

Study Suggestions

The following are suggestions on how to successfully complete a chemistry course.

- 1) Know definitions. The best way to study them is to make flash cards with the word on one side and the definition on the other. Each day take 10 different cards with you. At times during the day when you have nothing to do (e.g. waiting in lunch line) go through the stack trying to remember each definition. When you've gone through the cards once, mix them up, and repeat. (Don't learn them in a particular order.) Take 10 different cards the next day, etc. When you've gone through the entire stack, mix them up and start over.
- 2) Check problem answers for reasonableness. Don't accept an answer simply because it comes out of your calculator. For example, if you were asked how much a sandwich would weigh if a quarter pound of meat between two one ounce slices of bread and you calculated 25 pounds, you would immediately realize that you'd made a mistake. Use the rules you learn this semester to make similar judgments about the answers you calculate. If the answer you obtain does not appear to be reasonable check the problem set-up. If that looks good, recalculate the answer. Make sure you get the correct units from your set-up.
- 3) Double check your answers. Even if an answer looks reasonable, always recalculate just to be sure. Many possible errors can occur when typing numbers into your calculator.
- 4) Read the chapter/notes at least twice. Many times information that doesn't make sense on the first reading becomes understandable the second time around. In a sense it's like reading a mystery novel the second time around. You see the clues ahead of time.
- 5) Do every homework problem at least twice.
- 6) Ask questions. Most of each class period is available for you to ask questions about previous lectures, the notes, and the homework problems. There are also office hours and email. If you don't understand something, ask. That's what I'm here for.
- 7) Keep up. If you wait until a few days before a test to begin studying, you will almost certainly do poorly. If you study as we go through the material, you will remember it better. This makes test taking easier, but more importantly you will remember the material better for subsequent courses. Everything we cover in this class will be revisited again in a later chemistry course. Instructors will assume you remember it or can teach it to yourself the second time around.