

MEMORISING

Memorising new information is an essential academic skill. However, not all study strategies are equally effective. For example, **simply re-reading your notes is one of the least effective methods of study**. Try the evidence-based strategies suggested here instead.



1. Distribute your study time

Avoid cramming all your study into the week before exams. Instead, split your study up into short study sessions over the semester. Using this scheduling strategy will lead to better long-term memory retention. Not only is spaced study more effective, it makes your study sessions feel more achievable.

During semester, **start studying early**. Set aside a small block of time every day to review new and old course material. It is really important that you revisit the same material multiple times.

2. Ask, Explain and Connect

While you are studying, try to avoid simply repeating the information at hand. Instead, focus on understanding the meaning of what you are learning in depth. You can do this by trying some of the following techniques:



Ask questions:

When you are learning a concept, theory or idea, ask yourself a range of questions about the topic and answer these questions in a **detailed** way. The specific questions will differ but could include questions like: **What** is it? **How** does it work and **why**? **When** did it occur? **How** do we know? **What** is the evidence?

Attach new information to old:

Whenever you can, make connections between what you are learning and your existing knowledge. It is much easier to learn new information if you relate it to something that is relevant to you.

For example, try to connect what you have learned in class to what you experience in your daily life.

Connect ideas:

Build a **mind-map, framework or outline** of what you are learning. Importantly, you should organise the information to show how the ideas relate to each other. How are they similar? How are they different?

3. Use concrete examples

At university you are often required to learn concepts that are complex and abstract.

One way of helping you to understand and remember these ideas is by tying them to concrete examples. You can do this by using specific examples provided in class or in your readings. You can also try generating your own examples.

However, if you do come up with your own examples, best to check with your lecturer or tutor that they are accurate.

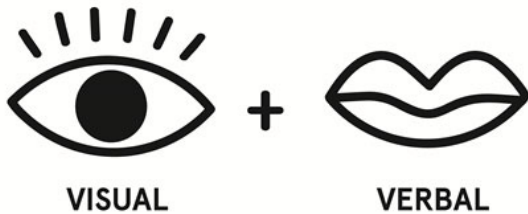
TIP

Use sleep and exercise to support your memorisation. Sleep is essential for memory consolidation, so prioritise 7-9 hours of sleep per night. In addition, research shows that regular exercise can improve your memory.

4. Combine words and visuals

Use visuals to accompany your written notes. Because verbal and visual processing use distinct regions of the brain, this strategy provides you with two different pathways to remember the information.

You don't need to be a talented artist! You can use simple sketches, stick figures, diagrams, or even cartoon strips. Make sure the visuals are relevant to what you are learning, and make a conscious effort to link the words to the visuals as you study.



5. Practise memory retrieval

To remember information in tests or exams, you need to practise **retrieval** (calling that information to mind without your notes). This is one of the most important things you can do while studying.

Each time you retrieve a piece of information from memory, it strengthens that neural pathway, making it more likely you will remember it in a test or exam. Leave some time in between reviewing the information and trying retrieval.

Some ways to practise retrieval include:

- **Free recall/brain-dump:** put your notes away and write down everything you know about the topic.
- **Flashcards** (tip: try a flashcard app like Chegg or Quizlet).
- **Test yourself:** use practice tests and exams. You can also write your own practice questions.

Make sure you go back to your notes to check that your retrieval was accurate. Retrieval will feel hard at first, but eventually you will build up to recalling a lot of information from your memory, so persevere!

TIP

Mix it up!



Try a combination of these techniques. For instance, you may like to draw visuals to go along with your concrete examples. Or you might try to recall a mind map or outline from memory.

Most importantly, practise **memory retrieval** in all your study sessions.

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