

How To Use Index Cards

Here is a method of studying that gives you an accurate perception of how well you know the material and forces you to think about it rather than just look over it.

- **Review your notes and readings frequently**, so the material is always “fresh”.
- **As you’re reading your text or reviewing your notes**, write down questions about the material. Imagine that you’re teaching the course. What questions would you ask on the exam?
- **Keep track** of any terms you need to know.
- **Write each question or term** on the back of an index card.
- **Write an answer** or an explanation for the question or term on the other side. You can use your notes and text for reference, but put the answer or explanation in your own words whenever possible.
- **Shuffle the index cards** so you can’t figure out any answers based on their location in the deck.
- **Look at the card on the top of the deck** and try to answer the question or explain the term. If you know it, great! Put it on the bottom of the deck. If you don’t know it, look at the answer, and put it a few cards down in the deck so you’ll come back to it soon.
- **Proceed through the deck of cards** until you know all the information.
- **Carry your cards with you everywhere.** Take advantage of little pockets of time. Test yourself while you’re waiting in line, riding the bus, etc.
- Being able to explain the information is the only way to be sure that you know it. It’s also the best way to prevent text anxiety. If you think you know the answer, but can’t put it into words, you probably don’t know it well enough.
- **Consider testing yourself** someplace where nobody can see you and reciting the answers out loud. That’s the best way to be sure that you can explain them.
- **Study with a friend from your class.** You can share ideas and help each other out with concepts. Also, you can check with each other to make sure that you’re explaining your answers adequately.