

HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD I STUDY? HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD I SPEND ON AN ASSIGNMENT?

“A little student study-time estimator”

by Uwe Richard Kackstaetter, Ph.D.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF GEOLOGY
DEP. OF EARTH & ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES
METROPOLITAN STATE COLLEGE OF DENVER

While the correlation between grades and the amount studied is obvious, students often have a hard time grasping how much is required OUTSIDE of the classroom. The following data was compiled from study habit and assignment preparation observations in the US as well as in Europe. Be advised that the results are only an approximation of probabilities and are NOT guaranteed. However, they will provide students and instructors with a valuable guideline! Criteria for the data given below assumes no or little prior knowledge of the subject matter by the student as far as exams / quizzes are concerned. The data also assumes that instructors prepare assignment complexity according to point values allotted (e.g., a 100 point assignment should approximately require 10 times more effort and constructive engagement by the student than a 10 point assignment in the same course).

In order to receive an AVERAGE GRADE or 75% on a test or assignment, a student should plan to invest the following minimum times OUTSIDE of the Lab and Class:

Assessment Value		Minimum Time Investment for 75% Grade	
Assessment Value out of 1000 Total Semester Points	Assessment Value (Assignment Weighting) out of 100% of Final Grade	3 Credit Hour Course	4 Credit Hour Course
10 Points	1 %	1.1 hrs	1.5 hrs
25 Points	2.5 %	2.8 hrs	3.8 hrs
50 Points	5 %	5.6 hrs	7.5 hrs
100 Points	10 %	11.3 hrs	15 hrs
150 Points	15 %	16.9 hrs	22.5 hrs
200 Points	20 %	22.5 hrs	30 hrs
250 Points	25 %	28.1 hrs	37.5 hrs

Those desiring a higher than average grade must invest substantially more time than indicated.

Studying means being engaged in the learning process without distraction: NO TV, NO music (headphones), NO conversation or cell phone / texting. It must involve complete concentration on the task at hand, otherwise the given time estimates easily double.

Students enrolled in a 3 credit hour course and needing to prepare for a 100 point assessment (out of 1000 total) or 10% assignment weighting, will need to spend at least 11.3 hrs study time to hope for a C grade. Since daily time is usually limited, the preparation for such a task will need to be stretched over several days. It is easy to see that the usual cramming the day or night before an assessment will ultimately lead to poor grades and is doomed to fail. The following table summarizes days of study for time allotments per day for a 100 point (10% weight) assignment. Keep in mind that the table indicates a target grade of 75%. A higher grade requires greater time commitment.

3 Credit Course - 100pt assignment (10%) - 11.3hrs total		4 Credit Course - 100pt assignment (10%) - 15hrs total	
studying 2 hrs per day	about 6 days	studying 2hrs per day	about 8 days
studying 3 hrs per day	about 4 days	studying 3hrs per day	about 5 days
studying 4 hrs per day	about 3 days	studying 4hrs per day	about 4 days