

Biology Study Tips

Lectures

- If you use a computer to take notes, don't keep an internet browser open. Not only will this distract you, it will also distract the students behind you; plus, you are more likely to miss something that will be tested on if you have any distractions during lecture.
- As much as you possibly can, WRITE your notes during class rather than typing them. Typing can too easily become stenography, where you become more focused on the words the professor is saying, rather than being focused on what the words mean.

Reading the Textbooks

- Faculty differ here, but for BIOL 102, it may be a good idea before class to lightly read the text chapter that contains the day's lecture topics. Don't spend too much time on it. After lecture read the text focusing closely on the topics covered in lecture. Read the topics not covered in lecture for perspective and context of the material covered in lecture.
- Rather than trying to tackle the text of the chapter from beginning to end, start by looking over the figures. With your notes from class readily accessible, look over the figures thoroughly (especially those that the professor specifically mentioned or presented during lecture), read the figure caption thoroughly, and read your lecture notes regarding that figure thoroughly. Then go to the text of the chapter, skim until you find the reference to that particular figure, and read the text pertaining to that figure thoroughly. Instead of thinking "Ugh, I have to read a 60 page chapter of my textbook by tomorrow," think "I have to look over 6 figures of my textbook by tomorrow." It makes reading the textbook a much more manageable and meaningful task.

Studying

- When it comes to knowing *mechanisms* (i.e. a cell signaling pathway or other step-by-step process), it helps to draw it out. Start with the assistance of your notes, and repeat every day until you can draw it out without your notes.
- Recommend reviewing your notes from previous classes the night before the class. This keeps you up to date and if there is anything you do not understand, you can ask the professor after class.
- Making your own flash cards based on your lecture notes can be a useful exercise for some classes.
- One of the best ways to learn something is to teach it to someone else. While you are studying, pretend you are preparing to deliver a lecture to your class. Write out an outline of the things you would say and the way in which you would present them. Then, if possible, get into a study group and "teach" that topic to someone else.

- If the professor provides his/her permission, obtain exams from students who have taken the class previously. Cover up the answers and take a “practice” exam. Give yourself the exact time limit you will have during the actual exam.

Exams

- Keep up to date by reviewing all readings and notes that will be covered on the next exam. Get a good night’s sleep before each exam. Studying all night does not work for most students.
- If an exam consists sections of different types of questions (Multiple choice and short answer, for example), figure out the most efficient order for YOU to attack them. Some students do better by starting with the multiple choice-type of questions where they get “warmed up” to answer the more thorough short answer/problem-type questions. Some students feel too rushed toward the end of an exam, so they begin by getting the short answer/problem-type of questions done first, with plenty of time to spare for answering the quicker multiple choice-type questions.