

Starting Strong in Medical School

Researchers agree and have found that students who study efficiently and effectively are generally identified as top performers in medical schools (Desai & Katta 2012). To study smarter, not harder, consider the recommendations below.

Use Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) to Focus Reading and Studying.

Prior to class, prepare to learn content by reviewing the course Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). The SLOs can be found in the course syllabus. All of your quizzes, exams and assessments have been purposefully aligned with the SLOs. In fact, over 50% of last year's M1 students reported using SLOs to guide their study efforts as one of the strategies that helped them learn.

In addition to course SLOs, each course session will have objectives that support the course learning objectives. Typically, faculty state these SLOs in the first few slides of PowerPoint presentations and/or post them prior to their presentation of content. For the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) cases, you'll find the SLOs within the body of the case instructions. (In PBL methodology, the SLOs are presented after you begin to discuss the case, not before.) Please do not hesitate to ask faculty for guidance if you have questions about the SLOs.

Preread *before* Class.

Prereading is similar to looking at a map before you begin a trip. It is helpful to know the major freeways, road names, attractions, and distances between stops. The importance of prereading is that it will enhance study efficiency by increasing your later re-reading rate, enhancing comprehension of content, and strengthening long-term retention (Kelman & Straker, 2000). To preread, engage in the following for 10 – 15 minutes:

- *Rapidly skim the material.* Begin with reading the study questions first and then scan for answers. Then, review the first paragraph of sections, bold or italicized text, shaded/boxed areas, diagrams, charts, graphics, and summaries.
- *Skim for information that aligns with the course and/or course session SLOs.*
- *Look for the "big picture" or the main points of the text.*
- *Get a sense of the vocabulary,* learning new terms that may be introduced in course sessions or later reading.
- *Work to "actively" learn* by identifying patterns of relationships between subtopics and main topics, analyzing cause effects, comparing and contrasting, or understanding time sequencing (Kelman & Straker, 2000).

In many courses, you will be expected to have read several pages prior to class. In these cases preread before you read the assignments to maximize your efforts.

For additional learning and study strategies and/or to ask questions about this content, please contact the Director of Academic Success, at CMEDAcademicSuccess@groups.cmich.edu.

References

Desai, S. P., & Katta, R. (2012). *Success in medical school*. Houston, TX: MD2B.

Kelman, E. G., & Straker, K.S. (2000). *Study without stress: Mastering medical school success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.