A Few Tips for Studying

Hopefully, a few of these ideas might help improve your productivity, so that you have more time for friends, fun and doing what you enjoy, even though opportunities for meeting up and enjoyable activities are more limited at the moment.

Why are study breaks important?

- The brain works a bit like a computer; when your laptop is shut down or on standby, it does not rest, but it sorts files, indexes and defragments them.
- The brain is similar. When it rests or has a break, it sorts and processes information, so that it can assimilate what you are learning. Maybe you have noticed that if you study late and then go to bed, it’s hard to sleep, as your mind is not ready to rest.

Rest breaks help you process information and remember what you have been studying.

If you want to improve your productivity, you may want to try out the following:

Pomodoro Technique

This suggests breaking study periods as follows:

- 25 minutes studying, then 3-5 minute break
- after 4 study sessions, have a 15-30 minute break

This approach can:

- help you concentrate better and counteract boredom
- improve productivity and motivation
- improve retention of information
- minimise interruptions

You can reward yourself with enjoyable activities during the breaks, such as:

- a short walk, exercise, dance, or stretch
- listening to music
- having a shower
- breathing exercises
- doing something creative
- having a snack or a drink

Phoning your friends is incredibly important, especially while you are unable to meet up. However, it’s probably best to phone them when you can have a longer chat, rather than in the short breaks, otherwise you may find it hard to get back to return to studying.

Study breaks, when used well, can lead to higher productivity and improved memory.

Your attention span may be different to your friends, so it’s important to find the timing that works best for you. If you have a tendency to study for hours, maybe explore whether your productivity improves by having short breaks. If your attention span is shorter, a 25-minute study session with the 5-minute break may work better for you. If you already study effectively for an hour, you may wish to have a 10-15 minute break.

Once you have used this Pomodoro Technique for a while, you may find that your attention span improves and you can study for longer periods, although it’s still helpful to have the breaks.

Apps to help improve your productivity

In case you have not come across these, here some Apps that you may want to check out to help reduce distraction, and improve your focus and productivity:

FLIPD – reduces distractions by locking your phone for the duration of time you set it to
HOLD - App blocker with mini rewards for not using your phone
FLORA A self-motivated and fun way to help you and your friends beat phone overuse and procrastination (?? iPhones only)
FOREST – plant trees when you stay focused
ENGROSS – customisable timer from Pomodoro technique that helps keep you focused
ANKI main emphasis is on helping you remember things

Other strategies you may find helpful when studying include:

- switch off your phone (if you are not using one of the above Apps), or put it in another room while you are studying, so you are not tempted to look at it
- make a list the night before of what you are going to do the next day, and then you have the satisfaction of crossing things off your list

If you feel overwhelmed, or find it hard to start studying:

- start with something easy
- break large tasks into smaller chunks

Importance of Recollection - for helping you remember information

- test yourself, rather than just glancing over highlighted notes

The Importance of Rewards

When you have studied well during the day, remember to reward yourself by doing something you really enjoy, whether its watching a film, playing a video game, or having a WhatsApp chat with a group of friends.