Organic Chemistry: It Doesn’t Have to Be THAT Bad!

The three elements to success in Orgo:

* Understanding
* Memory
* Reasoning Skills

Focus on understanding key concepts that define the reactions and formulas you ought to memorize. If you know the principles behind the reactions, then remembering the specific reaction will not be as critical.

Memory depends on understanding first, then converting the ideas in your short-term memory into stored, long-term memory.

In order to do this effectively:

1) Read the text for lecture the night before: it’s not that long (10-15pp) and will benefit your understanding during lecture.
2) Take comprehensive notes in class (it also helps if you go to class!)
3) Review those notes within 24 hours. This reaffirms what you learned.

Reasoning Skills develop by doing problems frequently.

Extra Tips:

1) Don’t pull all-nighters for exams!

2) Consistently keep up with the work: review your notes, do problems, read the book, attend lecture. Don’t fall behind because rushing and cramming is useless.

3) Study your notes and the text, but pay particular attention to what the professor has lectured on; if he presented a concept that was not in the text, learn it! When in doubt, do things the professor’s way, and not according to the book.

4) Do problems in the book without using the answer key/study guide until you’ve finished. Keep trying to answer a difficult problem and don’t look at the answer until you’ve completed it: this will store the problem in your memory longer and be more helpful in test taking.