

# Practical tips to apply the strategies

## Practice testing / retrieval practice

- Use practice tests provided by teachers or peers.
- Use flashcards with key terms, leave each card in the stack until you have recalled each term correctly three or four times
  - Don't just recall the information, but also explain it to yourself or others
  - [www.quizlet.com](http://www.quizlet.com)
  - <https://apps.ankiweb.net/>
- Use sample answers in textbooks.
- Write down the key concepts in tutorial groups and use these to self-test.
- Answer questions that you wrote while reading the text or reviewing notes from class, check your answers and look up anything that you got wrong
- Finish a study session by writing more questions (focussing on difficult concepts) and start the next study session by answering these questions (you do not need to write down these answers, force yourself to think through the answers)

## Distributed practice

- Review your class notes after lecture or tutorial (for 15-20 minutes)
  - Combine with practice testing by, while going through your notes, writing questions about stuff you did not understand and then try to answer and understand these questions
- Make sure you plan ahead: make sure you have enough time to be able to distribute your studying
  - Make a habit out of going back to notes from previous topics (tutorials) at the end of each study session, this makes it easier to plan the repetition sessions and makes it less likely you'll forget to go back to the previous topics. Take the last 15 min of a study session to review materials from the week before. Start early and set aside a bit of time every day, even if your exams are far away.
- Make a schedule and plan time to review class notes and answer practice questions every day. For example, review your class notes not immediately but the day after a lecture or tutorial, write questions about stuff you did not understand and then try to answer these questions.
- Cover something from each topic during each study session
- If you decide to reread, do so at spaced intervals

## Elaboration / self-explanation

- While reading, ask yourself "Why does it make sense that...?" or "Why is this true?". The power of this method increases with prior knowledge.
- Generate questions about the important points as you are reading them, explain what you are reading to yourself (e.g. cognitive dissonance: What is cognitive dissonance? What experimental techniques are used to study it? What are 2 real-life examples?)
- Another possible question to ask yourself while reading is "How do I know?". You can generate explanations of what you learn using questions such as "What new

information does the sentence provide for you?” and “How does it relate to what you already know?”

- Think about concepts you are studying. Are they similar in some ways? Or how do they differ? You can take two ideas about the same topic and explain how they are different from each other, how similar and how they link with your prior knowledge. Do not take facts or theories for granted, but ask yourself questions.
- As you read and think about new information, describe how the ideas you are studying relate to your own experiences and to what you already know. As you go through your day, make connections to the ideas you have learned. But make sure the way you are explaining and elaborating is accurate.

### Interleaved practice

- Like distributed practice, the most important challenge related to interleaved practice is planning: make sure you go back to previous topics, and differ in the order in which you study them. Don't stay on one topic for too long, try to understand the topic and move on to the next. Make links between the different ideas as you switch between them.
  - Think about analogies, relating material to other things, structuring and restructuring (reproducing in your own words) of the materials while interleaving
  - Interleaving will feel harder than studying the same thing for a long time, but it is actually helpful for learning!

### Highlighting

- Highlighting or underlining may be useful if it is the beginning of a journey to select the most important information and to keep the attention on the text —if the marked information is then turned into flash cards or self-tests. But be careful: it draws the attention only to the highlighted parts; make actively connections between the information you are highlighting.

### Rereading

- Don't waste your time; use more active strategies such as elaborative interrogation, self-explanation and practice testing.
  - You can make it a bit more effective when you space out the reading intervals and plan the second reading after a 2-5 days.

### Summarizing

- Copy-pasting the most important information into a separate document or notebook do not benefit learning performance at all: do not waste your time on this.
- Use the read-recite-review method: summarizing chapter after reading it, recalling ideas from memory, after that review the chapter and edit summary; recall & feedback!
- Or the Cornell method: LEAVE SOME SPACE ON ONE SIDE OF THE PAGE (LEFT OR RIGHT), AND USE THAT SPACE TO WRITE DOWN KEYWORDS OR TEST QUESTIONS THAT POP UP WHILE SUMMARIZING. IF THEN LATER YOU WANT TO TEST YOURSELF, YOU CAN SIMPLY COVER THE SUMMARY PART OF THE PAGE AND EXPLAIN THE KEYWORDS AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS.

## Visualization

- Actively structure information you are studying into visuals (infographic, a timeline, a cartoon strip, or a diagram of parts), and use the visuals to test yourself: explain the topic using the visual.
- When reading a text, make a visual out of it (graph/diagram/mindmap), when studying a graph or visual, then explain it in your words: *the dual-coding technique*
  - Combine it with retrieval practice and try to write and draw from your memory. That way, you make visualization more effective.