

Understanding how memory operates can help you to develop effective learning techniques.

Memory consists of the following 3 aspects:

1. **Registration** of information: Absorbing information i.e. taking it in.
2. **Retention** of information. Retaining information in your memory i.e. keeping it in your head.
3. **Retrieval** of information: Accessing information when you are reviewing material and when writing tests and exams i.e. getting it out.

TECHNIQUES TO ENHANCE MEMORY

1. Registration of information

- Adopt a **positive attitude** that you can and will remember even if it takes a long time and a lot of effort.
- Develop an **interest** in what you are studying. Read other texts on the subject.
- Give your full **attention** to what you want to learn. Practice focusing your concentration. Find a quiet place to study that is free from distractions.
- Decide on the **time period** and on the amount of work you want to learn.
- **Read actively**. Don't simply stare at the page. Always read with a pencil in your hand. Mark information.
- **Visualise relationships**. Create pictures about things you are studying. Draw diagrams. Make cartoons. Turn abstract ideas into concrete actions or illustrations. Make these visualisations interesting, colourful and humorous.
- **Read aloud** (or under your breath) to check if you understand what you are reading. Repeat the information in your own words.
- Attempt to **make connections** between new information and existing knowledge so that you understand what you are learning.
- Learn from the **general to the specific**. Get a broad overview of the subject before you begin to learn the details.
- **Calculations** need to be **practiced** regularly. Number-work requires a different style of memory. Make sure that you understand formulas, technical terms, definitions, etc. and then apply this knowledge. This can be done by going over previous work given for homework and also by working through test papers. These questions and correct answers can be used as a frame of reference while studying these understanding and practical application subjects.

Change the World

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- Mandela University Protection Services: 041-504 2009/3483
- Suicide Emergency Line: 0800 567 567 or SMS 31393
- Life Line: 0861 322 322 (Counselling available 24/7)
- SA Anxiety Group 24-hour helpline: 0800 12 13 14

Note: Student Counselling services are confidential, free of charge to registered Mandela students, and offered by qualified counsellors and psychologists.

Student Counselling, Career and Development Centre
<http://counselling.mandela.ac.za>

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Improving Memory Techniques

2. Retention

- Periodic **repetition** will help you retain information.
- **Practice writing information.** The sight of the information will give you confidence that you are retaining the knowledge. Writing information will draw your attention to what needs to be re-learned.

- Make use of **Mnemonics** such as:

➤ Acronyms

These are words created by the first letters of a series of words. Use the first letter of each word that you want to remember (i.e. keyword), to form a word or words. For example you want to remember five goals for counselling:

➤ Creative sentences

This involves creating a sentence where the first letter of each word represents something to be remembered. For example, “Every good boy does fine.” This helps music students to recall the notes of the treble clef staff.

➤ Rhymes and songs

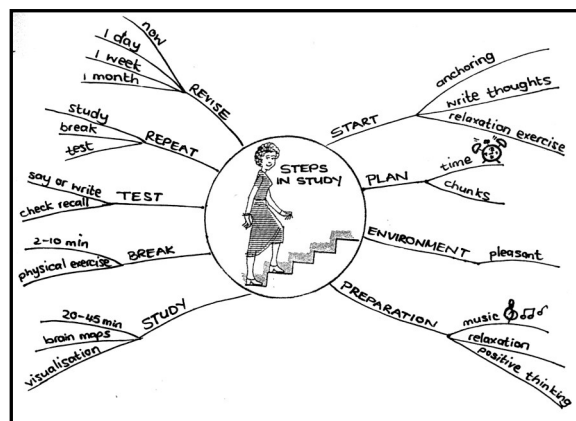
For example, “In fourteen hundred and ninety two Columbus sailed the ocean blue.”

• Visual Reminders

Create lists, summaries, charts, mind maps, etc. and stick them in visible places, for example, on your bedroom mirror. Change the charts periodically so that you are constantly stimulated by the information. Two examples of visual reminders are point-form summaries and mind maps.

Mind maps

Mind maps are a useful aid for recalling information. Research has shown that this is one of the most effective ways of making a summary. The mind map organizes material in a way that makes it easier to understand and remember. Here is an example of a mind map summary of Steps in Study.



Rules regarding mind maps

- Draw something or make an image which would represent the central subject. Write word/s representing the subject in the centre, using capital letters. The central image should be colourful.
- Draw the spikes clockwise, starting at the 1 o'clock position, using different colours for main points and sub-points.
- Major ideas are written down on spikes coming from the centre. These lines must be connected to the centre and should not hang in the air.
- Words are printed. The brain reads the printed word more easily.
- The words must be on the lines and should not hang off the ends of the lines. Writing the words on the line, will enable you to remember them better.
- Make images or pictures in the mind map, for example, if one point is about time, draw a clock.
- The main points, stemming from the central point are printed in upper case (capital letters) and the secondary, tertiary, etc. points in lower case (small letters).
- All the lines should touch (be connected). This enhances your ability to remember associations between facts.
- Single words only should be used.

3. Retrieval

Here are some techniques to enhance retrieval

- **Practice retrieving information:** bring it into consciousness from time to time.
- **Remember something else.** When you are unable to remember something, recall facts that are related to the one you are having trouble with. Similar information is stored in the same area of the brain.
- **Practice writing information.** Writing can give you confidence and help you to generate ideas.
- **Draw diagrams/pictures.** The action of putting pen to paper could help you to come up with ideas.
- **Picture/visualize** everything to do with the topic.
- **Relax.** If you over-intensify your efforts to recall material, you take the risk of blocking off completely. A relaxed mind functions more effectively.

NOTE: There is NO single method which works for all students. It is recommended that you try the different techniques described in this booklet and attempt to find the approach that suits you. Be prepared to acknowledge honestly if your approach is not working and then make some changes to your study techniques. Consult a Student Counsellor for further assistance.

If you have any more study or academic related queries; visit CTLM(Centre for Teaching and Learning) offices on North campus: R-Block R107 or contact them at 041 504 3207

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