**Tooling and Studying: Effective Breaks**

Even as an MIT student, you can't study all the time. In fact, we learn better by switching gears frequently. Here are some tips for breaking up your study time effectively.

1. **Approach the same material in several different ways.** This increases learning by using different brain pathways.
   1. Read a textbook section, aloud if possible,
   2. then review your lecture notes on the same concept.
   3. Write a one-sentence summary of a chapter or a set of questions to test your understanding. Then move on to the next textbook section.
2. **Study in blocks of time.** Generally, studying in one-hour blocks is most effective (50 minutes of study with a ten-minute break). Shorter periods can be fine for studying notes and memorizing materials, but longer periods are needed for problem-solving tasks, psets, and writing papers.
3. **Break down large projects** (papers, psets, research) into smaller tasks. The Assignment Timeline can help with this. Check off each task on your to-do list as you finish it, then take a well-earned break.
4. **Plan regular breaks.** When building a schedule for the term, strategically add several regular breaks between classes and in the evenings. **Take 20-30 minutes**; never work through these scheduled breaks. Our minds need an occasional rest in order to stay alert and productive, and you can look forward to a reward as you study. If your living group has a 10 pm study break, or you have a circle of friends that likes to go out for ice cream together at 7 on Wednesdays, put that on your schedule. These small, brief gatherings will become more welcome as the term intensifies.
5. **Get up and move.** Research shows that sitting for more than three hours a day can shorten your life by up to two years. At least every hour, stand up, stretch, do some yoga or jumping jacks, or take a walk, and breathe deeply.
6. **Schedule meals** to relax and unwind with friends; don't just inhale food while tooling.
7. **Turn off your phone** while studying and on when you take a break. You may think you are multitasking when you text someone while reading or doing problems, but often the reverse is true. An assignment done while texting or following tweets will likely take two or three times longer and not turn out as well.
8. If you tend to lose track of time while using your phone or computer, **schedule fixed times** for Facebook and other fun things, and set an alarm to remind you of the end of that period.