

Introduction

When trying to memorise new material, it is easy to assume that the more work you put in, the better you will perform. Memory lapses do occur and can be embarrassing and troubling. A memory is made by linking two or more of the 100 billion nerve cells in our brains, called neurons. The brain continues to develop neurons and build new connections to strengthen memory as we age. For learning purposes, there are certain ways in which we can engage with issues, concepts, activities, or certain procedures that we can adopt to help activate and sharpen our memories to meet certain learning purposes. This section provides some quick tips to serve as a guide to students on how to strengthen their study memory.

The memory process

For there to be memory creation, the following basic process has to be followed actively:

- **Record** – this simply means to capture or maintain information. Information has to be recorded in order to create memory. To record, you need to be in class, listen actively, understand and make summaries.
- **Retain** – it means to hold or contain information. Information needs to be stored correctly and condensed. You can achieve this by organising and structuring such information to make it easy for further processing.
- **Recall** – this refers to the ability to remember or recollect information. There are a number of recall or retrieval strategies that could be used, but at a basic level, information recall can be achieved by recognition/identification, and/or by re-formulation of information – using your own words to explain things.

Why do we forget?

Below are some of the possible reasons why we forget:

- Incorrect or negative mind set (attitude)
- Lack of understanding (not logical)
- Working for long periods without break (fatigue)
- Loss of interest
- Lack of repeated engagement with materials – if work is not re-visited, decay sets in.

Some tips to help you to remember

Here are some of the tips that could help you to remember:

- **Interest** – showing interest in your field of study could assist you to remember the content better.
- **Relevance** – find a way to link the content your materials relevant to your daily life situations. If you can make connections between your study content and your daily life situations, it would help you to remember and apply such information with greater ease.
- **Association** – associating the content of learning materials with your surroundings this could assist in making it meaningful.
- **Sequence** – try to see how each element of the content follow one another.
- **Understanding** – making logical sense to the content you are learning will enhance your understanding better and chances of remembering will be strengthened.
- **Activity** – try to be actively involved by writing key words, visualizing the content, reading aloud, and reasoning around the information.

Strategies to improve memory and retention

In order to improve memory and retention you can consider this approach. In this **GULP** approach, each step is explained.

Step 1: G – Get it

- ✓ In order to get it, you need to be present and conscious during the initial learning
- ✓ Pay attention and listen
- ✓ Experience the initial learning with as many senses as possible

Step 2: U – Use it

- ✓ Review the material content immediately (preferably, on the same day you attended the lecturer session)
- ✓ Repeat it
- ✓ Write it down, and
- ✓ Recreate the experience of learning

Step 3: L – Link it

- ✓ By associating new learning with something already known, you enhance your memory
- ✓ Link it to something it sounds like
- ✓ Link it to a location

- ✓ Make an acronym link
- ✓ Mind map it
- ✓ Group and categories it

Step 4: P – Picture it

- ✓ Create a visual image of the association
- ✓ Use colour
- ✓ Use all senses

Additional Resources

www.pepper.dine.edu/disabilityservices/students/tips/memstraf.htm

Summary

In order to improve your memory, you need to always think about the goal of why you are learning. It is also important to use your multiple senses such as pictures and notes to enhance your memory. Using your strongest learning style, such as visual or auditory for instance, is recommended. Your memory can also be strengthened by evaluating the learning critically, and by explaining the content or material to someone else.