

Study skills

How to Learn

Find out about your **LEARNING STYLE** first

- People learn in different ways.
- It is important to know how you learn best and then develop a variety of techniques that suit you and the subject you are learning.
- You can discover your learning style by doing the questionnaire on the VARK website <https://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/> and explore techniques matched to your VARK preferences.

Increase the **VARIETY OF LEARNING TECHNIQUES** you use

- Find out about these techniques and use as many as possible.

Examples

Mindmapping
Making up questions
Teaching someone your subject
Cards
Study groups

- Use a technique that suits the subject

Example

Learn maths by practising it
Learn Biology definitions on cards

Make mind maps

Making a mind map helps you:

- Pick out keywords
- Fit your keywords together into an overview
- Remember information

Write as steps or flow / symbolic diagram or tables

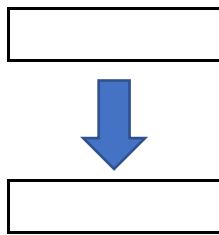
Some information can be written as steps.

Examples

Fraction/multiplication
Step 1 Write mixed number as improper fractions
Step 2 Cancel
Step 3 Multiply top lines together
Step 4 Multiply bottom lines together

Other information can be clearly presented using a flow diagram or table.

Example



		Symptoms									
Disease	X										
					✓						✓
						✓					
				✓				✓			
		✓							✓		

Explain what you are learning or teach it

Explaining the topic to someone else makes you put it into your own words. Teach a willing listener about your subject. Or talk to a 'pretend' person. When you explain key ideas and main concepts, you deepen your understanding and improve your recall.

Use study groups or a study buddy

Auditory and kinaesthetic learners will benefit from learning with others. Set goals and guidelines to structure your learning. Study groups and buddy systems allow for teaching and questioning.

Record your notes using your phone or another device

Dictate and record your notes. Ask yourself questions and record the answers. You can playback your recordings to revise as you are doing other tasks.

Make study notes

Summarise and condense your notes into key points that are more easily understood and remembered. Put main concepts onto cards.

Use a hierarchy, that is, main headings and subheadings, to logically categorise information.

Practise questions or past test/exam papers

Examine past exam or test papers to understand:

- (a) The format of the papers
- (b) The types of questions asked

Practise answering questions and give your answers to your tutor for feedback. Revise your strategies of learning and answering according to the feedback you receive. Practise again.

Find examples/relate it

A good way to check your understanding and remember information is to find an example.

Example

If you are studying the structure of business letters, find your own examples to compare the format.

Act it out

Often it is possible to act out what you are learning.

Example

If you are learning about the brain:

Set up your room as a brain and pretend to be the various parts of it

OR

If you are learning about conflict resolution:

Make up a scenario and act it out to learn the keys to good conflict resolution

Moving around while you learn may help to keep you alert and improve your focus.

Learn using physical or online flashcards

Flashcards are useful for learning, especially for definitions and terminology. Put the word/concept/principle on one side of the card and the definition on the other. Set yourself a goal of learning so many per day or week. Ask others to test you on your knowledge or test yourself.

Visit the Quizlet website (<https://quizlet.com/en-gb>) to learn online using flashcards, practice tests and games.

Use questions to develop your topic

As you read through your notes, create some questions.

Example

What is the name for.....?

Define the item....

Give the three functions of...

How does factor A affect factor B....?

Answer these questions using your notes or from memory.

Use PQRS

This is a reading technique which stands for:

- Preview
- Question
- Read
- Summarise
- Test

Apply PQRS to your notes, handouts, or texts.

Preview by skim reading the main headings and summaries to get an overview. Ask yourself **questions** about what you have read. **Read** while looking to answer the questions. **Summarise** the key points and **test yourself** as to how much you understand.

Use keywords

Reducing your study notes (or a text you are reading) to keywords helps you to pick out the important points. Keywords are easier to remember than sentences. As you read, ask yourself “what keywords summarise this information?”

Make up mnemonics

Mnemonics is a memory technique. Taking the first letter of the keyword of a series of words or principles you need to remember, make up a sentence or word using the first letter. This will trigger your memory about the topics. It is especially useful if you have to learn something in sequence.

Examples: ROYGBIV for the order of the colours of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet), BEDMAS for order of operations in maths (from highest to lowest priority – brackets, exponents, division and multiplication, and finally addition and subtraction).

Tips for Learning Success

1. Recognise what AFFECTS your learning

- Your ability to learn is affected by:
 - How relaxed you are – learn ways to relax and manage stress.
 - Any emotional/physical problems you have – get help early to reduce or solve problems.
 - Your attitude – be positive. Recognise your strengths and adopt a growth mindset. (Learn key ideas about growth mindset at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1CHPnZfFmU>).
 - Your motivation – if this is low, find out why and think of ways or get help to increase motivation.

2. Learn ACTIVELY

- Learning needs to be an active process. Your brain should think about what you are learning.

Apply Active Learning:

- Write notes in own words
- Remain involved in class
- Pick out keywords
- Ask questions and clarify doubts
- Practise answering questions
- Review regularly after class
- Know course outcomes and methods of assessment

Avoid Passive Learning:

- Don't read notes over and over
- Don't switch off in class
- Don't ignore material you don't understand
- Don't delay learning for a test
- Don't ignore course outcomes

3. PERSONALISE your learning to improve your understanding and recall of a topic

- Make notes in your own words.
- Connect information to what you already know.
- Associate what you are learning to your life experiences.
- Add diagrams/pictures and colour.
- Learn in ways you find more enjoyable.

4. Both RECALL and APPLICATION are crucial to effective learning

- **Recall** is when you can remember information without your notes or someone to prompt you.
- Check you can recall by:
 - Writing some questions for yourself to answer
 - Practising previous test/exam papers
 - Doing quizzes set by your course tutor
 - Choosing a keyword and writing about it.
- Improve your recall - focus on revising the important information you forgot or got wrong.
- **Application** is when you can use what you are learning to solve problems.

5. Know the difference between MEMORISING and UNDERSTANDING

- If you memorise information that you don't understand, you are rote learning, which is an ineffective learning method.
- To develop understanding, you need to:
 - Learn actively
 - Explore the subject
 - Ask yourself questions – why? How? What happens next?
 - Find examples
 - Gain an overview of a topic – that is, know how parts of a topic are related and work together.
- It is very important to confirm that you have a good understanding of what you are learning:
 - Test yourself by asking yourself questions or doing previous test/exam papers
 - Explain concepts and processes in your own words
 - Summarise the main points accurately.

6. Use these thinking skills to develop deep understanding:

Brainstorming
Questioning
Inferring
Relating

Structuring
Evaluating
Comparing
Thinking laterally

Finding key concepts
Analysing
Deducing