M E M O R Y

Busting Myths and Telling Truths

Academic Success Center, 2560 WSC

OUR STORY-MAKING BRAINS

"The brain does not store facts, ideas, and experiences like a computer does. It embeds them in networks of perceptions, facts, and thoughts, slightly different combinations...

"Using our memories changes our memories." (1)

WHAT IS YOUR MEMORY GOAL?

There is a difference between memory strategies for ROTE MEMORIZATION and strategies for MASTERING concepts and knowing how to apply them to new contexts.
MEMORY MYTHBUSTING

RECENT EVIDENCE HAS SHOWN THAT MANY OF OUR MOST WIDELY BELIEVED IDEAS ABOUT WHAT HELPS STUDENTS LEARN ARE FALSE!
FOR EXAMPLE:

• Remember when you determined your "personal learning style" (visual, auditory, etc.)? We actually DON'T learn better by focusing on just one--We DO learn best when we use more than one "learning style" together.

• Simply repeating material you're trying to remember (e.g., re-reading a chapter) actually CAUSES PROBLEMS, such as a false sense of "mastery," and not gaining a sense of gaps in your knowledge.

• Memory systems such as the Peg System, Linking Systems and acronyms can help you memorize a list of words but are not so well-suited to mastering college material.

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SO WHAT DOES WORK?
"Memory is something you do-not something you have."(2)

Top Research-Based Learning Strategies

1) **Spaced Learning:**
Review material in multiple sessions (can be only 10 minutes!), with a day or more in between. This is because our brains need time to "consolidate" information.

2) "**Retrieval Practice" or "Self Quizzing"**
Essential if we want to remember information for longer than a few hours.
How To Do It:
a) Take practice Quizzes or tests 
b) Teach someone else: can be a roommate or your car steering wheel!
c) Create a mind map from memory 
d) Cover up textbook headings and recall information about that topic from memory.
e) Preview text chapters

3) **Take a Break! "Focused vs Diffuse Modes"**(3)
Evidence shows that our ability to understand a concept is enhanced by taking a break after a period of focused studying!
Taking a break and doing activities such as unloading the dishwasher, going for a short walk, etc. puts your brain in diffuse mode. It really does help!
WHAT ELSE WORKS?

4) **Use Multiple Learning Styles**
Studying through more than one sensory mode (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic) helps create multiple connections in different parts of the brain, and is better than focusing on just one mode.

5) **SLEEP!**
There is OVERWHELMING evidence of the absolutely essential role of sleep in consolidating memories, or moving information into long-term memory.

6) **"Interleave" Different Subjects and Problems**
Study for the exam by mixing up different kinds of practice problems. It's also often more helpful to study more than one subject during a study session than to spend long periods of time studying just one subject.

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**DON'T FORGET! COME INTO OUR OFFICE FOR A ONE-ON-ONE APPOINTMENT AND DISCUSS THESE PRINCIPLES WITH A LEARNING MENTOR!**

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REFERENCES

