

Strategies for Successful Students: Facilitator Guide

Opening

ABOUT PERSISTENCE

By enrolling in classes here you have made a decision that can change your life. Some decisions can make a big difference in your life. Can you think of a decision you've made that made a big difference in your life (e.g. having a child, getting married or divorced, moving to a new city or country)?

Education is an asset. What's an asset?

- Something you own like a car, house, computer or other property that can be resold or has "exchange value."

How is education the same or different from a car or house?

- No one can take it away from you. It's yours to keep. Like a car, it can take you to places, give you social mobility.
- Our classes are free, so you cannot buy an education from us, like you'd buy a car, but you do have to work for it to get it.

What do you need to do to build this asset called education?

- You need to be physically and mentally present.
- You need to study. **Instead of investing money, you need to invest your time to build this asset called education.**

What does it mean to be mentally present? What are kinds of things do you do when you are not mentally present?

- text or talk on the cell phone
- have side conversations
- daydream or plan what you'll have for dinner or wear to a party, etc.

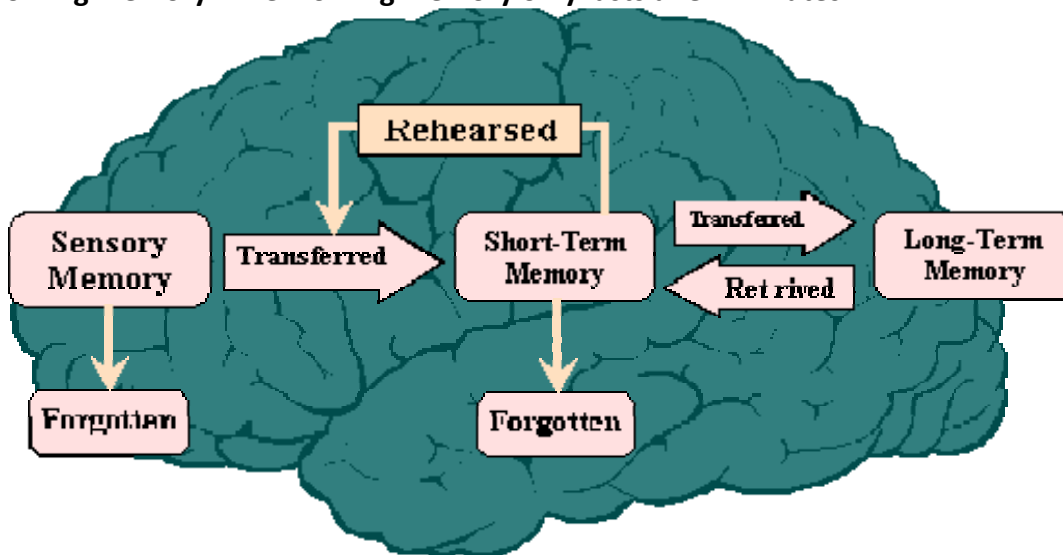
Today, we will learn strategies for how you can make the most out of your investment. If you use these strategies regularly, your investment will grow and you will make progress and begin to reach your goals. **By the end of this class/unit you will have learned 5 sets of strategies that will serve you for the rest of your life.** Make this investment of time work for you!

*** GIVE OUT BLANK PIECES OF PAPER FOR STUDENTS TO DRAW IMAGES OR SYMBOLS REPRESENTING THE CONCEPTS COVERED. DO NOT GIVE OUT THE HANDOUT YET. ***

Strategies for Successful Students

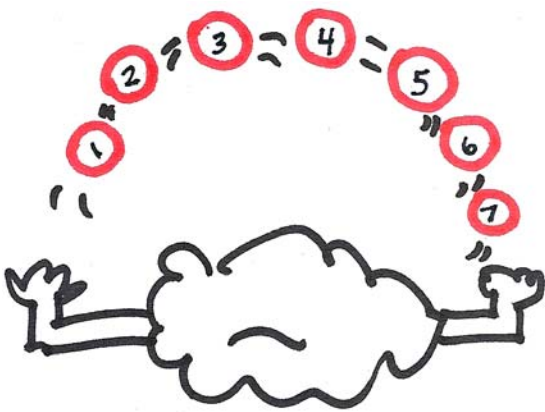
ABOUT MEMORY

Does it ever happen to you that you think you'll remember something and then when you need the information you cannot remember? This happens to all of us. That's because there are two kinds of memory: short-term and long-term. They are located in different parts of the brain. Short-term memory is also called **working memory**. **The working memory only lasts a few minutes.**



All information has to go through working memory before it can be “filed” into long-term memory. Short-term memories have to travel from one part of the brain (pre-frontal cortex) through the mid-brain (hippocampus) to where long-term memories are stored (neocortex).

This is the brain's way of protecting us because if all pieces of information went directly to long-term memory we'd be totally overwhelmed with the amount of information. **So we need to help our brain to decide what's worth remembering.**



Most people can remember about **7** items at a time. That's one reason why phone numbers have 7 digits (if you don't count the area code). There are things teachers and students can do to remember more. That's where successful student strategies come in.

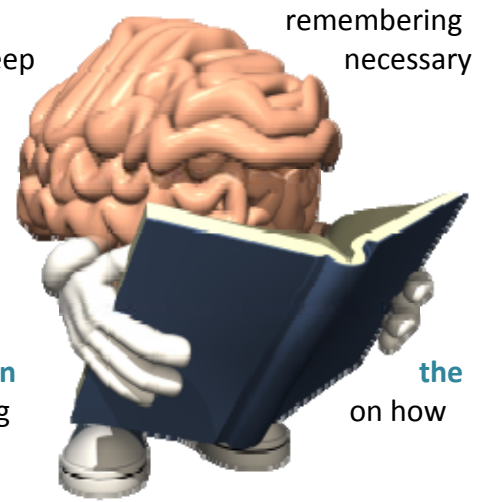
STRATEGY 1: LET YOUR BRAIN DO THE WORK WHILE YOU SLEEP

What many people don't know is that **long-term memory is created while you are sleeping**. It generally takes 3-5 nights of sleep for long-term memory to fully form.

Sleep is necessary for learning. Adult learners often have trouble what they studied. One reason is that many adults do not get enough sleep for the transfer of information from short-term to long-term memory.

What we do right before we go to sleep can help us build long-term memory. This means that if you review what you were supposed to learn right before you go to sleep, you increase the chances that you will remember it.

Right before you go to sleep, look over the content you studied earlier in day. It is not necessary to spend much time on it. This can vary depending much content you learned.



Activity

What do you think happens to your learning if you watch a scary movie or TV program or play a high action computer game right before you go to sleep?

- It can seriously interfere with remembering what you learned in class or studied on your own.

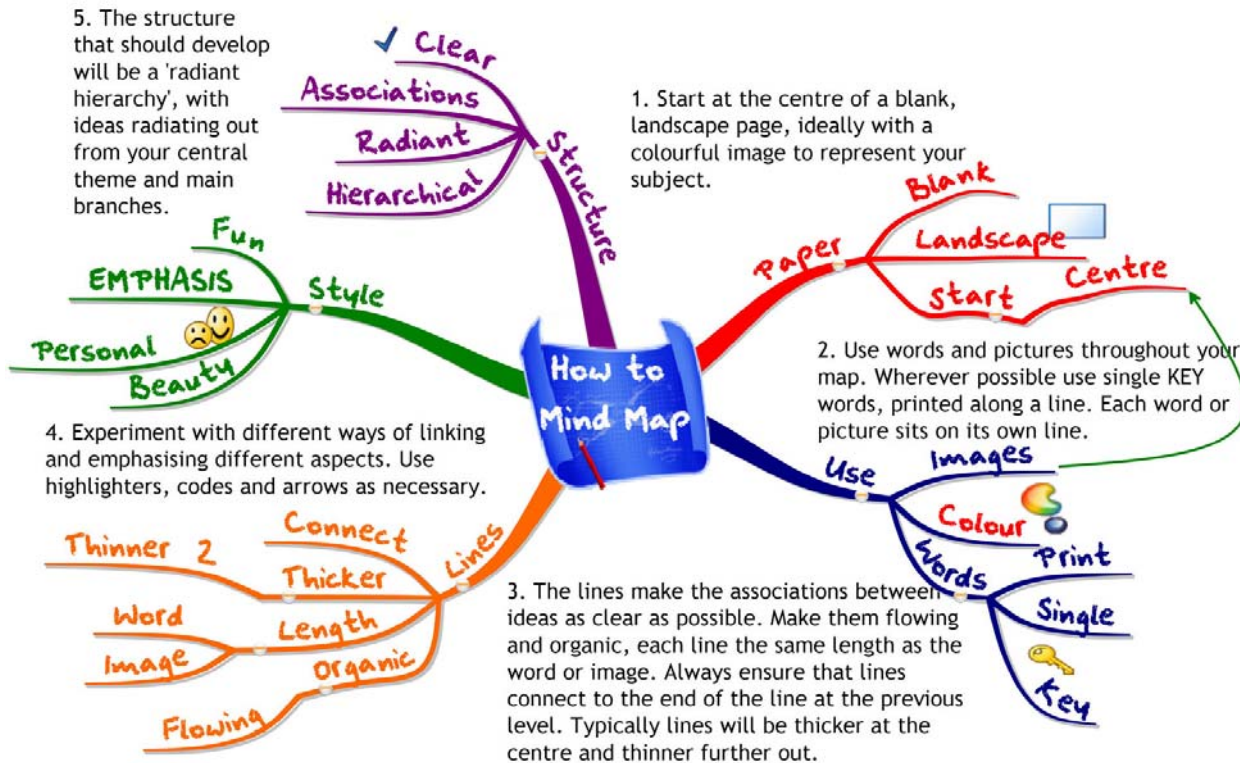
I. DRAW A PICTURE OR SYMBOL THAT REPRESENTS THE CONCEPT WE JUST COVERED.

STRATEGY 2: CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Unfortunately, a quick review before going to sleep is not enough. It is almost impossible to learn new material so you remember it without lots of practice and review. Here are effective ways to review material. Your chances of driving the information into long-term memory are better if you practice all of them.

1. **Quiz yourself.** A very effective way to review material after you have studied it is to quiz yourself. Make up questions about the material first, then review followed by a quiz.
2. **Spread your study sessions across several days.** When you learn something new, you should review it within about 24 hours and again in 7 days. You have a window of about 7 days from the time you learned new content or skills to review and practice them in order to create lasting long-term memory.
3. **Alternate different subjects or types of math problems.** You will remember more if you switch topics and types of exercises rather than study each type one block at a time.
4. **Explain it to yourself in your own words.** Ask yourself "why does it make sense that. . .?"
5. **Make mind maps.** Make visual representations of what you're learning.





Activity

Let's start a mind map about Successful Student Strategies.

II. DRAW A PICTURE OR SYMBOL THAT REPRESENTS THE CONCEPT WE JUST COVERED.

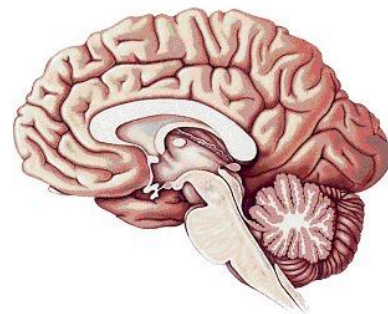
PAIR REVIEW ACTIVITY

Speaking of the importance of review, let's review what we have covered so far. Turn to your neighbor and come up with three things you have learned so far. What can you remember?

NOW GIVE OUT THE STUDENT HANDOUT

STRATEGY 3: MAKE EVERY EFFORT COUNT

Brain is like a muscle: the more you exercise it, the stronger it becomes. Did you know that learning new material literally our brains physically as the brain cells (neurons) make new connections? Academic success is all about using that muscle making an effort.



changes
and

1. **Check your thinking about intelligence.** Do you think people either are smart or not? If so, that mindset is not helpful. Almost no one reaches their goals without a lot of effort. Adopt a "growth mindset." If

you are not getting the results you want, did you give it 100%? Do you need to change your study strategy?

2. **Ask questions.** Many people are afraid of asking questions or making mistakes for the fear of looking stupid. Actually, the reverse is true. Successful students are not afraid to ask questions when they don't know something or want to know more.
3. **Learn to see mistakes as opportunities for learning.** Nobody likes making mistakes, but we all make them. The important thing is to learn from our mistakes. Mistakes can be our best teacher if we take the time to learn from them.

Activity

1. Write or discuss: Can you think of a time that you learned from a mistake you made? What did you learn?
2. Explain the wisdom behind the expression, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained."
3. Right now, you probably have a question about learning. Think of at least one question to ask:

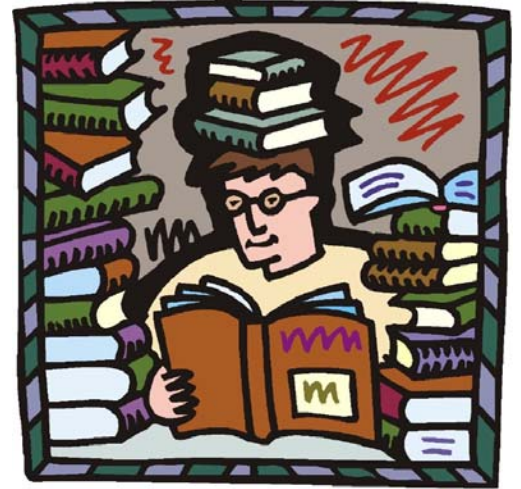
_____?

III. DRAW A PICTURE OR SYMBOL THAT REPRESENTS THE CONCEPTS WE JUST COVERED.

STRATEGY 4: MANAGE YOUR LEARNING PROCESS

Most adults lead very busy lives. It is hard to find time to attend classes and study. It can also be challenging to find a good place to study where there are no distractions. You will need discipline and support from your friends and family.

1. **Make a plan.** Set a goal for how much material you will review. Schedule a time. If you own a cell phone, you can use its built-in calendar and even set a reminder. Or use an appointment book.
2. **Set a regular time to study.** Analyze how you spend your time, and where you can save time in order to find time to study. Plan where you can study without too many distractions. If it's possible, change the place where you study from time to time. You'll remember more that way.
3. **Learn to set boundaries and say no to distractions.** Tell your friends and family that you need their active support. Don't assume they know what you need. Setting time boundaries is a skill that will help you make time for the things that matter the most to you.
4. **Keep your papers and notes organized by date and topic.** Binders with tabs are a helpful way to organize papers.
5. **Reward yourself when you have met your study goals.** Watch your favorite TV show *after* you've studied. Or treat yourself in some other way that's meaningful to you.



Activity

Best Time Savers: In small groups, talk about the best ways to save time you know of. Write down some of the best time savers you or your classmates can think of.

IV. DRAW A PICTURE OR SYMBOL THAT REPRESENTS THE CONCEPTS WE JUST COVERED.

Extension Activities

- **Time Management exercise:** Students estimate for how much time they spend on each of the listed activities per week. There are 168 hours in a week. Then they keep track of how they actually spend their time for one week and list the hours on the form. Some teachers have found they had to modify this activity to be just for one or two days.
- **Big Rocks:** This is a clever activity that makes an important point about setting priorities that can be fodder for class discussion. See instructions at <http://oncourseworkshop.com/Management002.htm>

STRATEGY 5: PRACTICE POSITIVE SELF-COACHING

We all talk to ourselves. Right? We can learn to guide this self-talk to be sure it is productive and moving us in the direction we want to go. Doing this can help us conquer our doubts and fears. We all have challenges trying to blow us off course.

Positive self-coaching is used extensively for improving performance in the training of Olympic athletes as well as by artists.

It usually doesn't work to just quit thinking negative thoughts. Many of us are not even aware of our negative self-talk. It's like a tape that plays in the back of our minds, and kicks in when we feel in doubt about our own abilities. It's more effective if we actively use positive self-talk.

First, you need to come up with a self-coaching script or affirmation that's meaningful to you. Here are some sample affirmations for an adult learner.

- ❖ I am persistent; I do not give up easily. I finish what I start.
- ❖ I am able to learn and accomplish my goals.
- ❖ I am an interested, positive, hard-working student.

Activity

Now is the best time to create your own affirmations. Be sure to write them as if they are already a fact. Finish each of the following sentences with two different affirmations for yourself here:

I am _____

I am _____

The next step is to use the script on a daily basis. A good plan is to read it first thing in the morning and at the end of the day. It is most effective to read it aloud. It is especially helpful when life gets challenging and you feel low on positive energy. **Replacing negative thoughts with positive ones will help you to stay focused on what's important.**

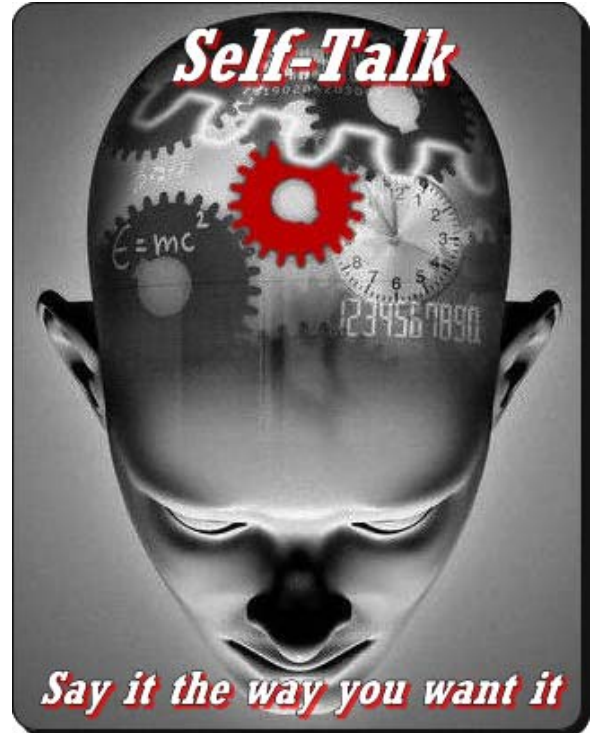
What do you need to help you remember to use this script on a daily basis? Think of ways that you can start right away (e.g. right after you brush your teeth or before going to sleep):

1. _____

Here's the thing: This strategy must be combined with practice and review in order for it be effective. Just like athletes and musicians have to practice all the time, so do the rest of us.

V. DRAW A PICTURE OR SYMBOL THAT REPRESENTS THE CONCEPT WE JUST COVERED.

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BONUS STRATEGY: DRINK WATER

The brain is over 80% water. Our brains need water to work properly. (The neurons in our brains need water to make strong connections, which are electrical impulses. Water conducts electricity.) Brain cells need two times more energy than other cells in the body. Water provides this energy more effectively than any other substance.

The body does not process other liquids like soda and juice the same way. There is no substitute for water. Drink plenty of water.



FINAL REVIEW ACTIVITIES

1. Go back through your list of symbols and images and write next to them the most important point that relates to that image.
2. Remember mind maps? Make a mind map of what we've covered today.