

Retrieval Practice

What is Retrieval Practice?

Retrieval Practice is the process of **bringing information back to mind** that you have learned before. Rather than simply re-reading notes or looking through a textbook, retrieval practice encourages you to actively remember and use what you already know.



Every time you try to recall information from memory, you strengthen that learning and make it easier to remember in the future.

Why is Retrieval Practice Important?

Learning is not just about taking in new information. It is also about being able to remember and use what you have learned when you need it.

Regular retrieval practice helps you to remember more over time, build confidence in your learning, make connections between different topics, identify areas that need more practice, and prepare effectively for assessments and examinations.

The more often you revisit your learning, the easier it becomes to recall important knowledge and apply it successfully.

Research

Research shows that actively trying to remember information is one of the most effective ways to strengthen learning. The effort involved in recalling information helps it stay in your memory for longer and makes future learning easier.

More importantly, retrieval practice helps you become a more confident and successful learner because it allows you to see what you know already and what you need to work on next.

Retrieval Practice Helps You **RULE**

- **R** – Remember knowledge for longer.
- **U** – Understand your learning more deeply.
- **L** – Locate gaps in your knowledge.
- **E** – Excel in lessons and examinations through greater confidence and improved performance.



Even if you do not remember everything correctly at first, the act of trying to recall information helps your brain learn and improve. Mistakes are part of the learning process and often help you remember more next time.

Student Strategies: How to Use Retrieval Practice



1. Brain Dump

Write down everything you can remember about a topic from memory. Then check your notes and add any missing information using a different coloured pen.

2. Self-Quizzing

Cover your notes and answer questions from memory. Use flashcards, knowledge organisers or online quizzes to test yourself and check your understanding.

3. Practice Questions

Complete exam-style questions without looking at your notes. Afterwards, review your answers and identify areas that require further practice.

4. Teach Someone Else

Explain a topic to a parent, guardian, sibling, friend or even to yourself out loud. If you can explain it clearly, you are more likely to understand it well.

5. Spaced Practice

Return to your learning regularly over time rather than revising it only once. Revisiting learning helps important knowledge stay with you for longer.

6. Mix It Up

Revise a range of topics and subjects during study sessions. Making links between different areas of learning can strengthen understanding and memory.

Top Tips for Success

- Try to remember information before checking your notes.
- Don't be afraid of mistakes. They help you learn.
- Test yourself regularly.
- Make retrieval practice part of your routine, not just something you do before exams.
- Focus on progress rather than perfection.



Remember!

- Learning is not just about taking information in.
- Learning is also about bringing information back out of your memory.
- The more you use your memory, the stronger it becomes.
- Stronger memory leads to greater confidence, deeper understanding and better outcomes.
- Retrieval practice is not about catching you out. It is about helping you discover what you already know and helping you learn even more.