Share your study plan in writing with positive friends and relatives who motivate and keep checking how you are doing. Psychology research has shown that it has tremendous benefits for remaining on track.

In a journal, keep a target study plan for the period before every exam. Divide it into monthly/daily/weekly/hourly plans. Keep a progress chart right below it to know how you are progressing. Add every bit of progress in it. You feel good doing it. This is important for corrective action. Even if the progress is slow, compliment what is done and note the need to accelerate. Be realistic in goal planning. Even if you fail to implement plans, don't get frustrated. Share with wise, positive seniors and ask for help.

Fast browsing material for the next lecture from a book or previous year's notes is a very good habit. There is no need to understand it; just awareness is sufficient. It gives you a tremendous confidence boost in the next lecture. You can even have a list of bullet points from this, which you can read at the commencement of the next lecture.

Keep your study time in harmony with your temperament and body energy cycle. If you struggle to put in 2 hours of study/day, don't attempt to jump to 4 hrs. First, focus on 2 hours of concentrated study in a good mood. Then increase by $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour and see how it goes for a week.

Help each other within your capability. If you can't do much, pray for others and reassure them when they feel depressed. Give whatever tips you can.

Reassure yourself that you are studying to do your best under all circumstances. Hence, don't worry about exam results.

You have to primarily rely on the short notes before the exam because of the lack of time. Moreover, you can't solve new problems before the exam. You can review the concepts and strategies in problems you have already solved.

Keep "If-Then Rules" ready to counter bad habits or distractions. If a friend asks you to leave the study and come for a chat/game/movie/mall, say that you can't come today and try some other day.

Preparing Lecture Notes/Abstract:

Reading, notes preparation, problem-solving is art. If you are passionate about learning it, you will get help from those who are good at it. It is a great asset in life.

Before beginning study, from your daily study plan, write down what exactly you wish to achieve in this period. Breaking it down to 15-minute modules brings in maximum focus. Even jot down what resource material (book, notes) you are going to use. Having such detailed clarity improves mood and efficiency.

During allocated time for a task, reread the recent class notes. See whether you need to refer to books or any other additional material to make the understanding easier. While reading, use pen/pencil to run over every sentence (without marking). Highlight or underline important matters. This helps in sharp concentration and speed reading. Use your books, notes for such marking. It is very important. Refine your notes accordingly. Share with close friends and bring in good points from others' notes. Make a very brief abstract of the lecture (max 1 page). Read this before the commencement of the next class. Moreover, simultaneously, prepare brief notes (slightly more detailed) for reading before the exam.

While studying derivations, be curious and mindful about logic in every important step. If it is not clear, check the theory in the chapter or ask others. Write comments against each such step in the book. Just look at them before the exam. Then you don't have to memorize them, and you can derive them any time without effort. Understanding derivations and problem-solving make most of the concepts, in theory, clear if you try to understand them.

Solving Numerical Problems:

The ability to solve numerical problems is one of the most critical outcomes of almost all Engineering Courses. You must start enjoying this, even if it is tough, to begin with. With a smart work plan, persistence and determination, this will surely happen.

If you like only easy topics and easy problems, you reduce your potential, and if you like to study difficult topics and solve difficult problems, you enhance your potential.

When you are comfortable with the concepts of a particular module in a subject, try to understand the solved problems from some good books/lecture notes. Both theory and numerical problems are essential for understanding the subject matter. Next, take up unsolved problems from the books/tutorial sheets. Begin with simpler ones and gradually move on to the more challenging ones. However, before beginning this study, from the plan drawn out for the day, note down which specific problems you to solve (book, tut sheet) and what resources you will need for the same. Identify 15-minute module plans. This brings in sharp focus and improves efficiency.

Try things independently at first. But whenever required, never hesitate to take help from friends, TAs, and teachers later on. Approach them with love, and express gratitude for the help. Form a group of like-minded friends. Help each other in all study matters and also enjoy life in general together. If you have a large no. of problems to solve from a tutorial sheet or other sources, it is always helpful to distribute these in a group of not more than three and explain the solutions to each other. This is always good from a time and energy point of view. Try and see previous exam papers for the course. Although these can differ depending on the teacher concerned and the exact content covered, the bulk remains the same. After you are satisfied with the problem solutions, prepare a brief note (algorithm) about the important elements of the solution process for reading before the exam. This is because you will never have time to solve problems before the exam. Make a separate notebook for the same. It is a very precious resource.

Be extremely careful about the units in formulae. Examiners deliberately give data in different units to check whether you use them blindly or not. Many students throw away easy marks because of being careless in this.

Some students find reading just theory very boring, and they can't then progress to numerical problem solutions. For such students, it is better to start right away with solved problems. Look for theoretical concepts required to understand these. Then take up unsolved problems from the book/tut sheet. Start with the simpler ones first, and again look for theoretical concepts required. Another excellent strategy is to get hold of question papers of the course in the last few years and start writing answers for each question on fair sheets. You can freely use books and notes, and there is no time limit like in the question paper. This brings in sharp focus and creates interest and motivation. All coaching classes use a similar approach.

Theoretical Questions Preparation: List the content of the answer in bullet points. For each bullet point, understand the content and try to write in your language. Trying to memorize such answers stresses memory. Remembering bullet points is much easier. If the concepts of each bullet point are understood, writing in our language is much easier.

Periodically, topic-wise, find out from the teacher the nature of questions in the examination and prepare accordingly. The teacher never likes to answer these queries just before the exam. Avoid work accumulation to the extent possible. Even if you have slipped in many ways, just note and learn lessons. But don't flog yourself. See what best you can do from that point onwards. This applies to slippages due to health or any other reasons as well.

Remain Energetic:

Diet is extremely important for keeping the brain alert and body energetic during the studies. Depending on the study time, check your energy levels and take some healthy snacks, drinks, and fruits to the extent possible. Don't miss your main meals and breakfast never.

Dehydration is a significant cause of fatigue. Hence, right from waking up, keep yourself hydrated adequately. Always keep a water bottle in your bag.

When you detect a lack of energy, have some healthy snacks or drinks. In addition, if needed, have a short nap for 5-10 minutes. These can be highly refreshing. Never exceed 15 minutes because you feel drowsy after that.

When you have to work for long hours, you must take some deliberate short breaks to reduce stress. After every half an hour of study, take a 2 minutes break. In this, you can take deep breaths with a smile for a minute, make some prayers and affirmations about love, peace, harmony, or anything that will make you feel good. You can get up from the chair and stretch your arms and legs. However, don't touch your phone or laptop during this period. After 2 hrs of study, you can take a 10 minutes break in which you can go to the washroom, and do the above as well for slightly longer periods. After 4 hours of study, you must take at least 30 minutes breaks in which you must go out of the room for a short walk outside in a peaceful area and do the above things. You can also check the phone for important calls or messages. You can listen to music as well. These measures improve energy and mood as well improving your study efficiency.

If you feel like taking a break in the study, which is not as planned, lovingly tell yourself, "Surely, but after ½ an hour." If comfortable after that, compliment yourself and request for ½ an hour more. Continue doing it as long as comfortable.

When you are unwell, don't give up your studies completely. Do something light like just going through friends' notes, for missed lectures, and studying easy topics you like. Take a rest and work again for a short duration. You can also try report writing or doing simple assignments if possible. This avoids heavy work accumulation and prevents breaking down study momentum completely.

Daily/Weekly/Monthly Review:

At the end of every day, review how you performed over the day against the study plan. Comment on what went well and what did not and the reasons for the same. Identify your major and minor areas of concern. Note down any bad habits which are harming you. Think of how you can improve matters by at least 1 % in every possible area. If you can't figure it out, take help from good mentors. Repeat such an exercise every week and every month. The longer-term reviews allow you to know how slippages can be distributed over that period. Review strategies that are not working, and change them.

It is not just the study output, but the overall mood and thought process are also important. Whether you are feeling good and upbeat or bad must be noted. Go back to the main articles to know how to improve.

The trajectory of performance over a period is important. Tiny gains and losses can accumulate over a period of time. Through this process, you are ensuring that you are working towards achieving your identity.

Complement yourself for your efforts, working process, and sincerity, not for output and grades.