

TEACHING LEARNERS HOW TO LEARN

Information is useless to students without the proper tools to process and understand it.

Help students (and yourself) learn and retain any material using six proven learning strategies. Keep in mind, the strategies are interrelated and should be used in tandem.

DISTRIBUTED PRACTICE

Study in chunks instead of all at once

This requires planning ahead. Studies show that five hours of studying scheduled over two weeks is more effective than studying five hours in one session.

- » Students should make it a daily habit to review information from each course—though not immediately after.
- » After studying new information, students review older information using other learning strategies.

INTERWEAVING EFFECT

Study multiple ideas in one session instead of just one

Weaving multiple topics into one session reinforces comprehension of how concepts relate to one another. Students need to be aware of similarities and differences.

- » During each session, students should review the concepts in a different order to help identify new links.
- » They should not switch from one idea to another until the concept is fully understood.

ELABORATION METHOD

Describe concepts in a student's own words

Students ask themselves questions about each idea and use course materials to answer them. From there, they describe concepts and connections after reviewing.

- » Information is best remembered if it can be related to personal experiences.
- » The goal is to elaborate and explain each topic without using class materials.

CONCRETE EXAMPLES

Grasp abstract concept by using specific, concrete examples

Real-life examples anchor memory and retrieval. Learners who can draw from their own experiences or create their own examples will have stronger retention.

- » Using teacher-vetted examples is best—online sources may be questionable.
- » The process of teaching others reinforces learning. Encourage learners to discuss their learning material, inside and outside of class.

TESTING EFFECT

Practice retrieving information from memory

One of the best ways to assure long-term retention, including prepping for high-stakes exams, is recalling information from memory. This means putting away highlighted and underlined notes and flexing memory muscles.

- » Using digital and paper retrieval strategies, such as labeling diagrams, flashcards, or decision trees, helps solidify recall of important information.
- » If retrieval time is a concern, ramp up retrieval practice to solidify those pathways.

DUAL CODING

Use visuals and words for memory reinforcement

Visuals are a powerful tool for information recall. Enhance recall by practicing talking through systems, processes, and functions, then draw them.

- » Examples include diagrams, data charts, infographics, timelines, or cartoon strips.
- » While using the testing effect strategy, students can also draw everything they know about the material.

Based on a work at <http://www.learningscientists.org>.

Six Strategies for Effective Learning by Yana Weinstein, Megan Smith, & Oliver Caviglioli is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.