

Being Successful in Medical School: Tips to Make It a Little Less Painful



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What does it take to be
a successful MI
student?

You might be a successful MI student if...



- you listen to wise counsel
 - Talk to your instructors
 - Go to Dr. Thomas, Dr. Thornhill, or Dr. Richeson for help and advice

You might be a successful MI student if...



- you listen to wise counsel
 - **There just has to be a way.....**
 - Students frequently come to faculty to try to find the “secret” of learning this easily. It doesn’t exist.
 - There is a lot of material to learn and there is unfortunately just no substitute for time and work.

You might be a successful MI student if...



- you don't like to ask questions in class email is a very efficient way to get answers.
- you prefer a face-to-face meeting, drop by your instructor's office or call and set up a meeting.
 - Setting up a meeting doesn't make it a big deal – it just means that both of you will be in the same place at the same time.

A comment from Dr Lill, who taught M-II students for a long time:



- Next year you will need to know what you learned this year.
- Microanatomy, biochemistry, physiology etc are the foundation for courses in Pathology, Microbiology, Pharmacology, and ICM.
- Your first year topics don't go away in May—they will come up again and again.
- Take them seriously – Please! For my sake not for yours.....

You might be a successful MI student if...



- you have a study plan – it really helps
- The more of the following you can do, the easier it will be for you to learn the material.
 - Skim over the material before you go to class.
 - Be an active listener in lecture. Stay mentally active in lab/small group. *Think* about what the lecturer is saying and try to relate it to things you already know
 - Ask questions during the lecture or during the break. If you want to wait until the break, write down your question so that you won't forget it.
 - ✦ It doesn't matter if you look stupid when you ask a question. It does matter when you miss an exam question.

Study Plan--it really works



Keep up in all of your classes no matter what!

- Review your notes the afternoon or evening after the class, even if you can only devote 30 minutes to the task.
 - Immediate reinforcement is the most effective way of learning.
 - In the long run, the more you do to keep up in all of your classes, the less time it will take you to learn the material.

Study Plan--it really works



- Learn for recall not recognition. Study the material to develop recall of the material\
- What do I mean when I say recall—that means that you can answer the question without having a list of possibilities in front of you.
 - Pick a topic. List every thing you know about it. When you have exhausted your knowledge, quickly skim the material to check yourself .
 - Pretend you are explaining the material to a friend or a patient. Pretend you are teaching a class. Or do it in groups and really explain to each other and correct each other.
 - Think about the material. Correlate the material to other material you have learned in other classes as well as that class.
 - Fill in a chart that forces you to organize the material.
 - Outlining is not as useful. Some people (I include myself) can outline material without it ever truly going through the brain.
- Do the above with ***small chunks of material*** (a page at the most—preferable a couple of paragraphs.)
- You will remember it longer and better.

Study Plan--it really works



- **Try to classify organs, tissues, diseases etc not only the way the instructor has but the way that helps you remember details. Integrate that information with what you already know.**
- For example, tubes in the body that move large amounts of material usually use smooth muscle for that purpose. Now you can just remember which they are and then how they differ in terms of layers and the exceptions (like the heart).

Study Plan--it really works



- **1. Reread the book or notes--the last time might be the charm**
- **2. Or ask a classmate if they understand it and ask them to explain it. Sometimes fellow students can put it in a more understandable form than faculty.**
- **3. Or go to a faculty member.**

Study Plan--it really works



- If you are confused about an area try this ----
- 1. Reread the book or notes--the last time might be the charm
- 2. Or ask a classmate if they understand it and ask them to explain it. Sometimes fellow students can put it in a more understandable form than faculty.
- 3. Or go to a faculty member.
- 4. Don't be afraid to try a new strategy if what you have been doing doesn't work

Study Plan--it really works



- **Very, Very Important: The more quickly you review material after a class, the more you will remember that material.**
- **The more often you study material the better you will remember it.**
- **It is much more effective to study smaller amounts of time over an extended period of time than to try to cram it all in at the last minute.**
 - **And you will remember it longer. There are always those finals and boards hanging out there.**

You might be a successful MI student if...



- **You work with other students occasionally to quiz each other on what you know.**
 - Studies have found that students who participate in study groups tend to do better.
 - Why? Study groups give students the chance to quiz each other and discuss ideas so that if there are disagreements, they have time to find out who is correct.
- **You teach other students.**
 - Teaching something is the best way to learn it.
 - It forces you to recognize more accurately your own level of knowledge.
 - One of the most common problems with students who score poorly is that they don't recognize what they don't know.

You might be a successful MI student if...



- **You have good social support system**
 - You are at less risk of failing.
 - Frustration and depression feed on themselves. A good social support system can help students deal positively with the pressures and maintain a sense of perspective and a sense of humor.
- **You start to get overwhelmed and depressed, you get help quickly so it doesn't start really pulling down your performance.**
 - What most students need is a little boost over a rough patch. Don't let pride get in the way of doing your best.

You might be a successful MI student if...



- **You can manage yourself**
 - Eat decent meals. French fries and Fritos don't count as vegetables and a Pizza Supreme isn't a balanced meal. Keep your nutritional support up.
 - Get as much sleep as you can manage.
 - Try to get in some regular exercise, even if it is just a 30 min brisk walk. It really does make you feel better and think better.



What does a penny look like?

What doesn't help--



- It is a rare student who makes it all the way through medical school without grouching and complaining.
- However, when it becomes too prominent in your way of dealing with school problems, it has some major drawbacks.
 - Problem: Blaming others just increases your frustration without doing anything to solve the problem. “It was the teacher’s fault because they didn’t tell us what was on the exam”etc.
 - Reality: If the average grade on an exam was 82 and you got a 68, your preparation wasn’t on target or your test-taking skills need some honing

Taking that Test



- **READ THE QUESTION!**
- **And answer the question asked.**
- **Underline or highlight words like NOT, EXCEPT, LEAST so you will be sure to see them.**
- **Mark out answers that you know are wrong.**

Taking that Test



- **After choosing an answer, compare the answer to all of the points in the question. If it doesn't fit all of the points in a question, it is probably the wrong answer.**
- **DON'T DON'T DON'T change an answer later unless you really remember something later on. Your first gut response is the most apt to be correct.**
- **Give the MOST correct answer.**
 - **If one answer happens 75% of the time and another 30% of the time – give the answer that happens 75% of the time!**
- **Again, read the question. Answer what is written down and not what you start reading into the question.**

You CAN do this.



- **It is hard. It requires good study skills, good time management, and discipline but you can do it.**
- **A positive attitude will ease your stress. “People are as happy as they let themselves be.” Mark Twain**
- **Take time to have some fun.**
- **If you have trouble, get help.**
- **Remember----**

You ARE going to be a doctor.