

## SOMETIMES YOU CAN'T REMEMBER

... **because** you don't initially read and study with the intent to remember. You are always assuming you'll think about it "later" and look back and learn it "later."

- **A conscious decision to concentrate and remember is necessary** if any of the other suggestions are to work well. Read with the intent to remember and to hold yourself responsible for what you've read as soon as you finish reading—then do so!

... **because** you have no interest in the material or have no clear reason to remember.

- **Think about what you are learning, and relate it to whatever is important to you.** What does the material have to do with you and your past or potential experience, with humanity, or with the universe? Write your reason down once you've found it, and keep it around for periodic pep talks with yourself when needed.
- **Talk with other students** who do seem interested in the material and learn what motivates them, or ask your instructor.

... **because** you don't understand the material you're trying to remember.

- **Try to get a "bird's-eye view" of the "whole" before attempting to remember details of each part.** Ask someone for help if you don't understand the "whole," or read a simplified version before retackling the original. Caution: initial understanding should be complete several days before the test so that the last few days can be spent organizing, memorizing, and reinforcing.

... **because** most forgetting takes place rapidly—right after initial learning unless some effort is made immediately to use the new information or recall and "store" the information for later review and use.

- **Always take a few moments at the time of initial learning to stop and recall at periodic intervals what you have just read.** Immediate recall of newly learned information is key to later memory of it.
- **When you want to remember something in the morning, go over it just before you fall asleep at night.** One reason you forget is that other things capture your attention, interfere with what you have just learned, and cause you to forget. When you are asleep, there is less of this interference. Unless you are too drowsy, the last few minutes before you go to sleep is a prime time for fixing material to be remembered in your mind.
- **Review every week or two by reading through the summaries you have written in your lecture notes and textbooks.** This review will help you see the sequence of ideas being developed. Seeing this sequence will help you understand material. Really understanding what you are learning is essential to remembering it.



. . . **because** you spend most of your study time just passively re-reading and "looking over" the material to be learned.

- **More than 50% of your time should be spent recalling what you've read and testing yourself** to see if you know it and can use it. Many students fool themselves into thinking that because they've looked over the material again they "know" it. Leave lots of time to test yourself and prove that you know it.
- **Visualize what you read and hear as often as possible.** Draw your own pictures in the margins of your textbook and in your lecture notes. A complex diagram or graph in a textbook is always difficult. Try tracing over it with a pencil or your finger to help you see the parts so that the whole will make better sense to you.
- **Make up examples of your own.** They will help you understand and remember difficult material.
- **List and number items to remember.** You will, for example, more easily remember six steps for surveying a textbook, ten ways to remember, and six ways to improve vocabulary than you would if these items were unnumbered.
- **Make up rhymes or sentences to help you remember.** Rhymes can aid memory because they are easy to remember. If you are not good at rhymes, you can compose simple sentences, such as "Mary Visits Every Monday and Just Stays Until Noon," to help you remember the order of the planets: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune.
- **Take the first letter from each word in a list you want to remember and memorize the letters. Make words of these letters when you can.** TISH V.S. can help you remember the steps in surveying a chapter--title, introduction, summary, headings, visuals, and words. You will find this method of remembering especially useful if you tend to panic in exams. Having a few made-up words and letters in your mind will give you something to grab quickly when you start the exam.

. . . **because** when you've finally grasped a concept and think you "know" it, you are satisfied and turn to something else instead of "overlearning" to insure against panic and anxiety during the test.

- **Test yourself—over and over—at periodic intervals of decreasing frequency.** Expose as many senses as possible to newly learned information (i.e., write it, speak it, hear it, look at it).

. . . **because** of "interference" from somewhat similar materials and ideas—especially when they are not learned perfectly before going on to the next set.

- **Learn one topic thoroughly—indeed "overlearn it"—before attempting to learn a similar one.** Familiar, well-learned things assume identities of their own and are not likely to be confused with, or be confused by, somewhat similar things.

. . . **because** you learn the material but don't practice using it in the form which will be required on an examination.

- **Once you "know" the information, practice using it** by actually composing and writing answers to typical test questions, doing problems, etc.