

Top tips from Nicola Morgan,  
author of *Know Your Brain & Blame My Brain*

SNACK WELL

Choose something from BOTH columns:

any fresh fruit	nuts
seeded bread	hummus
dried fruit	cheese
oatcakes	yogurt
raw carrot/pepper	cream cheese dip
fruit smoothie	fish or bean paté

+ a drink (NOT fizzy or high-sugar or alcohol)

SLEEP WELL

Sleep makes a big difference to learning and health. But when you are stressed, it can be hard to sleep (which is stressful itself). Don't worry too much if you can't sleep occasionally, such as before an exam - adrenalin will carry you through - but realise there *are* things you can do to sleep better.

For the hour before you plan to go to sleep:

NO	YES
Coffee, tea, sugar	A milky drink + small sandwich/fruit
Bright lights	Gentle exercise, eg walk / stretches
Loud, fast music (including TV)	Feel proud after a good day's work
Computer games / screen-time	Have same routine each night
Stress / arguments	Make list of tasks for tomorrow
Strenuous exercise	Close curtains; turn off bright lights
Excitement (eg scary film)	Get undressed for bed half an hour before
	Lavender - eg on pillow, in bath
	Bath or shower
	Relaxing music
	Read in bed, when everything else is done

BEFORE YOU STUDY

Have a snack + drink

Control your learning space - temperature, music, light, furniture, tidiness etc - make it feel right for YOU

Get the notes + equipment you need

Set targets - how long will you work? What task will you finish?

Switch off phone, email, social network sites (+ computer if not using)

Tell everyone you must not be disturbed

Use ear-plugs if you need to block out noise

Have a physical break after max 40 mins - fresh air + small reward

KNOW YOUR LEARNING STYLES

Different brains seem to have differences in how they like to learn.

To analyse your styles:

- Search "learning styles" on the internet
- Do the tests and activities in Know Your Brain (includes more detailed tests than any I have found on the internet)
- Simply work it out for yourself by becoming self-aware

Then, see how you can adapt the environment in which you study, so that your personal learning styles are best catered for. But learning styles are not fixed - you can change them if you want or need to.

HOW DO YOU RELAX?

Bath? Sport? Phone a friend? Close your eyes? Yoga stretches? Walk? Run? Music? Cook? Day-dream? Deep breathing? Whatever you do, do something relaxing at *least* twice a day - it's essential for brain health and happiness. It really will affect your ability to learn and remember, as well as health and happiness.

NOTE: whatever stresses you now will probably mean nothing in a few months!

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## DO YOU CARE FOR YOUR BRAIN? TAKE Nicola Morgan's "FLOURISH TEST"

**F**ood **L**iquid **O**xygen **U**se **R**elaxation **I**nterest **S**leep **H**appiness  
How many times have you done these things in the last 24 hours? Write a number in the space.

1. Read from a *novel*/for at least half an hour .....
2. Read something out loud (at least 10 lines of print) .....
3. Done some maths .....
4. Been creative - with words, music, ideas or art .....
5. Played, taken part in or listened to music/song .....
6. Exercised so that you are out of breath .....
7. Tried to learn or practise something new or difficult .....
8. Done something *on purpose to help you relax* .....
9. Taken part in a hobby - not connected to work .....
10. Done a favour for someone else .....
11. Done something on purpose to make you feel happy .....
12. Had 8 hours sleep .....
13. Had a glass of water or fresh juice (not fizzy) .....
14. Decided to eat something because it was a healthy choice .....

YOUR FLOURISH SCORE: .....

The best way to care for your brain is to learn about how it works.  
"Know Your Brain" is a great start. It contains quizzes and assessments,  
as well as lots of fascinating information about brains.

### HOW DID YOU DO?

- 18-20 Brilliant - you are looking after your brain really well.  
15-17 Well done - you have a pretty healthy brain life-style.  
12-14 You are doing lots of good things for your brain - but there are some ways you could make it even better.  
9-11 Not bad, but could be better. Can you see areas to improve?  
5-8 Oh dear - take control! You'll be amazed how lots of things about your life will improve once you respect your brain. And it's not difficult either.  
0-5 This is not funny! You only have one brain, and there's only one person who can look after it ....

Try to score at least 15 every day. Preferably 20.  
BUT, don't just drink lots of glasses of water to get your score up...

**Your target:** on each of numbers 1-12 try to score one point every day.  
On numbers 13 and 14, you should score at least three each day.

If you scored 10 or fewer, you are not caring for your brain. This doesn't matter if it only happens occasionally, but in the long term you are not giving yourself the best chance of happiness, health and success. And what you do (or don't) do now does have an effect on your future.

For more details about your brain and how to care for it, see "Know Your Brain" or to discover why being a teenager is often so stressful, see "Blame My Brain" - both by Nicola Morgan

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