

10 Memory Principles

Making an Effort

1. **Interest**—In order to remember something thoroughly, you must be interested in it. You must have a reason to learn it. Seek ways to make it personal.
2. **Intent to Remember**—Intent has much to do with whether you remember something. A key factor to remembering is having a positive attitude that you will remember. Take notes. Practice test questions. Use a concentration checklist; every time your mind wanders, put a check on a sheet of paper. Eventually, you will program your mind to pay attention.
3. **Basic Background**—Your understanding of new material depends, to a great degree, on how much you already know about the subject. The more you increase your basic knowledge, the easier it is to build new knowledge on this background. Before reading an assignment, preview it. Try to recall what you already know—review it if you cannot recall it.

Controlling the Amount and Form

4. **Selectivity**—You must determine what is most important and select those parts to study and learn. You cannot remember everything about everything. Read the objectives. Look for verbal and non-verbal cues during lecture. Make flashcards. Devise sample tests.
5. **Meaningful Organization**—You can learn and remember better if you group ideas into meaningful categories. Search for ways to organize information into categories that are meaningful to you. Use a variety of mnemonic devices.

Strengthening

6. **Recitation**—Saying ideas aloud in your own words is one of the most powerful tools you have to transfer information from short-term to long-term memory. When you finish reading a paragraph/section of a textbook, stop and recite what you learned.
7. **Visualization**—Another powerful memory principle is making a mental picture of what needs to be remembered. By visualizing, you use an entirely different part of the brain than you do when reading or listening.
8. **Association**—Memory is increased when facts to be learned are associated with something familiar to you and making neural connections. Creating associations should allow you to remember new information more efficiently.

Allowing Time to Soak In

9. **Consolidation**—Your brain must have time for new information to soak in. Take notes and then review and condense them. Ask questions. Make flashcards. Make practice tests.
10. **Distributed Practice**—A series of shorter study sessions distributed over several days is preferable to fewer but longer study sessions. For each hour of study, take a 10-minute break. Have a scheduled time to study each subject. Make use of daylight hours and time you usually waste. Study immediately before and after class. Review. Review. Review!