



Six Key Memory Rules

by Jack H. Shrawder, Executive Director, TFS

Effective memorization is the key to excellent recall. Learning research is steadily adding techniques to improve the transfer of material to the long-term memory, thus improving recall. The more you know about how memory works the more you can teach for success.

The recommendation from many learning experts that learning sessions last no more than 20 minutes is based on the retention curve. It has been found that students remember a higher percentage of the material at the beginning and at the end of learning sessions than in the middle.



Therefore, when you break learning into shorter segments you increase the time when retention is at its peak. You may be reluctant to shorten learning sessions and include a two-to-four-minute break between each session, but if you do, you will be rewarded. Your students will actually learn more in less time than when you teach for 50 minutes or longer.

Here are six rules for increasing retention that you should be able to recall:

- What is unusual is remembered in greater detail; eliminate dull learning routines and you improve retention automatically.
- Organize the material; categories make new material much easier to remember.

- Make information as tactile as possible; it's naturally easier to store in memory, and it's the reason students love real-world examples that illustrate abstract concepts and principles.
- Visual memory is very powerful; thus the more a subject is illustrated, charted, diagramed, pictured, colored, and textured, the more effortlessly it can be committed to memory, especially when students create their own visuals.
- Review early and review often; review is the process whereby stronger and stronger memory links are forged; time spent on review can double, triple, or even quadruple recall.
- We remember more when we decide to remember; invite your students to make a conscious decision to remember, and they will!