

How to remember what you learn

An online course aimed at high school and first-year undergraduate students

US\$95 / £60 / €75 / NZ\$110+GST / AU\$90

15% Early Bird discount for those registering their interest before February 14. (This is an expression of interest only — you will not be asked for any money (or credit card details!). Those registering their interest will be notified as soon as the online course is available, and granted temporary guest access to check out the course.)

The course is run by Dr Fiona McPherson, cognitive psychologist, author of four books on memory & learning (including *Effective Notetaking*, and *Mnemonics for Study*), and creator of the long-running and extensive *Mempowered* website.

The course will include short videos; podcasts, texts and worksheets that can be downloaded; plus guided instruction in mastering the strategies and exercises to practice them.

The course is designed to be taken in the student's own time, however Dr McPherson will be available to discuss problems and answer questions in forum or by email.

What the course will cover

Basic principles of memory that affect how well you learn.

Strategies for organizing your information to help you understand and remember it.

Strategies for remembering details that need to be remembered exactly.

Strategies to help you revise more effectively.

Course outline

Unit 1: Basic memory principles

To use study strategies effectively — to know when & how to use which strategy — it helps to have some basic understanding of the principles involved in making them work.

1.1 The 7 basic principles of memory

A quick look at how memory works, and the basic principles that affect which memory strategies are effective and how to use them effectively.

1.2 What working memory is & why it's critical

Explains what working memory is, how it interacts with your long-term memory, and how your individual working memory capacity affects learning & understanding (and therefore affects how you should approach learning).

1.3 What cognitive load is & how to manage it

What cognitive load is, and how to recognize when it is too high. How building strong networks helps reduce cognitive load; how you can use multiple working memory systems to effectively increase your working memory capacity.

Unit 2: Preparing your mind

Unit 2.1: Priming

Why getting yourself in the right mental space helps you make more connections more easily. Priming strategies for use with textbooks, before class, and before tests.

Unit 2.2: Setting & articulating goals

Why the first step in successful learning is working out your goals. Distinguishes between process & outcome goals. How to articulate specific goals.

Unit 2.3: Emotion regulation & attentional control

On how emotions (such as anxiety & stress) can reduce your effective working memory capacity, impacting learning ability and (especially) test performance. How to deal with it, and with problems in concentration.

Unit 3: Organizing selected information for better understanding and remembering

How to organize selected information in a way that makes the connections within the information clear, and makes connections to existing knowledge

3.1 Topical summaries

How to create good sentences & phrases that sum up the essence of a topic. When simple linear summaries are useful, and how to write them.

3.2 Asking questions

How to ask questions that show connections.

3.3 Making comparisons

How to make comparisons that show connections.

3.4 Graphic Organizers

How to create visual outlines to display your information, increasing your ability to make and see connections.

Unit 4: Using mnemonics for better remembering

Which strategies are most appropriate for information that needs to be remembered exactly, and how to use them.

4.1 Simple word mnemonics

This covers simple mnemonics the student will already be familiar with, but shows how to use them more effectively.

4.2 Keyword mnemonic

The keyword mnemonic is the most useful of the mnemonic strategies for study, being well-researched, of proven effectiveness, with wide-reaching applicability, and being relatively easy to master.

4.3 Linking mnemonics

Four linking mnemonics are covered here. These mnemonics are the ones most often used by “memory champions” and offered by those who make extravagant promises about how you can improve your memory. Although they are less widely useful than other simpler strategies, and in general require far more effort to master, a certain basic level of mastery can help you in situations where you are required to memorize ordered lists of items.

4.4 Mnemonics to remember numbers

For those needing to memorize dates and numbers, a coding mnemonic is useful. This mnemonic is also useful for those wishing to extend the pegword mnemonic (one of the linking mnemonics) beyond 12 items. This mnemonic does require more effort to master, and is included for the enthusiast.

4.5 Applying mnemonic strategies successfully

How to recognize when a mnemonic strategy would be useful. How to choose the right mnemonic strategy. How to apply it successfully.

Unit 5: Reviewing for better remembering

Regardless of how you prepare your material for learning, you need to repeat it. Unfortunately, most students revise poorly. This unit covers the best ways to review and revise.

5.1 Retrieval practice

The best way to practice, why it's effective, how it compares to other common strategies students use, how it applies in different learning situations.

5.2 Spacing & distribution

How to design a revision schedule for maximum learning.

5.3 Self-monitoring

The importance of monitoring; how to do it effectively; what to watch out for.

Final review

Exercises & tests to consolidate the material learned, and check understanding. Development of a 'master strategy' for individual learning.