

How to retain information when you study for a test

Studying for a test requires a lot of memorization, which can feel overwhelming. If you want to adequately prepare for an exam, there are ways you can improve memorization. Engage with the materials when studying. Read actively and take notes. Use effective techniques, like flash cards and mnemonic devices. Make sure you manage your study schedule carefully. A solid schedule, including a good night's sleep, can help you have the energy to study.

Engaging with the material



Read actively. You won't retain information if you just casually read the material. When you're re-reading for a test, or reading new information, do so actively. This will help you remember the information better when a test arrives.

It's easy to read a whole page and realize you took in nothing. If you notice your mind wandering, return it to the text.

It can help to underline as you go and write down notes in the margins.

Summarise what you read. If you summarise each paragraph as you go, you will better retain the information later. When you finish a paragraph briefly summarize the information in your head.

You can also summarise the information by writing it down, which may help you remember it better.

You can also recite the information to yourself out loud, as this may also help you remember it.



Take notes: Many students take notes during class. While this is a great tactic, you should also take notes while you're reading and studying alone. Putting the information into your own words as you go will help you remember it better later on.

Try to take notes actively. Do not just for example, copy down definitions and concepts into a notebook. Try to phrase them in your own words. This will help you better understand, and therefore retain, the information you've learned.

You should also make sure your notes stay organised. Use headings to label the notes by chapter and section. You should also date the notes, especially notes you take in class.

Explain the material to someone else. If you're studying with another student, it can actually help to explain the information. Study groups can be helpful. If someone is struggling with a concept, having you explain it to them may help both of you better understand and retain the material.

If you don't know anyone in your class, you can always ask a roommate or friend if you can explain the information out loud to them.



Using effective Study Skills

Write out information by hand. Copying information over and over again can help commit it to your brain. When you write, you will be actively thinking about the words you're reading. If you're really struggling to retain a particular concept, vocabulary word, date, name, or other aspect of your course material, try writing it down a few times. You may remember it better later on.

If you don't like handwriting, you can also type out your notes again and again. Just make sure to pay attention to what you're typing.

You can also try copying your own notes. You may understand terms better if they're already phrased in your own words. This can help you retain the information later on.

Use mnemonic devices. Mnemonic devices are means of associating new information with phrases, terms, or images. Many people use mnemonic devices to help them commit new material to memory. For example, 'Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain' is a mnemonic device many use to remember the colours of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

If there isn't a well known mnemonic device for the material you're trying to learn, you can make up your own. Have fun and be creative. Make up a visual you can easily remember and use to recall information later.



Make associations with the material. In addition to mnemonic devices, you can make other associations that help you retain information. You can make visual associations in your mind, for example, or look for certain patterns.

For example, say you're trying to remember John Stein wrote East of Eden. You have a friend named Eden and a friend with the initials J.S

In order to remember this information, picture your friend with the initials J.S standing next to your friend Eden. Imagine the two of them holding compasses pointing in the direction east.

Make flashcards. Flashcards are a wonderful way to help you retain information. They are particularly helpful when trying to remember things like dates, names and vocabulary terms.

You can make flashcards by writing information on either side of the card. For example, say you're making flashcards for vocabulary terms. Use index cards. Write the definition on one side and the word on the other. If you don't want to make physical flashcards, there are many websites that allow you to make flashcards online.

Test yourself on the materials. Testing yourself is one of the best means to retain information. Merely re-reading or studying the information is not as effective as actually testing yourself on the materials. In the weeks leading up to the exam, test yourself frequently.

You can make your own test by writing down questions as you re-read your notes and course materials. Think of questions that are likely to be on an exam. When you get done reviewing, try to answer your own questions.

You can also see if your teacher provides practice tests. You should take any practice tests your teacher offers, as this will help prepare you for the exam.

If you have any old exam papers lying around, try retaking them.