

Studying for an ASIS certification (like the **CPP**, **PSP**, or **PCI**) requires a disciplined and strategic approach to ensure you're fully prepared for the exam. Good study practices and habits not only help you understand the material but also improve your retention and performance. Here are some tried-and-true practices and habits to make your study process more effective:

1. Create a Structured Study Plan

- **Set Clear Goals:** Break down your study plan into weekly and daily goals. This ensures you stay on track and focused on covering all the necessary material.
- **Prioritize the Domains:** Given that different domains carry different weights, focus more on higher-weighted topics but don't neglect the lower-weighted ones.
- **Time Management:** Stick to your plan and allocate dedicated time for study each day or week. Aim for consistency over cramming.

2. Develop a Study Routine

- **Set a Consistent Time:** Study at the same time each day to build a routine. Consistency helps with retention and discipline.
- **Study in Blocks:** Break study sessions into manageable chunks (e.g., 60-90 minutes with breaks in between). The Pomodoro technique (25-30 minutes of focused study, followed by 5-minute breaks) can be helpful.
- **Minimize Distractions:** Find a quiet place to study and turn off or silence devices that could interrupt your focus.

3. Use a Variety of Study Materials

- **Official Study Guides:** Make sure to use the **official ASIS study materials** (e.g., the CPP, PSP, or PCI study guides). These materials are structured in a way that directly aligns with the exam content.

- **Supplement with Additional Books:** Sometimes, other resources like books on specific security topics or industry standards can provide a different perspective.
- **Online Courses:** Consider enrolling in an online prep course if you prefer structured learning, or if you need additional support in particular areas.
- **Practice Exams:** Take practice exams regularly to familiarize yourself with the exam format and identify areas where you need improvement.
- **Flashcards:** Use flashcards to memorize key terms, definitions, and concepts.

4. Understand the Exam Format

- **Know the Question Types:** The ASIS exams often include multiple-choice and scenario-based questions. Practice answering these types of questions, as they test both recall and critical thinking.
- **Time Yourself:** Simulate exam conditions by taking practice tests under timed conditions. This helps you manage your time effectively during the actual exam.

5. Engage in Active Learning

- **Summarize and Teach:** After each study session, write a summary of what you learned or try to explain it to someone else. Teaching is a great way to reinforce your understanding.
- **Practice Problem-Solving:** Work through case studies, scenarios, or sample questions that require you to apply your knowledge. This helps develop your critical thinking skills and enhances retention.
- **Link Concepts Together:** Try to relate new information to what you already know. Building connections between concepts helps with long-term memory.

6. Stay Organized

- **Take Organized Notes:** Keep neat, concise notes that highlight key points. Organize them by domain and sub-topic, and don't hesitate to update your notes as you learn more.
- **Track Progress:** Regularly check off completed study tasks and review what you've covered. This helps you stay motivated and see your progress.
- **Create a Study Calendar:** A calendar will help you allocate time for different domains based on their importance, as well as review time closer to the exam.

7. Stay Consistent and Discipline Yourself

- **Avoid Procrastination:** Start early, and don't put off studying. Consistent daily study is much more effective than cramming.
- **Track and Adjust:** At the end of each week, evaluate your progress. Are you on track? Do you need to spend more time on certain areas? Adjust your plan as needed.
- **Rest and Recharge:** Ensure you're not burning out by getting enough sleep, eating well, and taking breaks. A well-rested mind absorbs and retains information much better.

8. Join Study Groups or Online Communities

- **Join ASIS Connect Online Forums or Communities:** ASIS study forums can provide support, motivation, and resources. Engaging with others lets you share insights and clarify doubts.
- **Participate in Webinars or Local Study Groups:** Check if there are any local ASIS chapters or online study groups where you can meet others studying for the same exam. Collaborative learning can be beneficial for discussing complex concepts.

9. Focus on Understanding, Not Memorization

- **Concept Mastery:** Don't just memorize facts or terms. Understand the reasoning behind the concepts. This deeper understanding is critical, especially for applying knowledge to scenarios or case studies in the exam.
- **Relate to Real-Life Experiences:** If you work in the security field, try to connect what you study with real-world experiences. This will help reinforce your learning and give you practical insight into security practices.

10. Take Care of Your Mental and Physical Health

- **Mindfulness and Stress Management:** Studying for certifications can be stressful, so it's important to incorporate stress-relief practices like deep breathing or meditation to stay calm and focused.
- **Physical Activity:** Regular physical exercise can help improve concentration and boost your energy levels.
- **Healthy Sleep Habits:** Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep per night to keep your brain functioning optimally.

Bonus Tip: Plan for the Day Before the Exam

- **Don't Cram:** The day before the exam should be for light review only. Trying to cram new material the day before can overwhelm you. Instead, go over your notes or take a few practice questions.
- **Get a Good Night's Sleep:** Rest is crucial to ensure you're sharp and focused for the exam.
- **Prepare Your Exam Essentials:** Know the location of the exam, have your ID ready, and pack any necessary materials.

APPENDIX: EFFECTIVE READING TECHNIQUES

1. Active Reading

- **What it is:** Active reading is an engaged approach where students don't just passively read the material but interact with it to ensure better comprehension and retention.
 - **How to do it:**
 - **Ask Questions:** Before you start reading, ask yourself questions about what you expect to learn. For example, "What is the main idea of this chapter?" or "What is the author trying to prove?"
 - **Highlight Key Points:** Underline or highlight the most important points as you read, but don't highlight everything. Focus on concepts, definitions, and key examples.
 - **Take Notes:** Write down brief notes or summaries in the margins. These will help solidify the material and give you a quick review guide.
 - **Summarize Sections:** After reading each section or chapter, pause and summarize it in your own words. This reinforces what you've learned and helps identify gaps in understanding.
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2. SQ3R Method (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review)

- **What it is:** The SQ3R method is a popular technique for understanding and retaining information from textbooks or longer reading materials.
- **Steps:**
 - **Survey:** Skim through the chapter to get an overview. Look at the headings, subheadings, images, and any summaries or questions at the end of the section.
 - **Question:** Turn the headings into questions. For example, if a heading is "The Causes of World War I," turn it into "What were the causes of World War I?"
 - **Read:** Now, read the material carefully, looking for answers to the questions you created.
 - **Recite:** After reading a section, close the book and try to recite the main points aloud. This helps reinforce the material.
 - **Review:** Go over your notes and highlighted sections after reading the entire chapter. Test yourself on the key concepts to ensure you've retained the information.

3. Speed Reading

- **What it is:** Speed reading is a technique designed to increase reading speed without sacrificing comprehension.
 - **How to do it:**
 - **Preview First:** Quickly skim the text to get a sense of the content and structure. This prepares you for what to expect.
 - **Focus on Phrases, Not Words:** Rather than reading word by word, train your eyes to read in phrases or chunks. This reduces the number of eye movements and increases speed.
 - **Minimize Subvocalization:** Subvocalization is the habit of mentally "saying" every word as you read. Try to minimize this, as it can slow you down. Instead, focus on visualizing the information.
 - **Practice:** Regularly practicing speed reading can help improve your pace without losing understanding. Use tools like apps or timers to challenge yourself.
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4. Skimming and Scanning

- **What it is:** These are two different techniques for quickly locating important information.
 - **Skimming:**
 - **What it is:** Skimming involves quickly glancing through the text to get the main ideas, rather than reading every word.
 - **How to do it:** Read the first and last sentences of each paragraph, as they often contain the main idea. Look at bolded or italicized words, headings, and any summaries to get a sense of the overall content.
 - **Scanning:**
 - **What it is:** Scanning is used when you're searching for specific details or facts (e.g., dates, names, definitions).
 - **How to do it:** Move your eyes quickly down the page looking for the key words or numbers you're interested in. This technique is great when you need specific information, not an overall understanding.
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5. Mind Mapping

- **What it is:** Mind mapping is a visual tool for organizing and connecting ideas from a reading. It can help students better understand relationships between concepts and break down complex material.
 - **How to do it:**
 - Start by writing the main concept or theme in the center of a page.
 - Branch out with related ideas or subtopics, drawing lines between them to show connections.
 - As you read, add new information to the map. You can use colors or images to make the map more visually appealing and easier to understand.
 - Review the map periodically to refresh your memory of key points and their connections.
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6. Chunking

- **What it is:** Chunking is a technique where you break down large amounts of information into smaller, manageable pieces (chunks).
 - **How to do it:**
 - Instead of trying to absorb a large chapter at once, break the reading into sections or chunks of related information.
 - Focus on understanding one chunk fully before moving to the next.
 - After completing each chunk, review the main points to ensure they're understood before proceeding.
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7. Feynman Technique

- **What it is:** This technique is named after physicist Richard Feynman and involves explaining complex concepts in simple terms.
- **How to do it:**
 - After reading a section, try to explain the material to yourself (or someone else) as if you were teaching it to someone who has no prior knowledge of the topic.
 - Use simple language and avoid jargon. This forces you to focus on the fundamental ideas and ensure you've truly understood the material.

- If you can't explain it simply, revisit the material and clarify your understanding before moving forward.
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8. The Pomodoro Technique for Reading

- **What it is:** The Pomodoro Technique is a time management method that can help maintain focus during reading sessions by alternating between focused study time and short breaks.
 - **How to do it:**
 - Set a timer for 25 minutes (a "Pomodoro").
 - Read as much as you can during this focused time.
 - After 25 minutes, take a 5-minute break to stretch, relax, or grab a snack.
 - After four Pomodoros, take a longer break (15-30 minutes).
 - This technique helps improve concentration and prevents burnout during long reading sessions.
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9. Highlighting & Annotating

- **What it is:** Highlighting and annotating help emphasize important information and create an interactive reading experience.
 - **How to do it:**
 - **Highlight Sparingly:** Highlight only the key points, terms, or passages that are directly related to the main ideas.
 - **Annotate:** Write brief comments, thoughts, or questions in the margins. This helps deepen your understanding of the material and makes it easier to review later.
 - **Use Different Colors:** Different colors for different themes or ideas can help organize your annotations visually, making it easier to locate key information when reviewing.
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10. Reading Aloud

- **What it is:** Reading aloud can help reinforce learning, especially for auditory learners or when studying complex material.
- **How to do it:** Read the material out loud as you go. This engages both your auditory and visual senses, reinforcing comprehension.

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- **When to use it:** This technique works best for understanding dense material or memorizing lists, definitions, or steps in a process.

Combine these techniques depending on the type of material they're reading and their specific learning style.