

GENERAL STUDY TIPS

✓ **Get off to a good start.**

Some preparation the first few days of class can save you much time during the course of the semester, and make your studying more efficient. This is particularly important in FLF 1101 and 1102.

☞ Buy the right supplies: folders to hold both homework you are working on, and corrected homework (which you should keep for reference and review at least until the semester is over and you have your grades); a notebook for taking notes in class (do this daily!) and notes from the textbook (do this while reading); a small pocket calendar in which you can write due dates for major assignments (tests, compositions, lab/workbook, final exams) immediately. One that shows a month on a page will allow you a good overview of what's coming up, and help you plan study time for this and other courses. There should be no reason for you to ask me when the next test is: it's on your syllabus, and should be on your personal calendar.

☞ Prepare your book: buy self-stick tabs (like Post-Its®) or arrows and mark the vocabulary page for each chapter you will be covering during the semester (usually at the beginning or end of each chapter. If it's at the end of the chapter, the tab will also be a way to quickly find the beginning of the next chapter. You will want to have quick and easy reference to the vocabulary list when preparing writing assignments or doing lab work—keep your book with you, open to the vocab page. (I like to stagger the tabs across the top of the book, and label them with the chapter number, which makes it quick and easy to find the page I want).

Mark useful appendices and the French-English and English-French (separately) "lexiques" as well. (I like to put these tabs on the side of the book, which distinguishes them from the chapter tabs)

☞ Prepare your workbook/lab book. Put one tab (I prefer the "arrow" tabs) at the beginning of the first chapter you are going to work with (chapter 1 for 1101, chapter 9 for 1102, for example). If there are separate workbook and lab sections (as in 2201/2202), be sure to mark both the beginning of the workbook section and (further on in the text) the beginning of the lab section. These arrows will move as you work through the lab/workbook. (You can move them to the side of the page, to the location of the next exercise you are going to do, so you can easily find it next time to go to study).

Either mark the lab/workbook correction key pages (in the back of the lab/workbook) with a tab, or (better, IMO) tear out the pages that correspond to the chapters we will be covering during the semester, staple them together, and keep them in the book. That way, when you check your answers, you don't have to keep paging back and forth between the front of the book and the back, which is often very annoying and time consuming, to the point of discouraging you from doing the corrections that you are required to do.

✓ **Attend class daily.**

Learning a foreign language is a cumulative process, and it is very easy to fall behind quickly if you are absent or don't keep up with homework. If you must be absent for a good reason, make sure you are prepared for the next class session: call a classmate and catch up on what was done, prepare the homework for both the missed day and the subsequent class period.

✓ **Be prepared when class starts.** Arrive a few minutes early, and have your textbook, notebook and pencils/erasers ready to use when the hour starts. Turn your cell phone off to

avoid any distractions. Have assigned written homework ready to give to me. If handing in lab work, please make sure pages are stapled together before class.

- ✓ **Study every day, dividing study sessions into 3-5 blocks.**
If you want an A or a B, you should study a minimum of 2 hours for every hour spent in the classroom, divided into approximately 30-minute blocks. This time should be spent reviewing previous material, reading new material, preparing study aids (such as vocabulary cards), preparing your written assignments and lab work, and practicing oral communication skills with classmates or friends who study/speak French.
- ✓ **Do your homework assignments and hand them in on time.**
Assignments are given to help you review and practice materials and acquire the grammar and vocabulary in a building-block fashion. They are also a way for me to check to see what difficulties you are having, and to nip problems in the bud early. Do the homework mindfully: keep focused on what you are doing, pay attention to details, and avoid distractions.
- ✓ **Use as many senses as you can when studying** to help your brain better acquire the knowledge (for example, when studying vocabulary, look at the word list in your book as you listen to the word being pronounced on the vocabulary CD. Write the word down in your vocabulary notebook while at the same time visualizing the object or idea it refers to and saying the word out loud or to yourself (see more under vocabulary tips).
- ✓ **Take notes when reading over course materials.** Write notes that will help you focus your attention while you are reading and remember what you have read. If you have questions, write them in the margin of your notes, with a big question mark, so you remember to ask about them. (You may often find the answer to your question as you continue your reading).

If you plan to purchase your textbook at the end of the semester, you can highlight and underline in it (but still take notes!). If, like most students, you just plan to rent the book, you can still work around this potential disadvantage (not being able to call attention to important material in the book). Buy some Post-It® arrows or similar self-stick marking tabs, and use them to 'point to' important details. Larger square Post-It® notes can be used to write reminders to yourself, or add comments. (Be sure to NOT buy the type that have the extra strong adhesive, if you want to return the book with no charge, as they do not remove as easily as the regular ones).

- ✓ **Review, don't "cram."** Trying to cram for tests in a foreign language is like trying to learn to play a piano piece the day before a recital, when you haven't done any practice previously. You must practice and review often: preferably daily, and even better, several times a day in short spurts (15-30 minutes). By studying a step at a time, keeping up with homework, and reviewing often, you will both retain more (and you WILL need to retain information beyond the test!) and feel more confident when taking tests.
- ✓ **Ask me for advice and help when you need it.** Sometimes a 15-minute talk outside of class can save you hours of frustration and misused time, especially if you have inefficient study habits.
- ✓ **Make use of the free tutors in the language lab.** They are there to help you.

For helpful memory techniques, go here.

For tips on succeeding as a student (in general), go here.