



brain drain

Experts say all-nighters poor study habit for college students

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While draining the coffee pot, downing energy drinks and studying all night before a big test is not uncommon, it may not yield the best results, an academic consultant says.

Whether students want to believe it or not, cramming the night before the test will not help them learn the material any better, if at all, said Sarah Baird, assistant director and senior learning strategies consultant at LSU.

"Students should think of studying for a test like runners think about a marathon. Our brains have to be exercised, too," she said.

When it comes to studying, how much effort a student puts into his or her work can really make a difference, and the key is to know how to study and how much time to put into it, Baird said.

Victoria Wagley is like many

students in that she will wait until the day before a test to start studying and will usually stay up all night.

"If I have two tests in one week I will study for whichever one comes first, putting more time into the harder class and slacking on the easier one," said Wagley, an LSU nursing sophomore.

LSU Nursing sophomore Abby Meche said she starts to study the week of the test and if she has two tests in one week she will study for both by concentrating on one subject for a few hours, then concentrating on the other.

Baird said students should study new material every week

and review it on the weekends.

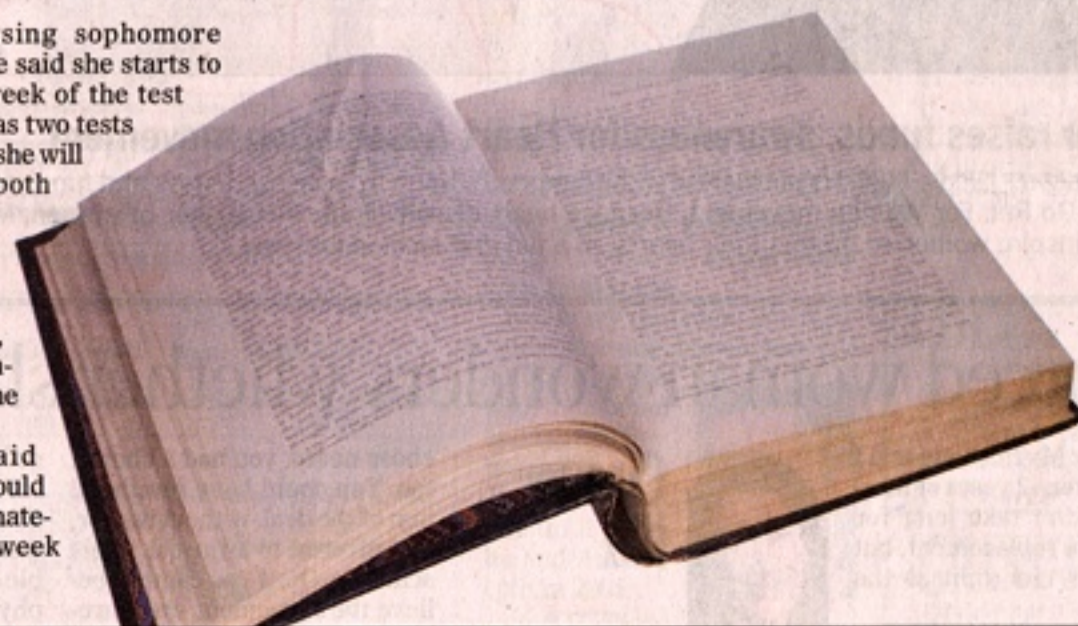
"Each week the material will build and students have a better way of being prepared for it if they learn it the first time," she said.

The Center for Academic Success Web site offers workshops to help students study.

One helpful graph, called "Bloom's Taxonomy," shows a pyramid of learning levels.

The pyramid starts at the bottom with knowledge, which is defined as when students memorize the information word for word without neces-

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sarily understanding the material.

It then goes to comprehension (restating in your own words), then to application (using the information to solve problems).

Next is analysis, which is identifying the components and determining arrangement, then logic and semantics.

Baird, relating to the pyramid, said students who study the night before the test go from knowledge and only reach analysis. When this happens, students miss the last two crucial steps in the learning levels.

In synthesis the students combine information to form a unique product. It requires creativity and originality. Evaluation is that last step, and it involves making decisions and supporting views.

This last step requires understanding the value and judging the validity of ideas or quality of work based on a set of criteria and profound understanding of the discipline.

Dustin Reed, a biological science senior, is another student who said he does not leave enough time to study. He said he studies two days before a biology test and only one day before other tests.

"Two days will give me a C for sure, sometimes better," Reed

said. Reed also said that he will usually stay up until midnight studying for a test and skips his classes the days before the test.

Michelle Landreneau, a kinesiology sophomore, usually waits to study two and a half days before her test and will stay up the night before to memorize anything she may have missed.

Some students believe that drinking coffee or energy drinks will keep them awake and help them remember everything, but that is not true, Baird said.

"In fact, studies show that we organize material during REM sleep — and most of us need five to seven hours in order to get into this deep kind of sleep. Sleep is far more important than cramming and staying up all night," she said.

The best way to be fully prepared for a test is to get a good night's sleep that will leave you feeling refreshed in the morning, rather than hyped up on caffeine or Adderall, which begins to wear off by the time of the test, Baird said.

Also, prepare for a test by following Bloom's Taxonomy, or for more studying strategies or quizzes on the ability to study, go to the Center for Academic Success' Web site.

▶ ON THE INTERNET:
LSU's Center for Academic Success:
<http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/cas.nsf/index>