

# How to Study

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A practical guide from  
a Christian perspective

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## TO THE TEACHER

Each student has different needs, abilities, and problems to be addressed. Therefore, the parent or instructor should guide the student by using the following steps:

- (1) determine the student's level of skills,
- (2) identify areas of difficulty, and
- (3) coach the student accordingly.

As the student practices under supervision, the parent can build motivation and help transfer the skills the student has learned to actual course work. Each student should realize the importance of these rules and procedures and believe that pursuing them is worthwhile.

## PREFACE

This guide meets a real need for those who desire to improve their reading, writing, and studying skills. *How to Study* simply and clearly explains how you can learn the craft of studying. Studying can be considered a craft because it requires a special type of work. As the Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” (2 Timothy 2:15). Each student needs to apply his or her mind—exerting energy to acquire knowledge and understanding of God’s creation. Such a workman seeks to please God and will not be ashamed when his work is brought into judgment.

*And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

*Ecclesiastes 12:12–14*

Most subjects in the curriculum are addressed in *How to Study*, and basic skills have been selected accordingly. These skills are easily transferable, so you can readily use them in your studies. There are no short cuts to the learning process, but many time-saving steps have been presented to help you acquire the information you desire. These rules and procedures are explained in a concise manner, and the illustrations show exactly how to use them. Confidence and success in your studies will be achieved as you seek to please God and apply these skills.

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# LET'S GET STARTED

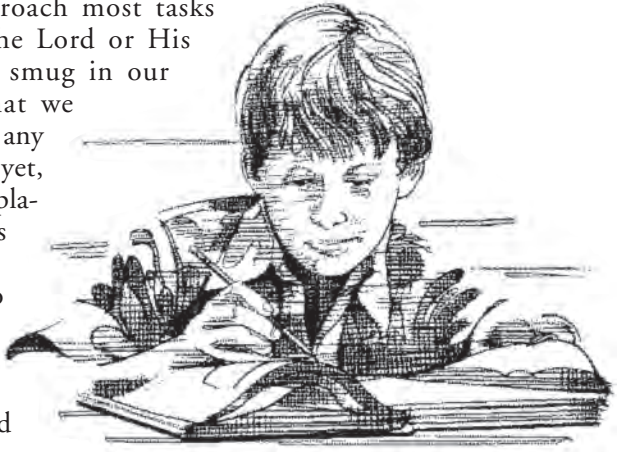
How *do* you study? In an overstuffed chair with your iPod™ blaring? Slouched on the couch in front of the television, with a sandwich in one hand and a book in the other? Some people can study almost anywhere and under any condition. But if we want to please God and do our best, all of us must honestly look at where and how we study. A quiet spot is the ideal. We learn in the Psalms that David often meditated on God's Word in the quiet hours of the night. In fact, Psalm 119:99 declares that a person will have "more understanding than all [his] teachers" if he quietly reflects upon God's testimonies. Quietness helps us not only in studying God's Word, but also in all areas of learning.

Many teachers have recommended guidelines to follow for those who want to study under the proper conditions. These have been summarized as follows:

1. **Use adequate lighting** when studying. If the lighting is poor, your eyes will become strained and tired.
2. **Follow a set schedule.** Develop the habit of studying at the same time each day—when you are most alert.
3. **Study in a quiet spot**, free from anyone or anything that might distract your concentration. A quiet spirit is also an immense asset.
4. **Obtain all your supplies** (pen, paper, text, ruler, notebook, and so forth), before you begin studying. In this way you will not waste time and energy.
5. **Use a table or desk as a work station**, and obtain a comfortable chair. Sitting up straight with your feet on the floor helps to keep you alert.
6. **Keep track of your assignments** in a notebook or a weekly chart. Assignments should be marked off as you complete each one of them.
7. **Plan to work for a whole block of time**, without interruption. You will usually finish in less time than allotted.
8. **Do any written work right away.** Start out with a rough draft. Correct any mistakes, and then rewrite the final copy.
9. **Study with a goal in mind.** Why are you reading a given section or chapter? Take notes and do not get sidetracked.
10. **Schedule free time each day** for reading a passage from the Bible, a particular article, or a favorite book to revitalize your heart and mind.

## 1. STUDY TO SHOW THYSELF APPROVED

Too often we approach most tasks without consulting the Lord or His Word. Either we are smug in our understanding of what we think the Bible says on any given topic, or worse yet, we are altogether complacent towards the things of Christ. However, the Apostle Paul—who is like a father to Timothy—exhorts him to take everything that he has told him and “the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). Because Timothy was faithful and passed on what he learned from his spiritual father to other faithful men, the message of God’s grace and forgiveness has come down to us through the ages, 2,000 years later.



But Paul does not stop there. He further encourages Timothy to “**Study to shew thyself approved unto God**, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Paul expected Timothy to spread this “word of truth” to the ends of the earth, but not without *studying* first. Obviously this refers to studying God’s Word and “rightly dividing the word of truth.” We too have been called of God, and sent by Christ to “teach all nations ... to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ...” (Matthew 28:19, 20). As disciples of Christ we must hear and obey all that He has told us to do, just like Timothy received the truth concerning Christ and committed it to other faithful men.

Therefore, as Christians and as students, we should seek to know and understand God’s will in all that we say and do—even when we study. Each of us should seek to learn all we can regarding God’s Word and His world. The course work, which has been especially developed for you according to your abilities, has incorporated those subjects that will help you grow in your knowledge of the Bible and His creation. So, take advantage of this God-ordained time in your life to study—and study with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). Your love and devotion towards the Lord Jesus will be reflected in your words and actions—and by the way you study.



Another important aspect of approaching your studies from a Christian perspective is the **spiritual warfare** that you face now and will face in the future. The Apostle Paul reminds the believers in Ephesus that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:12–13). Therefore, we must know God’s Word—“the *sword of the Spirit*, which is the word of God” (v. 17)—and be able to use it. “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any *twoedged sword*, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

How do your thoughts measure up? What are the intentions of your heart? You must “... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye *transformed by the renewing of your mind*, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1–2). Our minds need to be cleansed “with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5: 26), so we will be able to discern between good and evil. As you learn, you should get in the habit of holding all that you read and study up to the “mirror” of God’s Word—“But whoso looketh into *the perfect law of liberty*, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:25).

As you progress in your studies and in life, you will be exposed to all kinds of teachings and ideas. Therefore, you must be ready in and out of season, “For the time will come when they will not endure *sound doctrine*; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3–4). Especially if you plan to go on to college, you must be well-grounded in the Word: “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Ephesians 4:14). So instead of being swayed by the clever eloquence of men, you will “know how ye ought to answer every man” (Colossians 4:6).

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed of your age or status in life. But as God gives you grace, rightly handle God’s truth so you will know right from wrong, good from evil, and the truth from Satan’s lies. And as you study, make it a goal to study the powerful, life-changing Word of God. May it be your guide and defender in all that you think, say, and do!

O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!

Psalm 39:4-5 (ESV)

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

1 Peter 4:10 (ESV)

## 2. REDEEMING THE TIME

Time management is a key factor for anyone who seeks to improve in the area of study habits. In fact, handling time properly is half the battle. The Bible says, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, *redeeming the time*, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15, 16). Everyone has the same twenty-four hours to complete the tasks at hand, but not everyone uses these hours wisely.

Each student can redeem the time by keeping a *time diary*. A simple chart makes the best time diary, where weekdays are placed across the top of the chart, and all the activities of the day are listed down the left-hand column. Such activities as devotions, sleeping, eating, studying, working, exercising, and socializing are some that may be enumerated. Enter the estimated time you would normally spend doing each activity in the appropriate box. Sunday should always be allocated as a day of worship and rest (see Genesis 2:2-3, Hebrews 10:25). Out of the 144 hours (or 6 days) we have left, let's say 48 hours are set aside for sleeping, 16 hours for eating, and 30 hours for an outside job and some kind of recreation. This would leave approximately seven to eight hours per day for classes and studying. Examine the suggested *time diary* below:

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
Devotions							
Sleeping							
Eating							
Class Time	- 0 -						
Studying	- 0 -						
Working	- 0 -						
Exercising	- 0 -						
Socializing	- 0 -						

Figure 0.1 Time Diary

How do you spend your week? Make an honest evaluation of how you have been using your every waking hour. And then chart a new time diary that would reflect your desire to redeem the time God has given each of us to manage.

### 3. LONG-TERM SCHEDULING

The first thing you need to create is your *long-term schedule*, a single-page calendar listing each month with spaces to fill in self-imposed deadlines for tests, daily work, special projects, and book reports. Researching and writing a paper takes quite a bit of time; therefore, this should be broken down into a step-by-step approach over a longer period of time. You will not be able to remember everything you need to do; consequently, you should schedule all your known assignments. In this way, you will be able to do each task one day at a time.

Your overall course work will not intimidate you, if you spread it out and tackle it bit by bit. Study by a planned schedule, which saves time and effort. This approach is more efficient and most rewarding. Without a schedule, you will find yourself paralyzed by indecision: “What should I do first? Should I spend one hour or two on this assignment? Am I going to finish that project on time?” Your goal should be to make studying not only a habit, but spontaneous as well. Do not be distracted by the tyranny of the urgent. By sticking to the plan, you will escape the frustration and guilt for not doing your best on your assignments. Give each task adequate attention. Plan ahead!

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JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG
SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC

Figure 0.2 Long-term Schedule

#### 4. SHORT-TERM SCHEDULING

A *weekly schedule* is a must. Create your own schedule, including each of your class assignments, on a daily basis. You may want to use a spreadsheet program like Excel® for this purpose. A one-page schedule should be set up with the *days of the week* across the top, and the *hours of the day* from 6:00 a.m. to



11:00 p.m. listed along the left-hand column (see page 7). Once you have completed your schedule, you could even have it enlarged to add needed information. However, do not let your schedule control your life. Be flexible enough to make adjustments as you go. You should schedule the following activities:

- Morning Bible study
- Scripture memory
- Prayer
- Class/study times
- Meals
- Recreation
- Social/sports events
- Job hours
- Library time
- Sunday worship
- Ministering to others
- Group Bible study
- Free time

**Figure 0.3 Daily Activities**

Scheduling each hour of the day will give you much more free time than you ever expected. And, do not forget that *Saturday is a workday*. We are to labor six days; so you should study, do household tasks, or get a job on this day. Finally, Sunday is a day for worshiping our Lord Jesus—resting our souls and bodies, as well as fellowshiping with other Christians. Sunday is *not* a time for studying. There is always the temptation to use this day for work or study. However, commit yourself to keeping the Lord's Day holy. Give your heart, soul, mind, and body one day to rest during the week. It will work wonders.

Time	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
6:00 am							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
*							
*							
*							
8:00 pm							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							

Figure 0.4 Weekly Schedule

### Helpful Hints

Here are some helpful hints to follow for *redeeming the time*:

1. **Place your long-term schedule prominently.** If you have a set work station, put this schedule on the wall or on your desk in front of you. Check your long-term schedule periodically because you do not want any surprises.
2. **Consult your short-term schedule often.** Plan to study the same thing at the same time each day. Establishing regular study habits will help you avoid procrastination. Check your weekly, short-term schedule daily.
3. **Structure your schedule with your *needs* and *gifts* in mind.** Some assignments on your schedule may cause you great anxiety, but they still need to be done. Others may come easily, and you will be tempted to do them first. Therefore, make your schedule balanced; otherwise, you will never seem able to tackle your more troublesome subjects. The best approach is to *study the more difficult assignments first*.
4. **Be flexible.** Design your schedule to meet the unexpected. If your plan is flexible, it will be easier to keep yourself motivated. Do not be caught by surprise. *Anticipate the unforeseen, and reschedule.* However, do not fall into the trap of rationalizing everything that comes along.

5. **Find the best spot in your room to study**, but not on the bed. A *well-lighted desk* is the best place to study, including all your basic study materials close at hand. Having a set location to study goes a long way toward improving your study habits and redeeming the time.
6. **A small library of reference books** should be on your desk, including a *dictionary* and *thesaurus*, and any other books you deem helpful. And without a doubt, do not forget the most important book of all—your *Bible*.
7. **Avoid any and all distractions**. By all means, turn off any electronic media. Silence *is* golden. Also, do not waste time by answering the phone every time it rings.

*I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous  
and the wicked: for there is a time there for every pur-  
pose and for every work.*

*Ecclesiastes 3:17*