

Memory Techniques/Study Skills

- 1. Distribute rather than mass study time.** Study about 20–30 minutes at a time (about one section of a Module) rather than 3 hours the night before an exam.
- 2. Reinforce rather than punish “good” student behavior.** Do something fun (watch TV, talk on the phone, shoot hoops) *after* you have done your studying.
- 3. Create a study area.** Okay, so you can’t afford one room just for studying. Have a *study lamp* that you bring to your kitchen or bedroom when you study. When your lamp is on, you don’t eat, watch TV, talk on the phone, etc. Try the library. Choose an area that is free of distractions.
- 4. Become active (reciting, walking, or taking notes) rather than remaining passive while studying.** We all have had the experience of reading two pages *mindlessly* and not remembering a thing we’ve read. Put your brain in gear. Ask yourself questions about the material, ask questions during class, make flashcards, arrange study groups.
- 5. Discover meaning rather than merely memorizing.**
 - a. Can you do the concept reviews and summary tests without looking at the answers? Do you understand what the material means well enough to answer the study questions?
 - b. Try to put the lecture or textual material into your own words.
 - c. Take time to integrate new material with concepts that you already understand.
- 6. Use mnemonics (techniques to improve recall).**
 - a. Employ acronyms (e.g., *FOIL* in math or *ROY G BIV* in biology).
 - b. Use peg words.
 - c. Utilize the method of loci.
- 7. Eliminate interference.** Study one subject at a time, space study periods, study before or after sleeping.
- 8. Understand the concept rather than recognizing having seen it.** The most common reason that students *forget* is that they never *learned* the material in the first place—remember the penny demo?
- 9. SQ3R—Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review.** Your text is set up nicely to allow you to use this method.
- 10. Overlearn.** Studies show that the more one reviews material (even material one has mastered), the better it is remembered and the easier it is to retrieve. This is not to be confused with *overstudying* which is another word for cramming at the last minute.

11. Encode in as many different ways as possible.

- a. Visual: highlight text, visually arrange notes, use imagery.
- b. Auditory: tape record lecture or yourself going over important concepts, teach someone else, use tutoring services.
- c. Tactile: rewrite notes or combine lecture notes with textbook information,

12. Take good notes. Rephrase what the teacher has said in your own words (so that you understand it and can associate it personally). Write more than what is put on the board or screen (add examples and other students' questions). Rewrite your notes after class. Compare your notes with other students (for missing information or an other way of understanding). Divide your note page vertically so that the left side can be used later for important terms or added notes.

13. Strategic Textbook Reading Read before as well as after the lecture on the material. The former helps you understand the lecture better, the latter reinforces it. Write comments in the margins of the text. Look up difficult words (keep a dictionary handy). Remember that reading does not equal studying. Reading textbooks is not like reading a novel. Being familiar with the material does not mean you will remember specifics.

14. Managing Time Get a date book and with syllabus in hand set up a realistic study schedule. Divide up larger tasks (such as term papers) into smaller sub-tasks. When registering for classes make sure that your goals and times are manageable (balance family, job, fun). Go to class and if you should miss get notes and assignments from a good student.

15. Test Taking Skills Multiple-choice is choosing the *best* choice, so make sure you read all answers. If part of a true-false is false then the entire question is false. On essays, jot down a quick outline before you start writing. Do the essays before the multiple-choice. Skip questions you do not know and come back to them (later questions may help you remember). Relax.

16. Choose friends wisely Choose friends that are interested in learning and a career. Their motivation will help you get involved and keep you on track (and vice-versa).