

This is taken from an e-mail message I received from another math faculty member.

Subject: "I study six hours every week and I'm still failing. What can I do?"

Message:

"Try studying seven hours a week, and if that doesn't work try eight, and if that doesn't work try nine, and..."

Almost every text book, in its introduction, gives advice on where to study, when to study, how to study and, I think worst of all, how much TIME to spend on studying.

I think this can be very misleading to most students because it might give them a false upper limit on the amount of time they need to spend on a particular course.

In graduate school I spent uncountable weekends trying to grasp the intricacies of real analysis while my fellow graduate student Gordon (he spent his weekends consuming large quantities of beer) had professors seek him out when they needed some help with a problem. People's heads are screwed on differently. Some are luckier (maybe good genes) than others are.

Learning doesn't have to depend on luck. The willingness to spend as much time as necessary to master a course is what is needed most. I suggest something like the following:

"Significant time outside of class will be necessary to successfully master the material presented."

With thanks to Richard Linder

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