

JUTA

STUDY SKILLS

LEARNING STRATEGIES & TECHNIQUES

The strategies that are given below are ways of holding onto information and recalling information.

5% LISTENING

10% READING

20% AUDIO VISUAL

30% TEACHER DEMONSTRATION

50% DISCUSSION IN GROUP

75% PRACTISING BY DOING

90% TEACHING OTHERS IN YOUR GROUP

This Bar Graph shows the recall rate of various learning activities. (Source: Data derived from the US National Training Laboratories.)

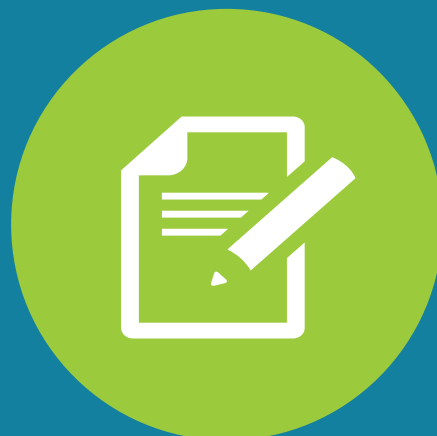
The bar graph illustrated above displays learning strategies in increasing order of effectiveness, from top to bottom. The top bar, Listening, is the least effective strategy. The bottom bar shows the strategy that is most effective in helping your brain to retain and later recall information. This does not mean that the other strategies should be discarded completely. Each of these strategies plays a part in helping you to understand, absorb and recall information.

When studying, it is best to use a variety of techniques. We shall elaborate on a few of the techniques in more detail on pages 16 - 24.



TAKE NOTE

When you apply these techniques, you are taking full responsibility for your learning.



STUDY TECHNIQUE 1 - TEACHING OTHERS

When you explain a section of academic work to other students, you yourself benefit the most from the exercise. You have to understand something really well to be able to teach it to others. If you have trouble explaining a concept to another student, it probably means that you do not understand it well enough, and that you have to go back and revise the topic. Because you have to prepare thoroughly and really think about concepts to be able to impart your knowledge to others, this technique is an excellent preparation for when you write tests or exams.

ADVANTAGES

1. It enables you to better understand the subject yourself.
2. It enables you to clarify and explain the subject in a concise and logical way.
3. It enables you to answer questions in detail.
4. It enables you to make connections that may not have been visible before.
5. It enables you to summarise information in an academic fashion.

This technique is an especially good way of keeping the information in your long-term memory, making it easier to recollect the information when you need it. Studying with another student or in a group can be beneficial, but remember to stay focused. Do not get distracted by non-academic discussions.





STUDY TECHNIQUE 2 – THE CONTINUOUS REVIEW METHOD

This technique is useful if you prefer to study by yourself or when your other study partners are unavailable. When new information is given to you in the lectures, go through the material every day or as often as possible. This cements the information in your long-term memory, and helps prepare you for a test or exam.

When applying this technique, do not read through the material in an unfocused way. This is ineffective and a waste of time. Keep yourself alert and interested by testing yourself as you read through the material. Ask yourself questions about what you are reading, and answer your questions. This will help you concentrate and will also help you understand the content better.

STUDY TECHNIQUE 3 - STUDY-COVER-RECALL-CHECK

When reading through your notes or any other material that the lecturer has set for you, you can use this technique to help your brain remember and store the information. This technique isn't new and is still one of the most effective techniques for storing information into long-term memory.

● STUDY

Go through the material and make sure you understand the content by making brief summaries and/or drawing simple mind maps.

● COVER

Cover up the work that you have just read and understood.

● RECALL

Try to remember the key information and write it down in bullet points.

● CHECK

See if what you have written corresponds with your original notes and learning material. If you have left out some key information redo the exercise and add the missing information to your list.

ADVANTAGES

1. If you do this daily, you will be well prepared for your exams even before you start studying for them.
2. The summaries and mind maps you create when using this technique can be used to study for tests and exams.

STUDY TECHNIQUE 4 - THE SQ3R METHOD

This technique involves the following routine: survey, question, read, recite and review. SQ3R helps you to get an overview of the information and build a framework, in addition to helping you to hold on to the information in long-term memory.

1

SURVEY

This is a quick scan of the reading material. Depending on the amount of material, this will take approximately 1–5 minutes. While you scan through the information you should try to understand the general theme or meaning of the chapter or section.

When scanning, look at the following closely:

1. The title and headings first – they will give you the main framework of concepts covered
2. The subheadings below each heading – these will give you an idea of the details that will be discussed for each concept
3. Captions under pictures, charts, graphs or maps – they will give you an even better idea of the details covered
4. Introductory and closing paragraphs – they will give you an idea of the logical flow of argument

TIP -

The main headings are usually in a larger font and different colour, or highlighted in bold. They will tell you what the main concepts are.



2

QUESTION

Take a couple of minutes longer than Step 1 (roughly 5–10 minutes) and take a closer look at your reading material by asking yourself questions. Ask yourself what you are trying to find out by studying the material. As you progress write down your questions on your exam pad.



TIP -

Take note of the headings and convert them into questions.

3

READ

Now read slowly through the information. Make a note of everything you do not understand fully. You will have to come back to these points later and explore them in more detail, perhaps by consulting other resources. As you read, search for the answers to the questions you wrote down in Step 2. This process is known as active reading and takes concentration and focus.



TIP -

Re-read the captions under pictures, graphs, etc. Take special note of the underlined, italicised and bold printed words or phrases. Examine all graphs and diagrams. These will sum up and clarify the content that you have just read.

4

RECITE

Summarise the information you have just read using your own words. Write down what you have summarised and say it out loud to yourself.

5

REVIEW

This means going over everything you have done by:

1. Reading through the entire chapter or other relevant material.
2. Looking at your recitation summaries and turning them into questions.
3. Answering the questions without looking at the material.



TIP -

You can combine the SQ3R technique with Study technique 1 ('Teaching others') by adding a 6th step – tell or explain to someone what you have just read.



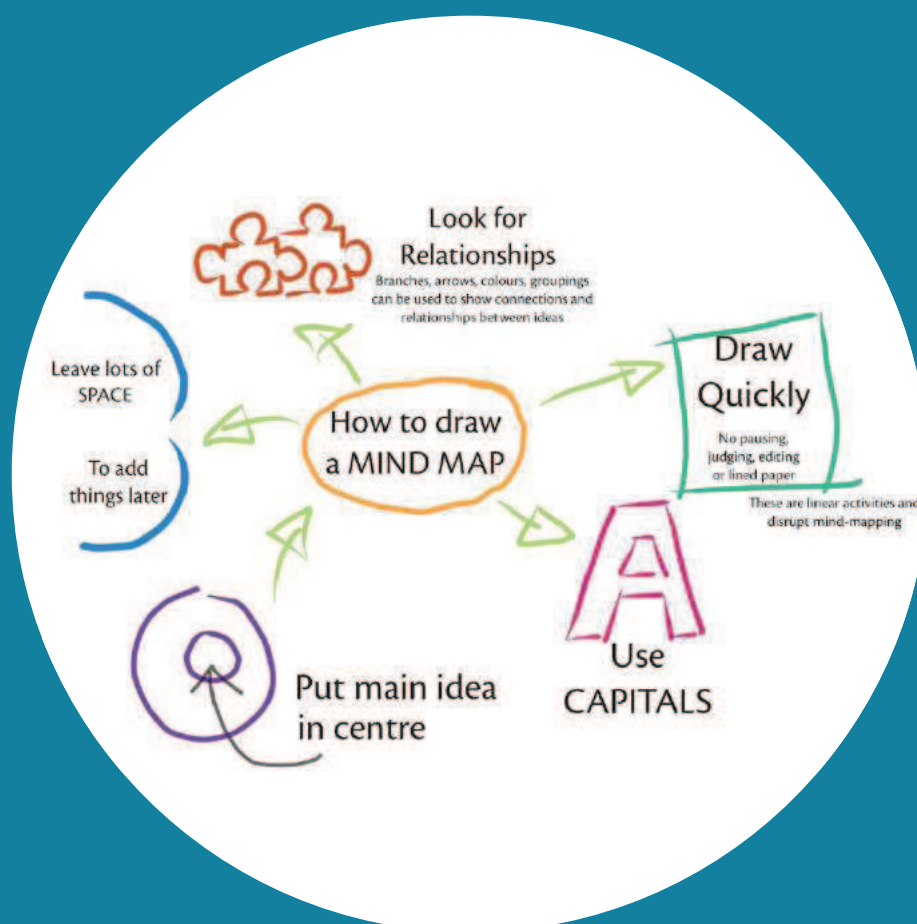
TIP -

If you are struggling to remember some of the more difficult concepts you can make flashcards, or develop mnemonics. Mnemonics are rhymes or sentences that can help you remember content. (See the section 'Use appropriate strategies for rote learning'.)

STUDY TECHNIQUE 5 - MIND MAPPING

Long-term memory is more receptive to images than to words, therefore using visual aids is a powerful study technique. Although most of what you study will be given to you as written information, you can still turn the information into a visual aid.

A mind map is a visual aid that is a great way of summarising and storing information. Below is an example of what a good mind map looks like. Use colour where possible, as this creates an association that can help you to recall the information from your long-term memory.



LOOK FOR RELATIONSHIPS

When creating a mind map it is important to understand which sections of information relate to each other, and how they relate. Place a central idea in the middle, and relating themes and what they entail around your central theme, question or idea.

HOW TO DRAW A MIND MAP

Step 1: Pick the section of information you would like to transform into a mind map.

Step 2: Write the central idea, question or theme in the middle of the page and outline it with a shape, for example a circle or rectangle.

Step 3: Draw several branches from this central shape and give each separate branch a heading that relates to your central idea. Draw a shape around each of these headings.

Step 4: Expand each of the separate headings by adding keywords or bulleted information. You can also add further sub-branches.



TIPS -

- Leave enough space when drawing your mind map in case you want to add information or questions later.
- Use capitals for your main ideas. The more prominent your information is, the easier it will be for your brain to memorise the content. Use capitals for the more important information and lower case for the less important words.

STUDY TECHNIQUE 6 - OTHER VISUAL AIDS

Other examples of visual aids are diagrams, graphs, tables and flowcharts. Creating visual aids is a great way of learning because you have to pick the most important points. This means that you have to read the material carefully, selecting and understanding the information as you go along. You will also pick up important connections that you can display in a memorable way on your visual aid.



TIP -

When drawing any type of visual aid it can be very useful to use different colours. However, do not use colour indiscriminately – use it meaningfully, for example to group ideas together, or show the relative importance of different concepts, or to show the relationships between ideas.