

Tips for Recalling

If you want to improve what you get OUT of your memory, pay attention to what you put INTO your memory!

1. Decide what it is you need to remember.

You may not have to remember all the information in front of you. Just focus on the terms or events or objects that matter.

2. Figure out what the whole concept is that you want to remember, rather than trying to isolate the parts.

Get a feeling for the whole, then decide what the general themes are and remember those. You may find that making a concept map and visualizing the map is easier than remembering a list of words.

3. Use prompts and cues to help you learn the material.

Use what works for you. Match the words you are learning to the melody of your favorite song. Mentally “hang” facts in different places of the room (when I look at the door it reminds me of...). Visualize the information, and visualize yourself remembering it later.

4. Imagine you are a character or a part of whatever you are reading.

Take a few moments to picture the events, the other characters, the setting, and the action. How would you feel? What would you see, taste, and smell?

5. Check your memory by recalling information as a practise.

You can do this soon after you have learned something new, and then every so often until you need the information. Every once in a while ask yourself what you want and need to remember from the past.

6. Use new techniques for remembering.

Ask other people how they remember. Record the techniques here, and then practise them to discover which ones work best for you.

Study Skills

You can train your mind to be more focused, to learn better and faster, and to recall information easier. Here are some steps to get you started.

1. Start with what you know.

Before you start studying take a few minutes to record what you know about the topic. Use a concept map, a KWL chart, or another way of organizing your thoughts. (See steps for using a KWL chart below.) Include what you learned the last time you studied this subject, as well as information you knew before. Notice where there are gaps or holes in information. Mark these with a highlighter or circle them in a different color. Be watching for this information as you study.

- Use a KWL chart.

Make three columns on your paper. K (Know) is for what you know about the subject. Record everything you know about the subject in this column.

The second column, W (Wonder), is for what you wonder about the subject, and for your questions about it. A good way to come up with questions is to visualize your subject. For example, if you are learning about volcanoes, picture what you already know. Imagine you are witnessing an eruption while traveling inside a volcano. What do you see? What is happening, and why? Note the gaps in your knowledge or places you are uncertain of the answers. Record these thoughts and questions in the second column under W (Wonder).

The third column, L (Learned), is for recording what you learned and the answers to your questions under the W column.

2. Give yourself a specific objective of what you want to learn.

Break a large chunk of text (such as a chapter) into smaller pieces (such as sections). Start by an overview of a section:

- ✓ note the headings and any boldfaced or italic sections;
- ✓ read the captions and look at the photographs;
- ✓ look at the features in the margins; and
- ✓ think about any questions that are raised in the text.

Then consider what it is you are about to learn by reading the section.

3. As you read, ask yourself, “What does this mean? What did I just learn? What don’t I understand?” after every section.

Reread the paragraphs or sentences that didn’t seem to make sense and consider them now that you have finished the whole section. If something still isn’t clear, mark the point with a sticky note to come back to later or to ask about. If you find that your mind is wandering as you read, go back to the place where you last remember getting the meaning of the words and begin reading again from that point.

Open to Learning

Use these techniques to open your mind to learning.

1. Beware of approaching a subject with the attitude “I already know about this.”

Remember that things are constantly changing, and you are not the same as you were when you thought about this subject the last time. You have grown in your understanding since then. There may be something new for you to appreciate or understand as a result. Try approaching the subject with the thought, “I don’t know about this yet.”

2. Be more interested in finding the truth of the matter than showing you are right or “just getting it done.”

Be genuinely curious about the subject you are learning about. Think of each experience as an opportunity to find another piece of knowledge to add to the collection your mind is making. Always be ready to learn. You never know when the universe will present you with the information you need.

3. Be alert for information that might change the way you see or do things.

Have an interest in the ideas of other people, especially when those ideas are different from yours. *Why do they think the way they do?* If you can sympathize with another point of view, it will add to your understanding of an issue.

4. Get the best possible evidence you can before you make up your mind.

Don’t jump to conclusions based on surface appearances. Remember there are many ways of looking at an issue. Until you’ve considered three or more perspectives, you have not yet gotten to know your subject. Learn to listen to your own feelings about an issue as well as those expressed by others. Your point of view is valid and may not need changing, but it can be strengthened and improved by understanding all sides.