

# NINE WAYS TO AID YOUR MEMORY

It is more natural to forget something than to remember it. If you intend to remember something, apply as many of the following techniques as possible.

1. **Be flexible.** Experiment with many learning procedures. Be willing to abandon outmoded and faulty learning procedures so you will be free to acquire new and more efficient methods.
2. **Overlearn.** In order to retain anything learned, you must practice and reorganize it into your current ongoing activity. One way to do this is to incorporate the learned material as part of your present habit system. Use it in speaking and writing. Act out the material as a rehearsal of a part in a play-a process known as role-playing. This is especially helpful in learning a foreign language.
3. **Schedule.** Schedule your study time so that the time at which something is learned or relearned is close to the time at which it will be used.
4. **Rephrase and explain.** Try a little role-playing. Take the point of view of the teacher, for a change. Rephrase and explain the material, in your own words, to a classmate. Allow your classmate to criticize your presentation. Then let the classmate be the teacher, while you criticize. If you can't explain something, you don't really know it.

Many students adopt the so-called warm-body attitude toward learning. A "warm" feeling toward one particular answer becomes the basis for its selection, regardless of whether one really knows why the answer is correct. This attitude is the result of classroom examining procedures in which true-false and multiple-choice items are used exclusively for testing. Testing in this manner encourages the attitude that mere recognition of the most probable answer constitutes learning.

Even though a particular course may not require adequate recall by using more penetrating recall-type questions, don't allow yourself to fall into this warm-body learning trap. Insist on testing yourself! If you can explain the material, most certainly you can pass any "objective" test calling for superficial recognition. However, the reverse is most certainly not true. Learning only to a point of recognition, and depending on your ability to ferret out the correct response, is insufficient for total-recall kinds of tests. Sooner or later this habit will result in total failure in a demanding test situation.

5. **Eliminate accidental and unrelated associations.** A study situation in which a phone is constantly jangling produces breaks in the mental association process. Remove the receiver. The only suggestion that can be made for the elimination of television during the study period is to donate the set to a family that is not involved in higher education.
6. **Eliminate previous mistakes.** Take note of all previous mistakes and make every effort to eliminate them from future practice. It has been shown experimentally that consciously reviewing mistakes, making note of exactly why they were incorrect, helps to reinforce the correct response. This process is sometimes referred to as negative practice.
7. Decide on an **order of importance.** Some things are more important than others. In a particular study unit, decide what these are and organize the important material into an outline or framework. "Over-learn" this particular framework.

8. Become **emotionally involved**. Assume the attitude that you fully believe the viewpoint of the author. Strive for perfection. You may never achieve it, but you will most certainly improve your performance. Learn to discuss your current beliefs calmly with people holding different attitudes. Cite authorities to back up your position.
  
9. Use **mechanical memory aids**. When material is complicated, it may be necessary to use mechanical memory aids. For example, suppose you had reason to believe that a certain table showing all of the endocrine glands of the body with their secretions and functions would be called for in an examination. In order to be sure that you would be able to recall all of the glands, you memorized the first letter or syllable of each gland, and organized them into three very strange words: **Anpothy Paramed Adcorpan**, the novelty of which aided recall. This could be deciphered as follows: **An**=anterior pituitary, **po**=posterior pituitary, **thy**=thyroid, **par**=parathyroid, **amed**=adrenal medulla, **adcor**=adrenal cortex, **pan**=pancreas, etc.

©Academic Skills Center, Dartmouth College 2001