



STUDY TIPS FROM DENTAL HYGIENE STUDENTS

How to learn the material and manage your time

The following study tips, techniques, and ideas were compiled in consultation with ODHA's student ambassadors to help their fellow dental hygiene students succeed in their programs. ODHA is with you every step of the way, from school to practice.

Time Management

- Once you get your course outlines, **put all the dates for exams/assignments into your calendar** and review where you have multiple assignments/exams on the same week.
- Look at how the **assignments/exams are weighted**. If one assignment or exam is worth a lot more than others (e.g., 35% of your overall grade) then plan to spend roughly three times the amount of time on it when compared to an assignment that is only worth 10% of your overall grade.
- Use your calendar to **block out your week**. Include any upcoming tests and assignment due dates, as well as times for attending classes, working on assignments, and other school-related activities. Be sure to also block out times to relax and decompress.
- It can be helpful to **make a spreadsheet** of assignments for all your classes, as well as their status (due dates, not started, in progress, completed).
- **Colour code your schedule** to easily read your week/month of activities at a glance.
- **Use rewards** to motivate yourself. For example, reward yourself with a movie or show after reading and making notes on several chapters in your textbook.
- Over-estimating how long it will take will **provide a buffer** in your schedule should something else in your life come up.
- Having a **work plan** for the term will help calm you down when the amount of assignments/exams seems overwhelming.
- Don't feel guilty for taking your **free time!** Allowing yourself to rest and recharge will help you learn and retain information more effectively. Work this relaxation time into your schedule and observe it like you would any other block of time in your calendar.

During Lectures

- Make sure to **attend class regularly**. Hearing your instructor explain, walk through, or demonstrate concepts will help you to process and understand the information.
- Plan to **read the course material** prior to the lecture so the instructor what the instructor says is reinforcing what you have already read. Reading ahead of the class also allows you to ask questions about the written materials you need clarification for. Being able to ask detailed questions about the material also demonstrates to the instructor you are a serious student by coming to class prepared.
- **Print out the instructors' PowerPoint slides** and make notes or highlight important parts as you go.
- Flag words or concepts you do not understand and be sure to devote time to reviewing them. If you still need help, reach out to your instructor to get help with your questions. Do it early. **Since most material builds on previous weeks, it is important to understand the important concepts as you go along.**
- **Hand writing notes** during lectures (as opposed to typing) has been [shown](#) to boost learning and retention of new information.
- After you have read the material and attended the lecture, **write 3-4 of the most important points in bullets** on a large post-it note. Being able to summarize the key points forces you to understand them and will help you prepare your study notes for exams.

Tools & Techniques for Studying

- Use programs like Kahoot! to **create quizzes** to test your knowledge.
- Create **flashcards or study guides** from your notes or course materials using Quizlet or similar applications.
- Rephrasing a concept in your own words can help to identify any gaps in your knowledge and ensure you understand the concept rather than simply repeating the phrasing used in your text.
- Create and keep a list of definitions for words and terms you are learning.
- [Mind mapping](#) is a useful technique for note-taking. It starts with a central topic, from which you branch out with related concepts and thoughts. This method encourages you to focus on important points using your own wording and to identify relationships among ideas. As a result, you can organize information visually in a way that enhances comprehension and memory retention.
- For those who are visual learners, search YouTube for clinical videos. Just be sure the videos are posted by a reputable source – a dental hygiene professional or institution.
- Find and collect the graphics used in textbooks, lectures, and digital course content, or create your own. These can be studied and/or used to augment your own notes.

Peer Support & Group Studying


- Find out if your school offers formal support through meetings or study sessions with peer leaders. Some schools encourage students in their final year of study to volunteer to tutor new dental hygiene students.
- Form a study group: divide the content you need to study into sections and have each member of the study group teach a section to the rest of the group. Preparing to teach a section helps that student form a more in-depth understanding of the material, and having course material taught by another student can feel more engaging than studying from a textbook.
- Create a shared Google document for your peer study group to work on – use it to add questions, answers, and resources.
- Feeling accountable to others on a team can help motivate you to meet deadlines and achieve your goals, but not everyone learns or studies best in a large study group. Consider partnering with one or two other student “study buddies” and have regular meetings or check-ins to encourage each other to meet study goals.

Support at School

- Don’t forget to approach your instructors if you are struggling to understand a concept. They often have set office hours to discuss course material with students. Taking this opportunity to talk about course content one-on-one with your instructor allows you to ask exactly the questions you need addressed.
- Determine whether your school offers a student resource centre for additional support.

Other Helpful Resources

- The College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario (CDHO)’s [Knowledge Network](#) helps you find the clinical information you need to make point-of-care decisions quickly and accurately. The Knowledge Network contains advisories and fact sheets about medical conditions that need to be considered before initiating client care, including whether a medical consultation is advised, or if treatment should be postponed.
- The Federation of Dental Hygiene Regulators of Canada (FDHRC) has produced an [English/French lexicon](#), which provides a list of most terms used within the National Dental Hygiene Certification Examination.

 **Remember: You are not alone. Use your resources, lean on your community, and don’t be afraid to ask for help.**