

Memorization Principles



Seven Common Memory Strategies

Effective study takes much less time if you “study smart.” To “study smart,” you need to practice recalling in a deliberate way. To study smart, think about the strategies and tactics you need to be using to master a learning challenge. Be aware of any need to change strategies and tactics that are not working well for you.

Do not just “look over” the information. The best memory technique is to **think about** what you are trying to memorize. Ask yourself questions about the information, such as:



- What has special meaning for me?
- What is missing that would be useful to know?
- What do I not understand?
- Where can I get this explained better?
- How can I apply this information to what I already know, to other parts of the course, to other courses, and to different kinds of problems?
- What new ideas does this give me?

Think about the information in different ways, in other contexts. Think about how the information relates to what you thought you **already** knew. What is new about it that you need to incorporate into your knowledge arsenal.

Five Key Learning Principles

What good is learning if you don't remember what you learn? Here are three important principles to make learning easier, faster, and more lasting.

1. Motivation

It is in **your** interest to make yourself interested in all learning assignments. Being bored doesn't punish your teacher or the author of the instructional materials. You would be **punishing yourself**. You will find that with most any subject matter, the more you motivate yourself to delve into it, the more interesting it becomes! In addition, the more motivated you are to learn, the greater the chance that you will enjoy the learning and that your grades will improve!



2. Intense Focus

With any subject matter, you learn easier, faster, and better if you become totally immersed. When immersed in your subject matter, you quickly lose yourself in the learning material. Being thus immersed allows you to shut out distractions that otherwise might disrupt the encoding of the information and cementing it into memory. Scientists have demonstrated in multiple experiments that **the archenemy of learning is multi-tasking!**

3. Create Associations



Represent facts and ideas with mental images

Rote memorization, where you rehearse something repeatedly without thinking about it, is the worst of all memorizing tactics. Rote memorization takes too long, and with this approach you may soon forget. The easiest way to memorize is to create associations between what you already know and what you are trying to learn. The best associations are mental images, because pictures are easier to remember than words.

4. Consolidation

When you learn something new, it's like wet cement. Impressions have to "set up," and that takes time. New learning is represented in the brain by patterns of nerve impulses. Those patterns have to remain in place for some time to cause the anatomical and biochemical changes necessary for long-term memory. Any distractions or disruptions during this "consolidation" stage will replace the learning-specific impulse patterns with new patterns and likely erase the memory before it has a chance to "set up."

5. Deliberate Practice.

Study sessions need to be strategic. That is, at the time you are studying, you need to think about what you need to do to make your memorization better. Here is an example to prove the point to you: If you are learning how to stand on one foot in a yoga pose, you could just do it repeatedly without thinking about what you have to do to make it work. Try it. You will see that does not work well. Now try it again, focusing on a visual spot far away and think about what muscles in your foot you have to activate to keep you balanced. These deliberate tactics will train you much faster to master this task.

Seven Common Memorization Strategies



The most basic feature of effective memory enhancing techniques (mnemonics) is the association of what you are learning (the new) with what you already know (the old). Unfortunately, this association process does not always occur automatically. That is why it helps to know and use specific tactics designed to promote the creation of these associations.

Common-Sense Thinking: Every new bit of information has meaning. Thinking about that meaning improves your understanding and may give you new ideas. In the process, you are also memorizing.

Acronym: Use the first letter of each word to create one set of letters, forming an acronym. Ex: U.S.A. for United States of America.

Subject-Object-Verb (SOV): Imagine a picture of someone or something doing something to a target or object.

Memory Palace: Visualize (create a mental picture for) each item you want to remember and mentally place that item's image on or in mental images of a place with which you are familiar (like objects

<p>Acrostic: Use the first letter of each word of a concept or item you are trying to remember to create a string of words. Ex: <u>A</u>ll <u>C</u>ows <u>E</u>at <u>G</u>rass (the white keys on a piano)</p> <p>Categorization: Group similar items together. Remembering any item in a category often will help you recall the others in that same category.</p>	<p>in your room, parts of your bicycle, etc.)</p> <p>Story Chain: Imagine a picture for each item you want to remember and mentally place it into a story that you make up.</p>
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While each of these seven techniques can be applied using words or language, the most effective approach is to convert words into mental images. Once you create your own mental images, memorization becomes easier and more reliable—even fun! Once you have reviewed these techniques, we will guide you step-by-step through ways you can apply them to this instructional module.

We know that some of these tactics may seem dumb or a little silly, but often the dumber and sillier they are, the more powerfully they promote memorization. Memory Palace and Story Chain techniques are in fact the most powerful of the seven-memorization techniques. Successful “memory athletes” use them to compete in international contests designed to see who can memorize the most in the shortest amount of time. With Memory Palace, for example, contest winners have been able to memorize the sequence of four shuffled decks of cards in less than three minutes! Without these techniques, their memorization ability would be no better than your own.

Two other advantages of these memory aid techniques are not so obvious. One advantage is that these techniques exercise and develop your creativity. You must imagine mental pictures that work for you..

In the next step, we will provide ideas for ways you can use these seven mnemonic techniques for each memory task in this learning module. For each given memory task, choose the technique that seems to work best for you and that best fits the task. You don’t have to use the words or sample images we use here. These are simply examples. Make up your own scheme based on what is easiest for you to remember and what works best for you.

Once you construct a mnemonic for a given learning task, force yourself to recall it three or four times the first day. Repeat that recall once a day for the next four or five days. Remember: forced recall is essential to effective memorization. And, recall is most powerful if you say it aloud, write it down, or draw it.

Source: the eBook, *Better Grades, Less Effort*

