



I am in class 12. When teachers explain topics, students who are brilliant understand everything they explain. But I am envious of them, because I feel inferior and can't understand teachers' explanation. What do I do? I want to do well in my studies, but my memory power is not so good.

Smita P

Dear Smita,

I understand your frustration. At the outset, I would suggest: address your feeling of inferiority. Negative feelings form a vicious circle and get in the way of learning. Introspect to identify why you feel inferior and get rid of that first. Nonetheless, for better memory, an important thing is to understand the subject matter thoroughly; organize and add meaning to the material prior to learning it, this will facilitate both storage and retrieval. Some ways of

doing this include using outlines, learning things in a particular order, or making intentional associations between ideas. When learning something new and unfamiliar, try pairing it with something you know very well, such as images, puns, and music. Either teach or visualize teaching the material; it's a great way of learning. Verbal rehearsal is an effective memory tool. The use of colour is linked strongly to memory. Using different colours for highlighting the important points can make an impression on your memory. Most importantly, get enough sleep; lack of sleep steals your attentiveness affecting your memory.

I am a hard working student in I PU. I study really hard but on the day of exams, I become



very worried and anxious. I lose confidence and forget everything. Please tell me what I should do?

XYZ

Hi XYZ,

Anxiety during exam is a common phenomenon. In exam anxiety, one tends to often give oneself negative messages, 'I can't do this', 'I'm going to fail.' Try to consciously replace these with positive, encouraging thoughts: 'I am well prepared, I cannot fail.' Recognize that you are doing your best. Some precautions for reducing anxiety: Be prepared. Learn your material thoroughly. Approach the exam with confidence. Strive for a relaxed state of concentration. Avoid speaking with friends who talk negatively and are nervous themselves; this may trigger off your anxiety. Derive a mantra for yourself like, 'stay calm, relax' and repeat it in your head over and over again to defuse anxiety. During the exam, take a deep breath in and a long breath out. As you breathe in again, look straight ahead at something inanimate (the wall, the clock, a picture) and focus your mind on the positive thought, 'I can do this exam well,' as you breathe out. Different techniques work for different people, examine what works for you.

I am doing my BE in mechanical engineering. I have a group of friends in my class. They are good friends but when we decide to study together, it is OK for the first few hours, after that, everyone starts chatting, and forgets about studies. I feel my time is wasted. Please advise.

Suresh

Dear Suresh,

A study group can be a very positive learning experience. Let's begin with basics of forming a group. When selecting a friend to join your group, ask yourself a) is he motivated to do well? b) Is he committed and focussed enough? c) Would he be able to follow the rules established for the group? d) Are you comfortable with him?

Evaluate each person on these and then form the group (ideal number being five/six). Subsequently choose a leader who can steer the group gently but firmly. Group members can take turns in leading the group. Decide on the goals of each session. Establishing that everyone should come prepared for every session as a rule will enhance learning for every member. Be aware that every study group will start to veer off track; it is the leader's responsibility to bring the focus back and meet the goals at the end of each session. Before dispersing, write an agenda for the next session. You take the lead and be a role model, it may inspire others.

(Meera Ravi is a psychologist with many years of experience in dealing with students' queries about handling studies. If you have problems managing your studies, write in to her at bngeedt@indiatimes.com. Do not forget to mention HELP DESK in the subject line. Or send your questions to Help Desk, Education Times, The Times of India, 40/1, S&B Towers, MG Road, Bangalore 560001).

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