

### SECRETS OF MEMORY

#### **Know the percentages! We retain:**

10% of what we read  
20% of what you hear  
30% of what we see  
50% of what we see and hear  
70% of what we talk about with others  
80% of what we experience personally  
95% of what we teach to others

To remember information, you need to know that your memory operates on four levels of efficiency. Your ability to remember something increases from level 1 to level 4 depending on what you do with the information.

Level 1: **Hear** or read the material once (not reliable for a test).

Level 2: **Read** the information and review it once or twice  
(This is cramming - you will forget most of what you have read).

Level 3: **Read** the information, review the material several times, write it down, and test yourself over the next two days (expect fairly good recall).

Level 4: **Repeat** and frequently write down the information over a period of 3-6 days  
(Gives you excellent retention).

If you do not review what you have learned, you will forget 70% within an hour and 84% within 48 hours. One of the best forms of review is teaching or telling someone else about the information using your own words. This is where study groups become invaluable.

#### **Choose your techniques that will help you remember.**

1. Visualize	2. Associate	3. Apply	4. Repeat	5. Use mnemonic devices
1. Review	2. Read	3. Recite	4. Rewrite	

Use these techniques to keep what you want to remember in your memory.

#### **Using Mnemonic Devices to Remember Information**

**Rhyme.** A rhyme is a poem or verse that uses words that end with the same sound. Example: Thirty days has September, April, June, and November. All the rest have thirty-one except February which has twenty-eight.

**Acronym.** An acronym is a word that can be pronounced that is made by using the first letter of other words. Example: The names of the five Great Lakes in the U.S. form the acronym HOMES (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior).

**Abbreviation.** An abbreviation is a group of letters made from the first letter of each word to be remembered. Example: FBI is an abbreviation for the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

**Acrostic.** An acrostic sentence or phrase is formed by words beginning with the first letter of each word to be remembered. Example: The phrase **very active cat** might be used to recall the three types of blood vessels in the human body: **veins, arteries, capillaries**.

**Pegwords.** A pegword is a word that helps you remember something by forming a picture in your mind. Pegwords are used to remember lists of things. Each pegword helps you remember one thing. If you memorize 10 pegwords, then you can use them to remember 10 things. If you memorize 20 pegwords, you can remember 20 things.

#### **Using Repetition to Remember Information**

You have probably used repetition many times without realizing it. Anytime you have read, said, or written something a number of times to remember it, you have used repetition. A good way to remember information when using repetition is to read, say, and write what you want to remember. For example, if you need to remember a list of words and their definitions, here is how to use repetition to do this: Read aloud the word and its definition. If you need to, use a dictionary to help you pronounce a word. With your eyes closed, say the word and its definition. Without looking at the word, write the word and its definition. Repeat the steps until you can write the word and its definition from memory three times without an error. Do this for each word on the list.

### **FOUR WAYS TO FORGET**

**Disuse.** Information not periodically used withers and disappears. Do you remember all of your previous telephone numbers?

**Interference.** It is easy to confuse materials that are similar and related. When confused, we are more likely to forget which is which. Learning two similar foreign languages at the same time may present some problems.

**Repression.** We have very strong systems of belief. Sometimes what we learn doesn't fit with what we believe. When in conflict, odds are our beliefs will win. Believing that we are no good at remembering names will make it all that much more difficult to learn new names. Not learning it in the first place. This is probably the number one culprit in forgetting. Even if we've been exposed to something, unless we

### **Techniques for Remembering:**

A push from short-term to long-term memory - To transfer information from short-term to long-term, permanent memory, the brain has to perform several functions. The brain by nature is a selective organ, committing to permanent memory only those items it deems are absolutely necessary to retain. You must determine what is important and what just fluff is. If the information is important and needs to be stored, you must perform an essential operation to insure transfer into permanent memory. This process is called recitation or verbalization. You help to transfer the information through the recitation process by repeating the information over and over again, or by summarizing the information in your own words. This process of reciting important information enables the brain to permanently store the information. Recitation is the best way to commit large amounts of information to long-term memory.

**Sorting Information** - Sorting large amounts of information into categories can help you remember information more accurately and retrieve information faster. For instance, suppose you had to learn the following concepts for a business class: tools, labor, trees, wildlife, human resources, minerals, machinery, capital resources, factories, tractors, water, power plants, manpower, natural resource, typewriters. These concepts would be difficult to learn and remember if you were merely trying to memorize the individual terms. If you sort these terms into major categories, you will place a value on the terms and give them meaning. These individual terms could be held in short-term memory long enough for you to push them into long-term memory by using the recitation process. For example:

Natural Resources: minerals, water, trees, wildlife

Capital Resources: tools, machinery, power plants, factories, tractors, typewriters

Human Resources: labor, manpower

If you stop your reading often to review and categorize, it will be easier to verbalize the information at the end of the reading, thereby, improving your long-term memory.

### **Visualize the word you want to spell**

The human brain is divided into two hemispheres; left and right. Each hemisphere has specialized capabilities and each processes different types of information. The left hemisphere operates in a rational, analytical manner. It processes verbal information. It is the seat of language and logical thinking. It organizes and categorizes information. The right hemisphere operates in an intuitive, holistic manner. It processes visual and spatial information. It is the seat of creativity and imagination. It combines separate elements to form coherent wholes.

Note taking, lecturing, reading, and analytical thought are left-brain skills. Recognizing patterns, configurations, shapes, and forms; intuitive thought; and visualization are right-brain skills. Students spend most of their time developing left-brain (verbal) skills. Those students who are also thinking pictorially, focusing on the whole instead of on separate parts, and trusting intuition, are taking advantage of both of the ways in which the brain makes learning possible.

According to Allan Paivio of the University of Western Ontario, who has done a great deal of research on memory, if you commit facts and ideas to memory through words only, you are using only half of your brainpower.<sup>1</sup> When a fact or idea that you memorized through words (and stored in the left hemisphere of your brain) is also memorized through a picture or sketch (and is stored in the right hemisphere of your brain), you set up a powerful combination in your memory. You can draw on this combination later when you need to recall the fact or idea.

For holistic learning to take place, the left side of your brain must cooperate and harmonize with the right side. This cooperation is easy to gain if you make it a habit to convert words into actual pictures or diagrams in your notes, or to convert words into mental pictures or images on the blackboard of your mind. Verbal descriptions often lend themselves quite easily to visual representation. Unfortunately, in many textbooks, pictures and diagrams are not as numerous as they should be. When a key concept lacks a picture, you can act as your textbook's illustrator by drawing what you read.

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**HAPPY LEARNING!**