

MEMORIZATION

How do I approach memorizing?

1. Remembering is like seeing; dependent not upon how much we use it, but rather *how* we use it.

So *how* do I memorize?

2. Close attention. Cultivate the habit of close attention to the subject you wish to remember. This will help make an impression.

What do you mean, “impression”?

3. An impression is a mark left on your memory. Obtain as many impressions as possible. For example, try reading aloud. In doing this your eye takes in the appearance of the printed word, your ear passes the sound of the words to your brain, and your throat contracts to produce sound. All of these elements help to give the total impression which your mind is expected to store.

I have a roommate and can't read aloud until later. What can I do right now?

4. Visualize. Either remember a diagram or a picture of the material to be remembered, or take short notes about it, which you can then visualize.

How else can I improve my memory?

5. Intend to remember. Like attention, *intention* requires special effort. The mere intention to remember puts the mind in a condition to remember. If you will apply this intention while studying, you will be able to recall between 20 and 60 percent more of what you read and hear than if you were not actively trying to remember.

I'm reading aloud and visualizing, but I'm still struggling to remember.

6. Consider. A fact doesn't belong to you until you have used it. In making use of this principle, plan to spend not more than one-half of your study period in reading your lesson. Spend the other half *using* what you learn. Think about what you have studied; write down notes about it; make flashcards and diagrams about it; and explain it to somebody else.

I'm not sure I'm “making use” of the information.

7. Associate. One of the most important of all aids to the remembering process is the habit of immediately associating a new idea with facts or ideas that are already firmly lodged in the mind. This association revives and strengthens the old memories and prevents the new one from slipping away by anchoring the new memory to the well-established framework of your mental world. For example, you are studying parts of the brain and want to remember that the “temporal lobe” interprets hearing. You already know that “tempo” has to do with music. So, “temporal”=hearing, “tempo”=music.

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I had class at noon yesterday, but now I can't remember much of its content.

8. Immediate review. We will forget more, on the average, during the first hour after learning than during the next 24 hours; and we will forget more, on the average, during the first day than we will during the next thirty days. Whatever is left after thirty days time, we will probably be able to hold on to without much further loss for years to come. Therefore, briefly review right after class.

How often should I review?

9. Review-Rest-Review. Repetitions should be strung out over as long a time as is available. We remember better if we pause a little between periods of study. So if you have an exam in a week, briefly review each day leading to the test.

How much overall time should I spend studying?

10. Time management. You should study more than enough to learn your assignment. Experiments have proven that 50% *more* study resulted in 50% better retention. After a week had passed, it was found that extra work had salvaged six times as much of the material as in the case when it was barely learned.

Adapted from

Pauk, Walter. How to Study in College, 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974.