

10 Memory Principles

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 – has much to do with whether or not you remember something. A key factor to remembering is having a positive attitude that you will remember. Take notes. Predict test questions. Use a concentration checklist; every time your mind wanders, put a check on this sheet. 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.
4. SELECTIVITY – You must determine what is most important, and select those parts to study and learn. You cannot remember everything about everything. Look for verbal and non-verbal clues 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. Alphabetize a list. Use a variety of mnemonic devices.
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 in a textbook, stop and recite.
7. MENTAL 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. Words are processed on the left side of the brain. Pictures are processed on the right. Use both sides!
8. ASSOCIATION – Memory is increased when facts to be learned are associated with something familiar to you. By recalling something you already know and making a link to the "brain file" that contains that information, you should be able to remember new information more efficiently.
9. CONSOLIDATION – Your brain must have time for new information to soak in. Take notes and review 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. After 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!

Source: Hopper, Carolyn. *Practicing College Study Skills: Strategies for Success*. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.
<http://www.mtsu.edu/~stuskl>.