



Study Strategies for Learning Deeply & Remembering Longer



The Importance of Undivided Attention

Studies show that when you are multitasking, your attention is divided and not equal. Research also shows that when one is multitasking, you're more likely to become bored with the task that requires the most attention. Remember that attention must happen first in order for retention to happen later.

Making Meaningful Associations

Connecting what you're trying to learn to something you already know is a powerful memory-improvement strategy. Instead of trying to learn something by repeatedly pounding it into your brain, your first strategy should be to try hooking or hanging it onto something that is already stored in your brain, something you know is already meaningful to you. An example of this would be to looking up any terms that you feel are foreign to you, and identify its meaning in the dictionary.

Compare & Contrast

When you're studying something new, get in the habit of asking yourself these two questions:

1. Is this idea similar or comparable to something that I've already learned? (Compare)

2. How does this idea differ from what I already know? (Contrast)

Research indicates that this simple strategy is one of the most powerful ways to promote learning of academic information. Asking yourself how information is similar or different from what you already know makes learning more personally meaningful; because you are relating what you're trying to learn to what you already know.

Integration & Organization

Organize your class notes, readings, and ideas into the same category. A strategy for this would be to use index cards to separate similar ideas under the same category like a mini filing cabinet. Integrating information related to the same topic in the same place and studying it at the same time divides the total material you're learning into identifiable and manageable parts.

Divide & Conquer

Rather than cramming all your studying into one long session, use the method of distributed practice meaning spread or distribute your study time over several short sessions. Research consistently shows that short, periodic practice sessions are more effective than a single marathon session. Another advantage of breaking up your studying over time is that it is less stressful because you can anticipate short sessions which can be an incentive to start to study and help you to maintain motivation while studying.

The "Part-to-Whole Study Method"

With this particular method, you break up the material you need to learn into smaller parts and study those parts in separate sessions in advance of the exam; then you use your last study session just before the exam to review all the parts you previously studied in separate sessions. This way, your last session is not a cram or even a study session, it is merely a review. Research shows that students of all ability levels learn material in college courses more effectively when it's studied in small units and when progressions to the next unit takes place only after the previous unit has been mastered or understood.

Build Variety into the Study Process

You can increase your concentration and motivation by mixing it up with your study routine. Here are some examples:

1. Shift periodically among tasks that involve reading, writing, studying and problem-solving skills.
2. Studying in different locations provides different environmental contexts for learning, which reduces the amount of interference that normally builds up when all information is studied in the same place.
3. Take breaks during long study sessions. Breaks should include some sort of physical activity to give your mind a break and also stimulate the mind by increasing blood flow to your brain.
4. Learn visually by using visual aids that are available to you, including ones that are in your textbook and by your instructor in class. You can also create your own visual aids by drawing pictures, concept maps, flowcharts, etc.
5. Learn by collaborating with others as research indicates that college students who work regularly in small groups of 4 to 6 become more actively involved in the learning process and learn more.

Self-Monitor Your Learning

Reflect and check on yourself to see if you're actually putting in quality time and understanding what you're attempting to learn. You can monitor your comprehension of what you're learning by asking yourself these questions:

- **Can you paraphrase (restate or translate) what you're learning into your own words?**
- **Can you explain what you're learning to someone who is unfamiliar with it?**
- **Can you think of an example of what you've learned?**
- **Can you apply what you're learning to solve a new problem that you haven't previously seen?**

Tips to Remember

- If what you're learning is meaningful to you, you'll learn it more deeply and you'll remember it longer.
- Changes in pace and place while studying can stimulate your attention to what you're studying as well as your interest in and motivation for studying.
- Try to make the learning process a total body experience-hear it, see it, say and move it.