

Learning Strategies: Study Techniques

DISTRIBUTED PRACTICE

The key to using it successfully: Don't waste time. Use short intervals to review and remember.

- 1) Distributed practice takes advantage of the brain's ability to concentrate for short periods of time.
- 2) Do you have 15 minutes? Use an app such as Anki for some quick review. Add additional information to your lecture notes. Think of a possible test question and write down everything you can in 10 minutes; check your answer, and fill in what's missing.
- 3) Do you have 30 minutes? Read and outline a few pages of text. Review and edit your lecture notes. Quiz yourself or a partner. Write out some possible test questions.
- 4) Short, frequent sessions add up throughout the day. Your brain will get lots of practice retrieving the information.

RETRIEVAL

The key to using it successfully: Do it often. Practice makes perfect.

- 1) Practicing retrieval is training your brain to find new information after it's been stored.
- 2) Pretend your brain is a closet or a file cabinet. To remember where you've put new information, link it to something you already know.
- 3) Try it right after class. Then again later that day. Then again the next day. And so on....
- 4) With repeated practice, your brain will quickly develop pathways to find the information again and again.

ELABORATIVE INTERROGATION

The key to using it successfully: Works best with a partner. Talk out loud.

- 1) Elaborative interrogation is a fancy term for asking "Why?" This helps your brain understand causes and effects.
- 2) Pose a question. After the answer, ask "why," and keep asking "why" after each question until you have a thorough understanding of the issue.
- 3) Answer out loud. By talking through an issue, your brain gets the information by hearing it. Get as many senses involved as you can.
- 4) A partner or classmate can help you find faulty reasoning. Quiz each other for best results.

SELF-EXPLANATION

The key to using it successfully: Do it out loud. It's okay to talk to yourself!

- 1) Self-explanation is just that – try to explain a concept or idea from your notes or books.
- 2) The key is to put the concept into your own words. Talk out loud. By listening to yourself, you might uncover faulty reasoning.
- 3) Ask yourself, “Do I really get this? Could I explain it to someone else?” Test it out on a partner.

TEXTBOOK TECHNIQUES

Get the most out of your textbook reading time.

- 1) Have a plan. Don't sit down and just start reading. Let's put a helpful structure in place first.
- 2) Introduction, then conclusion. Begin with the chapter introduction, then skip to the conclusion. This gives you a quick overview of what the chapter is about.
- 3) Read sidebars. Sidebars are selections of text set into a separate section that clarify or highlight content.
- 4) Read captions. Pictures, graphs, or other images have explanatory captions under them. Again, this helps increase your understanding of what the chapter is about.
- 5) Make an outline. Most textbook chapters are arranged in sections with headings and titles, giving you a head start on outlining. Leave space in your outline to fill in details while you read.
- 6) Now, begin reading the chapter. Reading is much more efficient when you already have a good grasp of the chapter's content. Fill in your outline as you read, and check it against a chapter summary, if available.

BEST STUDY HACKS

The key to using them successfully: Design them for YOU.

- 1) Make a schedule with regular study times. Post it near your study space and in places where your roommates or family members can see it.
- 2) Create space that helps you study. In general, this does NOT mean your bed! (Your brain associates your bed with sleeping.)
- 3) Think about noise. Some people like to have a constant buzz in the background, others want quiet, and some like listening to music.
- 4) Find a rhythm that works. Try a Pomodoro app to help you manage your available time. Be sure to include short breaks. Frequent short periods are better than fewer long sessions.
- 5) Get rid of distractions. Turn your phone off and ask others to not disturb you. Constant interruptions lower your attention span.