

WHAT IS PRESENT IN AN EXCELLENT SET OF STUDY NOTES?

Special Note: The reason study notes are required is to help you remember all the material you need to know for a test and to act as a quick review for later tests when many of the bits and pieces that you remembered for a test in September are forgotten by June.

First, your notes must be short and easy to remember. Re-writing chunks of your Workbook makes the notes too long and less useful. Whichever method you use (flash cards, pages of loose leaf paper, sheets of loose leaf paper folded over to hide certain parts, etc.) is your individual choice, although file cards usually work best.

The notes should:

- include all definitions, if possible in your own words (see the Glossary of your Workbook for the definitions you must know).
- include an example of each defined word or phrase.
- include all tricky points or exceptions to rules.
- include all relationships (“when this happens, that occurs” or “if . . . then . . .”).
- include all procedures you need to know. Procedures are descriptions in your Workbook or class notes that fit into the heading “How to . . . (do something)”. For example, in Chem 11 you encounter “How to select the number of significant digits in the answer to a question involving a multiplication or division”. In Chem 12 you encounter “How to identify the presence of a catalyst in a reaction mechanism”.
- include all the major types of calculations you need to know.
- describe the words in each problem that let you know the exact type of problem it is. (Your teacher should help you with this in class, so take good notes and ask for this information if it is not given.)
- show the steps used to complete each problem type. When you show the steps to solve a particular problem, use a different coloured pen or pencil to say why something happens or where a tricky point occurs.
- keep related information visually together. In this way your visual memory uses one thing you read to “trigger” the recall of related facts or associated ideas. (This is the main reason flash cards frequently work better than putting everything on sheets of paper and why tiny cards frequently are much less useful.)

The notes should NOT:

- be a confused mess that presents your eye with too much information in the same area.
- copy out Workbook examples without any added comments.
- simply state “See page . . . of Workbook”.
- jumble together unrelated ideas in one area. This confuses your ability to keep ideas separate and makes the notes unreliable.
- try to cram everything on a single sheet of paper. (That might be OK if you are preparing a “cram” sheet to take into a test, but serves no useful purpose for study notes.)

The notes may:

- include typical questions and answers related to important ideas. This gives you a “self test” of important ideas.