



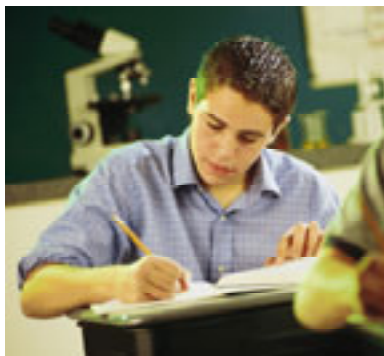
Secrets of Knowledge Retention

by Jack H. Shrawder, Executive Director, TFS

“They know enough who know how to learn,” wrote Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*.

Do your students know enough; do they know how to learn and retain? Many of the teaching problems that you face stem from your students’ lack of learning or retention skills. If you find that your students are not adequately retaining course information, it may be that they do not use an effective set of retention activities.

Here are some specific, active retention strategies that will help your:



- A students learn faster,
- B students become A students
- C, D and F students realize greater success.

The most important of these techniques 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.

When and how

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. Making voice notes is a great use of a smart phone.

Make lists

List comparison is another dynamic active review. Students first make a list of the main points, writing them in their own words.

Next, they study them for a short time, put the list away and attempt to recreate this list from memory. A comparison of the two lists will quickly reveal what they've missed. This list comparison process continues until the original and final lists match perfectly.

Review Activities

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.