



Smart Study Snacks

When you're busy studying for exams, it can be hard to make good nutrition a priority. Many students rely on energy and coffee drinks, vending machine snacks, or fast food just to save time. However, these items do not provide the fuel your body needs to focus on your exams. Try adding these smart snacking strategies to your study plan to keep you energized and (most importantly) help you ace your tests!

Eat at regular intervals

Waiting long periods of time between meals can make you feel fatigued and foggy. Include small snacks between meals so that you are eating every 3-4 hours to keep your blood sugar levels up, keeping your mind alert.

Practice portion control

It is easy to mindlessly snack while studying and end up finishing an entire box of cookies. Choose items that are already packaged in individual servings. If you are buying in bulk, measure out one serving in a separate container or plastic bag to prevent overeating.

Don't fear the carbs

Carbohydrates are the primary energy source for the brain, so it is important to include them in your snacks. However, not all carbohydrates are equally nutritious. Choose complex carbohydrates (100% whole grains, whole wheat, fruits, or vegetables) for your snacks instead of processed carbohydrates (chips, cookies, candy, sugar-sweetened beverages, and white bread).

Include protein and healthy fats

Carbohydrates give you energy, but pair a complex carbohydrate with a lean protein and/or healthy fat for snacks that will keep you satisfied until your next meal. This provides balanced nutrition, stabilizes blood sugar levels, and leads to better energy and concentration.

Keep food safety in mind

Foodborne illnesses can sideline your study schedule, jeopardizing your GPA. If you are taking snacks "to-go", choose non-perishable foods or keep perishable foods cold with an ice pack in a clean, insulated container.

Stay Hydrated

Nothing tanks concentration quicker than dehydration. Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day. Use non-sugary options most of the time like water, tea, and flavored waters.

Plan ahead

Take a quick study break on the weekend to plan your snacks for the week. Think about your schedule and stock up on healthy options at the grocery store. Use the list on the back of this handout for some ideas!

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Combine complex carbohydrates with good sources of protein for snacks that provide longer lasting energy

Carbohydrates:

- Fruit (all - fresh/canned/frozen)
- Dried fruit
- Baby carrots
- Celery sticks
- Bell pepper, cucumber slices
- All vegetables, really
- Oatmeal
- Whole-grain bread/cereal/crackers
- Bars with grains/nuts/dried fruit
- Pretzels
- Popcorn

Protein and Healthy Fats:

- Low-fat milk (regular/soy)
- Low-fat yogurt (Greek/Regular)
- Cheese (string, Baby Bell, Laughing Cow)
- Cottage cheese
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Peanut butter and other nut butters
- Nuts
- Hummus
- Edamame (soy beans)
- Deli meat (turkey, chicken, ham, roast beef)
- Avocado

Combination Snack Ideas (Carbohydrates + Protein/Healthy Fats):

- Apple with 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- Celery and dip made from 1 tablespoon peanut butter and 2 tablespoons raisins
- Whole-wheat English muffin topped with 1 ounce melted low-fat cheese
- Whole-grain waffle topped with 1 tablespoon peanut butter & drizzled honey
- ½ cup sugar snap peas and 2 tablespoons hummus
- ½ cup greek or low-fat yogurt and ½ cup berries
- Hard boiled egg and 1 slice whole-wheat toast with 1 teaspoon margarine
- Fruit smoothie made with ½ banana, ½ cup berries, ½ cup low-fat milk or yogurt, and ice
- Small baked potato topped with salsa and ¼ cup low-fat shredded cheese
- ¼ of an avocado rolled in 3 slices deli chicken or turkey
- 2 cups air-popped popcorn and string cheese
- ½ cup low-fat cottage cheese and ½ cup peaches
- Low-fat pudding cup topped with 2 tablespoons chopped nuts

Vending Machine Smart Snacks:

If a vending machine is the only option for a quick snack, choose one of these items that provide nutrition (not just calories!):

- Small bag of pretzels
- Small bag of nuts or trail mix
- Fat-free or reduced fat popcorn
- Whole-wheat crackers with peanut butter
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice
- Energy/protein bar made with whole-grains, dried fruits, and/or nuts
- Dried fruit such as raisins, cranberries, or apricots
- Microwaveable soup or oatmeal

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