Ten Pitfalls to Avoid in Your Learning

1. **Not getting enough sleep.** Sleep makes your brain-links stronger. It washes away toxins in your brain. If you don’t get a good night’s sleep before a test, nothing else you have done will matter.

2. **Passive reading and rereading.** You need to practice active recall, not just let your eyes pass over the same material.

3. **Highlighting or underlining.** Don’t be fooled! Just highlighting or underlining big chunks of text doesn’t put anything in your head. Make brief notes about the key concepts you are reading. Do this in the margin or on a piece of paper. These notes help you create a set of brain-links of the key concepts.

4. **Glancing at the solution to a problem** and thinking you understand it. You need to solve the problem yourself.

5. **Cramming.** Last-minute learning doesn’t build solid sets of brain-links.

6. **Lazy learning.** Don’t just practice easy material. That’s like learning to play basketball by focusing on your dribbling. Use deliberate practice—focus on what you find most difficult.

7. **Ignoring your book.** If you are using a textbook in your studies, remember to take a picture walk through your book or course notes before you get going. And be sure to read about how to do problems before trying to solve problems!

8. **Not clearing up points of confusion.** Are there just a few points you don’t get? Chances are, these are precisely the points that will be asked about on the test. Be sure to get help from your teacher or your friends.

9. **Distractions.** Choose somewhere you can focus when you study. It’s often a good idea to leave your smartphone turned off and out of reach.

10. **Chatting with friends instead of studying with them.** Good study groups can be a great way to help you learn. But “study groups” that mostly gossip instead of study aren’t much use.