Improving Study Habits to Support Academic Performance: A Case Study of a College Student

Sample Student

Department of [Your Department], [Your College or University]

[Course Number and Course Name]

[Instructor Name]

[Submission Date]

Abstract

This illustrative case study examines how a college student can improve study habits by replacing last-minute cramming with a planned routine that includes spaced practice, self-testing, and reduced distractions. The fictional student, Maya, reports difficulty remembering course material and completing assignments on time. Information is gathered through a short interview, a review of a weekly study log, and a four-week trial of a structured study plan. The example describes how the plan is introduced and how progress is assessed. The fictional results suggest that regular study sessions and practice retrieval may help the student feel more prepared and complete work more consistently. Because this is a teaching example based on an invented case, its outcomes should not be treated as research findings or generalized to other students.

Keywords: study habits, college students, spaced practice, retrieval practice, time management

Improving Study Habits to Support Academic Performance: A Case Study of a College Student

Introduction

College students often balance lectures, assignments, examinations, work, and personal responsibilities. When study sessions are irregular, students may rely on last-minute cramming and find it difficult to remember information. Research suggests that practice testing and distributing study over time can support learning more effectively than relying only on repeated rereading (Dunlosky et al., 2013).

This case study follows a fictional first-year student who wants to develop a more consistent study routine. It focuses on a practical question: How might a simple four-week study plan help a student manage coursework and feel better prepared for assessments?

Case Background

Maya is a fictional first-year college student taking four courses. At the beginning of the semester, she usually studies for several hours on the evening before a quiz. She often switches between her textbook, messaging apps, and social media. She says that she understands material during lectures but struggles to recall key ideas later.

Maya has no fixed weekly study schedule. She sometimes misses smaller assignments because she starts them close to their deadlines. She would like to improve her preparation without adding many extra hours to her week. This case uses an invented name and scenario for educational demonstration; it does not describe a real student.

Methodology and Analysis

The example uses a simple descriptive case-study approach. The information sources are: (a) a short, fictional interview with Maya; (b) a one-week study log listing study times and tasks; and (c) a review of assignment completion and quiz preparation during a four-week trial. No real participant was recruited, and no actual personal or academic records were collected.

The study plan has three parts. First, Maya schedules four 30-minute study sessions across the week for each course, adjusting the total workload to her timetable. Second, she ends each session by closing her notes and writing or answering questions from memory. This is a form of retrieval practice, which can strengthen later recall (Roediger & Karpicke, 2006). Third, she revisits key material in later sessions rather than leaving all revision until the night before a quiz. Spacing learning over time is supported by research on effective study techniques (Dunlosky et al., 2013).

To reduce distractions, Maya places her phone out of reach during each session and records the task she intends to complete before starting. At the end of each week, she reviews the study log and identifies what worked and what needs to change.

Findings or Results

In this fictional example, Maya completes more of her planned study sessions by the end of the four-week period. She reports that short self-tests help her notice which topics she has not understood. She also begins assignments earlier because she has set aside regular time for coursework.

The example's study log shows a gradual shift from irregular, last-minute sessions to shorter sessions spread across the week. Maya says she feels less rushed before quizzes. These outcomes are illustrative only: no actual measurements, grades, or participant data were collected.

Discussion and Recommendations

The case illustrates how a manageable routine can make studying more predictable. Spaced sessions give the student repeated opportunities to revisit material, while retrieval practice encourages active recall instead of passive review. These strategies are consistent with research identifying practice testing and distributed practice as useful learning techniques (Dunlosky et al., 2013; Roediger & Karpicke, 2006).

For students facing similar challenges, the following steps may be useful:

- Create a weekly timetable with realistic study blocks.
- Break large assignments into smaller tasks with separate deadlines.
- Use practice questions or write key points from memory after studying.
- Revisit course material over several days instead of relying only on one long session.
- Review the plan each week and adjust it when the workload changes.

The case has important limitations. It is fictional, involves only one invented student, and does not provide evidence that the plan will produce the same results for others. A real study would need clearly defined measures, informed consent where applicable, and a larger or more varied sample before drawing broader conclusions.

Conclusion

This illustrative case study shows how a college student might use scheduled study sessions, retrieval practice, and spaced review to build a more consistent routine. The main lesson is to make study plans specific, manageable, and open to revision. The example is intended to demonstrate a possible case-study structure, not to report real research or guarantee academic improvement.

References

Dunlosky, J., Rawson, K. A., Marsh, E. J., Nathan, M. J., & Willingham, D. T. (2013). Improving students' learning with effective learning techniques: Promising directions from cognitive and educational psychology. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 14*(1), 4–58. https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100612453266

Roediger, H. L., III, & Karpicke, J. D. (2006). Test-enhanced learning: Taking memory tests improves long-term retention. *Psychological Science, 17*(3), 249–255. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2006.01693.x

Formatting note

This sample demonstrates a student-paper layout with a title page, page numbers, double spacing, one-inch margins, and a reference list with hanging indents. APA 7 does not require every case study to use these exact nine content sections. Follow your instructor's directions and the requirements of your subject or institution. The abstract is included here because it was requested for this sample; student papers do not always require one.