



Memorization & Information Retention Strategies

Memorizing information can be challenging. The best approaches to memorizing information call for repetition, using multiple senses, and making the information meaningful to you.

First off, make sure you are taking steps to keep your brain in good working order. Eat nutritious foods, stay hydrated, move your body, and work to get enough sleep. Food, water, movement, and sleep fuel your body and your brain. Your ability to retain information depends on good brain function.

Put information into your own context.

Try to take concepts and definitions from the textbook and connect the information to something you already know. Material in isolation can be harder to remember than material that is connected to other concepts – especially ones that you already know well.

Incorporate repetition.

For a concept to move from working memory into long-term memory, it needs to be memorable and repeated. Repetition techniques can involve things like flash cards and self-testing. Space out your studying and repetition over several days and start to increase the time in between each study session – varying your study sessions and techniques can significantly improve your information recall.

Incorporate visual and spatial techniques.

Consider linking concepts to images or places you know well. Take words/concepts you need to learn and make a song out of them. Listen to music while you study and make note of what song is playing as you are learning certain concepts. Study using as many of your senses as possible – for example, if studying for an anatomy exam, pick up the anatomy models, feel each part, and say the names of them out loud.

Mnemonic devices.

Mnemonics are systems and tricks that make information for memorable. One common type is when the first letter of each word in a sentence is also the first letter of each word in a list that needs to be memorized. For example, many children learned the order of operations in math by using the sentence *Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally* (parentheses, exponents, multiply, divide, add, subtract).

Teach someone.

Grab a friend, family member, or classmate and teach them about the concept you are learning. Allow them to ask questions and seek clarification. If you don't know the answer to their question, look it up and get back to them. This interactive process will help you remember the concept you're trying to learn.

Learn in multiple ways.

Read the textbook and your notes, look for videos or podcasts that explain concepts, read out loud to yourself, draw a mind map, and try to think of creative ways to engage your visual learning, verbal learning, and auditory learning. This helps to retain the information into multiple 'storage areas' in the brain, which can help to move beyond memorization and towards understanding.