

Here are some specific, active retention strategies that will help your A students learn faster, your B students become A students and your C, D and F students improve.

Students POV

Studying for retention requires discipline and effective study skills that some students master early in their academic career and some struggle into their college years before it all comes together for them. The goal of study for many students is to complete the assigned work as soon as possible.

However, just completing the work does not necessarily lead to retention. The most important retention technique for underachieving students to learn is adopting a **regular review schedule**. Most poor students fail to review often enough. Here's a very effective pattern that will produce terrific results. For maximum retention, students should review after:

- One hour.
- One day.
- One week.
- One month.
- End of course.

Knowing **how** to review is as important as knowing **when** to review. One of the most simple yet powerful strategies is to verbalize learning in your own words. Even better, record these explanations on audio tape or digitally as a computer sound file.

Then add music (preferably classical) to the other track. Finally, play this voice-music recording when relaxed before sleeping or upon arising. This review involves both sides of the brain and accelerates learning.

Students can list comparisons—another dynamic active review. They first make a list of the main points, writing them in their own words. Then, they study them for a short time, put the list away and attempt to recreate this list from memory. A comparison of the two



Those who are struggling need help in learning how to effectively study, and they often look to their instructor for help. The most important retention technique for underachieving students to learn is adopting a regular review schedule.

lists will quickly reveal what they've missed. This list comparison process continues until the original and final lists match perfectly.

Instructor POV

The purpose of Retention for the instructor is to Show-You-Know and to validate mastery of skills, knowledge and attitudes, to substantiate learning and close the feedback loop, to arrive at a grade and to be sure course goals are achieved. To this end, instructors provide test reviews and practice tests to prepare students for a graded exam.

Outstanding students achieve more because they continually confirm their subject mastery. Struggling students, on the other hand, may fail because they haven't developed self-test skills. To assist your students, help them make self-testing during learning an unbreakable habit.

One of the most common mistakes students can make is to wait too long to confirm progress. Research shows that waiting more than 24 hours to review and test oneself reduces retention markedly. Practiced faithfully, a learn, check, sleep, check pattern noticeably boosts learning. Brainstorm a list of out-of-class, self-check activities and their application. Some examples are:

- Create a set of flash cards—useful for language or definition learning.
- Make a mistake analysis chart—good for pinpointing habitual mistakes in mathematics or English grammar.
- Form a testing partnership with a study buddy.
- Draw a flow chart—helpful when learning processes.
- Write an outline from memory—an excellent check for mastery of textbook reading assignments.
- Create a theory/application chart.
- Keep a daily learning log—check off learning when confirmed by self test or completing of practical exercise.
- Use imagination to practice a new skill.

As an instructor you want proof of learning confirmed by a written test, oral exam, evaluation of a practical demonstration, log, journal, paper, project or learning summary. You want students to show they know. You can help your students learn more in less time by leading a discussion on practical ways for them to show they know, and learning how to select and construct reliable tests. (See the Teaching For Success QuickCourse, "Ensure Quality Testing" for more information.)