

Memory Principles

Making an Effort

Interest. In order to remember something thoroughly, you must be interested in it. You must have a reason to learn it.

Intent to Remember. Your attitude has much to do with whether you remember something or not. A key factor to remembering is having a positive attitude that you will get it right the first time.

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.

Controlling the Amount and Form

Selectivity. You must determine what is most important and select those parts to study and learn.

Meaningful Organization. You can learn and remember better if you group ideas into meaningful categories or groups.

Strengthening

Recitation. Speaking ideas aloud in your own words is probably the most powerful tool you have to transfer information from short-term to long-term memory.

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 your brain than you do by reading or listening.

Association. Memory is increased when facts to be learned are associated with something familiar to you. Memory is essentially formed by making neural connections.

Allowing Time to Soak In

Consolidation. Your brain must have time for new information to soak in. When you make a list or review your notes right after class, you are using the principle of consolidation.

Distributed Practice. A series of shorter study sessions distributed over several days is preferable to fewer and longer study sessions.

From Hopper, C. H. (2004). Practicing college learning strategies (3rd ed.). Houghton Mifflin.