

Learning Tip:

Why Sleep Matters for Our Brains

Dr. Gary Au
au@math.usask.ca

University of Saskatchewan

Importance of Sleep

Three ways sleep supports learning:

- ▶ **Memory Consolidation:** Our brains organize and integrate new information acquired during the day, affecting both declarative memory (facts and events) and procedural memory (skills).
- ▶ **Recovery & Waste Clearance:** Sleep supports brain recovery and helps clear metabolic waste products that build up during wakefulness.
- ▶ **Emotional Regulation:** Sleep improves mood stability and stress resilience, which supports focus and learning.

Importance of Sleep

Some tips for a good night's sleep:

- ▶ Aim for a consistent sleep schedule of about 7–9 hours each night.
- ▶ Engage in regular exercise during the day, but avoid vigorous workouts close to bedtime.
- ▶ Avoid caffeine and nicotine late in the day, and avoid alcohol close to bedtime.
- ▶ Dim lights and avoid bright screens for 30–60 minutes before bedtime.
- ▶ Create a sleep-friendly environment: keep your room dark, quiet, and cool.
- ▶ Relax before bed, such as reading a book or taking a warm bath.
- ▶ Don't lie in bed awake. If you can't get to sleep in 20 minutes, get out of bed for a calming activity (e.g., reading, soothing music) until you feel sleepy.