

## 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.
- Discover your learning style by doing the VARK questionnaire on the VARK website (<https://vark-learn.com/>) and explore techniques matched to your VARK preferences.

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

- There are many different ways to learn.
- Find out about these and try as many techniques 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 mindmaps**

Making a mindmap helps you:

- (a) pick out keywords
- (b) fit your keywords together into an overview
- (c) remember

### **Write as steps or flow / symbolic diagram or tables**

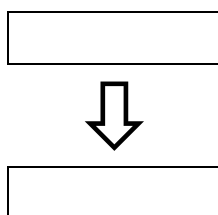
Some information can be written as steps.

#### *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 fits well on a flow diagram or table

*Example*



		Symptoms									
Disease	X										
					✓						✓
						✓					
				✓					✓		
		✓								✓	

### **Explain it or teach it**

Explaining the topic to someone else makes you put it into your own words. Try teaching a willing listener about your subject. If you don't have such a person, pretend. Talk to a 'pretend' audience. The important thing is to articulate the key ideas and main concepts.

### **Use study groups or a 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.

### **Put your notes on tape/MP3**

Dictate your notes onto tape/MP3. Ask yourself questions and record the answers. You can play this as you are doing other tasks.

### **Make study notes**

Summarise and condense your notes into key points. Put these main concepts onto cards or in a separate folder.

Use a hierarchy, i.e. main headings, subheadings.

### **Practise questions or old exam papers**

It is good to look at old exam or test papers to see:

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

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

### **Find examples/relate it**

A good way to check your understanding and help you 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 trying to learn.

#### *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

Even just moving around while you learn helps sometimes.

### Use cards

Cards are useful for learning 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.

### Use questions to develop your topic

As you read through your notes, devise 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 using your notes or from memory.

### Use PQIRST

**PQIRST** is a reading technique which stands for:

Preview

Question

Read

Summarise

Test

Apply this to your notes, handouts, or texts.

**Preview** by skim reading the main headings and/or summary to get an overview. **Read** looking to answer the questions. **Summarise** the key points and **Test** yourself as to how much you understand.

### Use keywords

Reducing your notes (or a text) to keywords helps you to pick out the important points. Keywords are easier to remember than sentences. As you read, ask yourself "what words summarise what I have just read?"

### 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 original topics. It is especially useful if you have to learn something in sequence.

For example SWOT: study without tears or ROY G BIV: for the colours of the rainbow.

## 1. Recognise what AFFECTS your learning

Your ability to learn is affected by:

- How **relaxed** you are – learn to relax
- Any **emotional/physical** problems you have – get help to sort these out
- Your **attitude** – be positive and tell yourself you can be successful and you enjoy learning. (See Positive Self-Talk handout)
- Your **motivation** – if this is low, find out why

## 2. Learn ACTIVELY

- Learning must be an active process. This means your brain must be made to think about what you are learning.

### *Examples*

#### **Active Learner**

- writes notes in own words
- remains involved in class
- picks out keywords
- asks questions of self and others
- practises questions
- reviews regularly after class
- works on material not understood
- knows course outcomes and methods of assessment

#### **Passive Learner**

- reads notes over and over
- switches off in class
- leaves out material not understood
- leaves learning for a test until the night before

- Just reading notes over and over is not active learning.

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

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

### **4. Know the difference between RECALL and APPLICATION**

- **Recall** is when you are able to remember information without your notes or someone to prompt you.
- Check you can recall by:
  - writing some questions for yourself to answer
  - practising old papers
  - choosing a keyword and writing about it.
- **Application** is when you can apply your learning and problem solve.

### **5. Know the difference between MEMORISING and UNDERSTANDING**

- If you memorise information that you don't understand you are rote learning.
- To develop understanding:
  - learn actively
  - explore the subject
  - self question – why, how, what happens next
  - find examples
  - get a global view of a topic – i.e. know how parts of a topic fit together to get an overall picture
- To check that you understand you need to:
  - test yourself by asking yourself questions or doing old papers
  - explain it in your own words
  - be able to give a summary of the main points

### **6. Use the thinking skills to develop understanding**

Thinking includes:

Brainstorming  
Questioning  
Inferring  
Relating

Structuring  
Evaluating  
Comparing  
Thinking laterally

Finding key concepts  
Analysing  
Deducing