



ACE Your Memory: Specific Strategies for Improving Memory

"Memory is the treasury and guardian of all things." – Cicero

Intend to remember. We remember those things that we are motivated to remember, whether we are naturally interested or have enthusiasm in learning the subject matter because of the ultimate benefits. *Intending to remember* is, perhaps, the most vital learning task.

Have a positive attitude. Be motivated to remember items. For tips on how to improve motivation, see our worksheet, "ACE Your Attitude."

Immediately review your notes after class lectures, even if only for a few minutes. This reinforces learning and remembering of material. The greatest amount of forgetting occurs directly after finishing the learning task (psychologists say within 20 minutes). Also try reviewing notes before class.

Use short study periods rather than cramming. As a general rule, short study periods interspersed with rest intervals are more effective than cram sessions.

Selectively choose memory tasks. Select the important topics, facts, and ideas and disregard the least essential elements. When studying, first skim the chapter outline to identify key concepts to be remembered. For tips on reading for college, see our worksheet on improving reading skills.

Be sure you understand the material. Can you explain the concept to someone else? The more you understand a topic, the better you will remember the details associated with it. A poorly understood concept is difficult to remember because it has little meaning.

Associate new material with prior knowledge. As new learning occurs with your later courses, this material will provide additional background with which to associate future learning. The more you learn, the easier it is to learn more because you have a broader base for anchoring new information.

Make and use flash cards.

Use mnemonic devices only when other strategies do not work. Rhymes, sayings, and acronyms are examples of mnemonic devices. Mnemonic devices should be used only until you know the material so well that you no longer need them. For example, to remember the five Great Lakes, use the acronym HOMES (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior).

Use all of your senses. Sight and hearing are the most important senses in acquiring information. Visual learners should take copious notes (and rewrite them). By doing this the material is presented more often and in different forms. Auditory learners should spend more time reciting orally. For both learning styles, mental recitation is important in transferring material from short-term memory.

If there is a basis for doing so, **divide and group your material.** Information is best taken in bunches. "Chunk" items together. The brain easily remembers things in groups of 5 (plus or minus two items). If you have a list of 15 items to remember, chunk them into 3 groups of 5 and learn the chunks.

Study before going to bed unless you are physically or mentally overtired.