



ISLAMIC ONLINE
UNIVERSITY
www.iou.edu.gm



BRIEF GUIDE TO "STUDYING HACK"

MUBEENA IFTHIKKARUDDIN

Published by IOU Press

Copyright, IOU Press

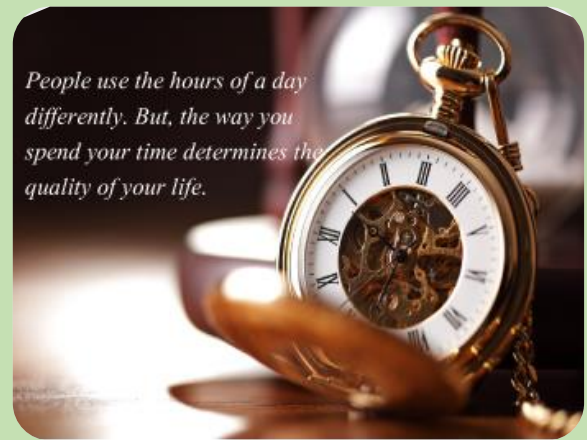
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Published by IOU Press, Gambia.

Everyone has their own idea about the best place and time to study. This booklet is prepared to share my personal experience of studying methods and tips to navigate the students for getting the most out of study. It briefly summarizes studying tips from Islamic perspective.

“The greatest profit in the worldly life is to make yourself, all the time, busy with what is better and more profitable to it in its hereafter.”

(From the book of Al-Fawa'id by Ibn Al Qayyim)



People use the hours of a day differently. But, the way you spend your time determines the quality of your life.

Contents:

1. *Factors which help to facilitate studies*
 - a. *Internal Factor*
 - b. *External Factor*
 - c. *Emotional Factor*
 - d. *Physical Setup*
 - e. *Rules and Regulations*
2. *Time Management*
3. *Studying Hacks*
4. *Inspirations from Quran and Sunnah*
5. *A Few Interesting Facts*
6. *Conclusion*
7. *References*

Factors which helps to facilitate studies:

a. Internal factors:

Students should be responsible and disciplined before embarking on the journey of seeking knowledge as it is an important criterion which helps the students to be consistent in achieving his/her goal. To discipline ourselves we have to first analyze our habits and change unproductive ones. For this you should have firm determination and come out of the comfort zone.

b. External factors:

A clean study area, scheduled timetable, healthy eating habits, proper sleep and exercise etc. also helps in creating a better concentration.



c. **Emotional factors:**

- **Emotional maturity** is very important to avoid distractions. Emotional/spiritual maturity is when you are able to handle most of the negative situations in a reserved manner without losing your inner calm. Many factors may turn up your way, and you must learn to differentiate between what is important, urgent and unnecessary and use wisdom to tackle the issues in such a way that your goals are not interrupted.
- **Personal Mastery** is when you set a goal and you visualize beforehand the issues and problems which can be barriers in achieving the goals and you take all the precautions and self-master yourself to tackle the oncoming issues.

d. Physical setup:

- Keep an inspiring quote that inspires you. For e.g. “Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions” ;)
- Clean place preferably with no sound. **It has been found that people living in cluttered places are more likely to feel more fatigued than people living in clean environment.**
- Don't leave stacks of paper, pens, cables, books and all other kind of distractions lying around. **Efficiency of work is likely to be less in a disorganized place.**
- Try to have at least two study places because sometimes a change of surrounding can make you feel refreshed. After home, I personally prefer library or coffee shops as other alternative.
- On the table: subject text book, a rough note for jotting important points/summary, a high lighter, an index card.

e. Rules and Regulations:

Set rules and regulations that you will strictly adhere to and stick on your table.

Time Management:

- 'Being busy is not same as being productive'. Learn to prioritize what is important and what is not.
- Schedule your day.
- Learn to say NO to unnecessary work and events.
- Once at task try to give your complete focus. Avoid all sorts of distractions like social media, telephone conversation etc. during this time.
- Schedule and adjust your tasks around Salah time. This will help not only to attain barakah in your time but also create a discipline in your habits as well.

- Easy subjects (e.g. Lessons teaching moral values, stories, literature etc.) which needs to be only understood and there aren't many rules and regulations to be followed then audio lecture are preferable as it saves time. Important points can be jotted down while hearing the audio if needed.
- Group the 'like' tasks. This can save time.
- Utilize the 'waiting time' (travelling, waiting areas etc..). My personal preference is an iPod with all the audio lectures to utilize during this waiting time.



Do it now, sometimes 'later' becomes 'never'.

Delegate for things which you don't have time.

Leave out everything unnecessary.

Decide your schedule and stick to it.

Studying Hacks

- Read the text, understand, highlight the important points and summarize what you have understood in a separate rough note. Also you can take notes using different colored pens.
- While starting a task, don't think about its entire bulk at that moment, just focus on the amount you have decided to do that day and make it perfect.
- If there are names, dates (scientific names, formulas etc.) to be remembered jot it out on an index card, so that it stays comprised like a pocket note. Occasionally you can glance at it. **Occasional glances are rehearsals at regular intervals which helps in the retention to the long term memory.**¹
- **It is said that “associations are memory’s best friend”.**² Create a mind map (similar technique which helps in better memory retention are Mnemonics etc.) Mind maps helps to understand and memorize difficult concepts easily. You can draw cartoons related to the concepts, or draw bubbles and write down important points in it and relate and it can be quite informal and very much personal.

¹ Craik and Tulving, 1975.

² Ibid.

- Understand what you are learning instead of memorizing. [Even though for certain subjects' rote learning (memorization) is essential].
- Set a time limit for each subject.
- Take frequent breaks. **This helps to improve both focus and attention.**³
- You can also motivate yourself by offering yourself a cup of tea/coffee or your favorite snack or hobby after completion of each task.
- Take every step as a challenge.
- Break the task down to lessen the sense of being overwhelmed. Enjoying small accomplishment will keep you motivated.
- Another normal yet important aspect is 'lighting'. For me personally, dull lights make me doozy (problematic) and less interested in the tasks I am into. Bright lights (not too bright) are like boosters which helps to stay awake and alert. **Studies show that bright light affect positively on your brain focus and visual clarity.**⁴

³ 'The Distracted Mind: Ancient Brains in a High-Tech World'. Dr. Gazzaley and Dr. Rosen

⁴ Hathaway, W. E. (1995).

- Study in a group. This depends on your personality. If you prefer to be a loner, then its ok.
- Teach others what you have learnt or else you can teach yourself/speak out loud.
- Keep yourself surrounded with like-minded people for gaining confidence and positivity. They will be also a source of encouragement.
- At the end of the day, 'just close your eyes and recollect the lessons' you had done that day. Recollect from the summary and index notes you have prepared. This is useful for making the lessons so thorough that it becomes difficult to forget.

Inspiration from Quran and Sunnah:

- Prayer, Perseverance and Patience are the main three P's of success.
- Check and purify your intentions.
- Always remember without Allah's help you can never achieve success.

"My success is only by Allah." {11:88}

- Have Piety and Taqwa to achieve Barakah.

"And for those who fear Allah, He (ever) prepares a way out." {2:3}

- Al-Imam Sufyan Ath-Thawree had stressed the importance of knowledge:

"There is no action after the obligatory ones better than seeking knowledge." *Hilyatul Awliyaa Vol 2 Page 363

- Gaining knowledge not only benefits you in this life but also in the afterlife:

Imam Shafi said, "The one who desires this world; then upon him is knowledge, and the one desires the hereafter; then upon him is knowledge!" *source: al-Majmoo' of Imaam An Nawawee

A few Interesting Facts:

- Adopt the habit of reading at least twenty minutes each day. It helps to develop vocabulary for fluency and comprehension. Students who scored 90% better than their peers on reading tests, read for more than 20 minutes a day.⁵
- The higher the learning the lesser the brain degeneration by aging. This is because learning triggers formation of synaptic connections which will take longer time in degeneration during old age due to the already formed dense neural connection.⁶
- Physical exercise is important for brain stimulation, as exercise results in increase supply of blood, oxygen and nutrient, which can affect cognition. In addition, a brain structure called the hippocampus is stimulated during exercise. Research has shown that the hippocampus is important for reasoning and memory.⁷

⁵ Nagy and Herman's (1987) research.

⁶ Winston, 2004.

⁷ Erickson KI, et al. (2009).

- Your mind like any other muscle, need constant exercise. Like your other muscles, brain muscles also need exercise. Studies relate that passive people are more vulnerable to diseases like dementia than people who keep themselves active by learning new concepts and continuously sharpen their mental skill.⁸
- Memory has two components- short term and long term. Most short term memories only last 20-30 sec.⁹
- Omega-3 (nuts, seeds and oily fish) and Omega-6 fatty acids (common vegetable oils) are found to be essential for memory and intelligence and other functions of brain.¹⁰

⁸ Restak, 1997.

⁹ Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1971.

¹⁰ Holford, 2005b.

- There are mainly three types of learners-VAK Learning styles:¹¹
 - a. Visual Learners - have two sub-channels - linguistic and spatial. Learners who are visual-linguistic like to learn through written language, such as reading and writing. A visual-spatial learner think in pictures than in words. Use of handouts, videos, charts etc are examples.
 - b. Auditory Learners - learn best through the sense of hearing. They learn and remember concepts better when explained aloud. They do better when study materials are shared verbally with their study buddies. They can even better retain knowledge when new ideas are paired with nonverbal sounds such as instrumental sound or drumbeats etc.
 - c. Kinesthetic Learners - do best while touching and moving. It also has two sub-channels: kinesthetic (movement) and tactile (touch). A child who is a kinesthetic learner can learn well while on a big bouncy ball or stationary cycle. Strangely even clapping hands or finger snapping while learning or reading helps them.

¹¹ Dunn, R. (2000).

Conclusion

Organize your responsibilities in such a way that you make sure you are living the details of your life. Take some time out in solitude to Observe, Reflect and Contemplate. Allah swt gives signs and opportunities for our personal development all around us.

Life is not about proving OTHERS what you are but proving YOURSELF that you are worth handling God given talents and gifts beautifully in a way that benefit yourself first, family and then society.

May Allah swt accept our efforts, grant us forgiveness and guidance. May He make this world for us and the whole ummah a better place to live and bless us with the opportunity to die as true Muslim. Aameen.

References:

Craik, F. I. M., & Lockhart, R. S. Levels of processing: A framework for memory research. Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior, 1972, 11, 671-684.

Hathaway, W. E. (1995). Effects of School Lighting on Physical Development and School Performance. Journal of Educational Research, 88(4), 228-241.

Nagy, W., Herman, P., & Anderson, R. (1985). Learning words from context. Reading Research Quarterly, 17,233-255.

Winston, R. (2004). The Human Mind. Bantam Books.

Erickson KI,et al. (2009) Aerobic fitness is associated with hippocampal volume in elderly humans. Hippocampus 19:1030-1039.

Restak, R. M. (1997). Older and Wiser. New York: Berkley Books.

Atkinson, R. C., & Shiffrin, R. M. Human memory: A proposed system and its control processes.

Holford, P. (2005b). Optimum Nutrition for the Mind. London: Piatkus Books.

Dunn, R. (2000). Learning styles: Theory, research, and practice. National Forum of Applied Educational Research Journal, 13 (1), 3-22.

It was narrated that 'Abu'd-Darda' said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say:

“Whoever treads on a path in search of knowledge, Allah will ease the way to Paradise for him. The angels will lower their wings, pleased with this seeker of knowledge, and everyone in the heavens and on earth will ask forgiveness for the knowledgeable person, even the fish in the deepest of waters will ask for his forgiveness.”

* [Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Tirmidhi #2835-sahih hadith]

About the Author

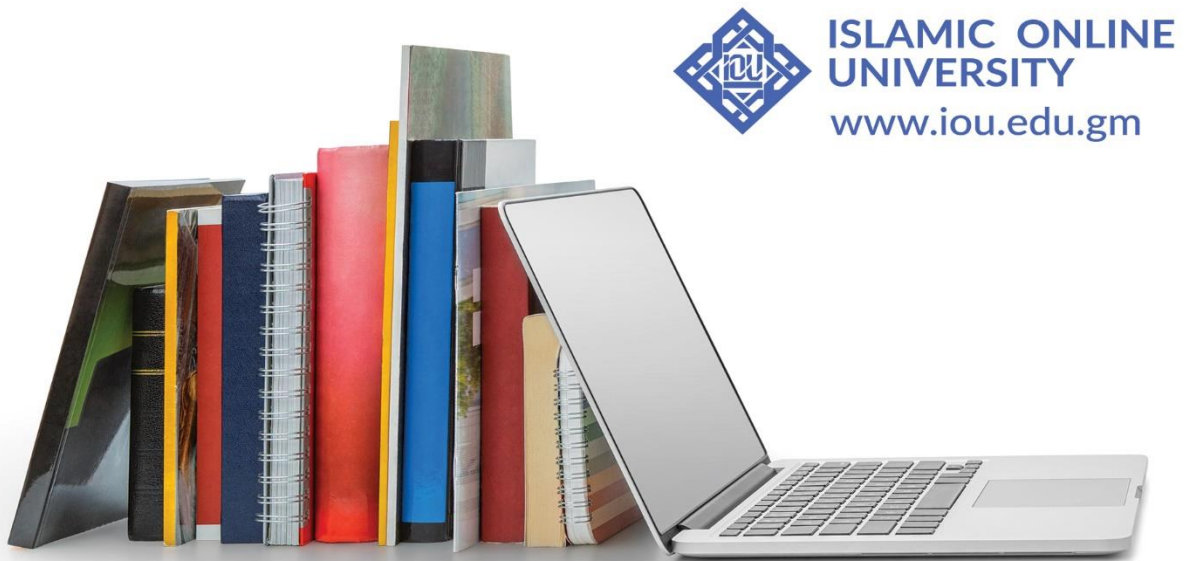
Mubeena Ifthikkar is an Indian residing in the UAE. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Science and a Bachelor's degree in Education and also holds a BMAIS degree in Islamic Studies. She had worked as a teacher in the faculty of Science, UK curriculum in Dubai. After completing her education in Islamic Sciences, from an Islamic Institute in Dubai she has been teaching Tafseer in the same Institute since 2009. Currently, she is working as a Lecturer in the Education Department of Islamic Online University and is also a Course Facilitator for the subject Aqeedah At Tawheed in the Diploma Section.

IOU PRESS PUBLICATION

The Journal Of Islamic Sciences (JIS) is a multidisciplinary publication initiated by the international open University (formerly known as Islamic Online University) that aims to publish quality research and review articles focusing on all kinds of studies especially practical studies that fall under the auspices of any of the sciences of Islam and relate to the today's Muslim.

High standard original research and quality reviews pertaining to intradisciplinary as well as interdisciplinary aspects of Islamic studies and Islamic Sciences are what make the JIS one of a kind.

A dedicated team of academic professionals work tirelessly to ensure that the content published in the JIS is only of the highest standard and up to date with the current trends of research.



ISLAMIC ONLINE
UNIVERSITY
www.iou.edu.gm

For more information on how to submit manuscripts for review and publishing please visit the 'Guidelines of Authors' section

<http://jis.iou.edu.gm>