

STUDYING SUCCESSFULLY

How can you remember the study material?

With a final sprint and your hard work it may just be possible to get the study material in your mind quickly. However, a few days after the exam, you often don't know what you read in preparation of the exam. Shame, isn't it? By using a different approach, though, you can actually ensure that the study material sticks in your memory a long time after the exam. How?

Keeping up and repetition

Studying is actually not difficult if you ensure that you keep up and don't let it all pile up until just before your exam. But to be able to remember the material, keeping up is absolutely crucial. Repetition is namely the key to being able to remember well. And in order to do that you must, of course, start in time.

How do you do that, repetition? You may have already found a system for yourself for repeating the material. You may want to experiment a little with different methods of repetition. In this section, we will give you a basic method that works well. Try it out and see if it suits your needs, or adjust it into a method that works for you.

The basic framework for repetition is based on the following sequence: hour - day - week - month/exam .

With every following step, you will repeat more densely.

This is displayed in the following table.

Do you only want to study for your exam and forget everything immediately afterwards, or do you also want to be able to do something with the acquired knowledge after the exam. If the latter is the case, then repetition is necessary.

Sequence	Repetition	When	Number of minutes
Hour	1st	After 45 minutes study + 10 minute break	10 – 15 min.
Day	2nd	Within the first 24 hours. Also if you don't study that day!	5 min. per block studied
Week	3rd	One week after you have studied something	15 min. for what was studied last week.
Month/exam	4th	Week/few days before exam	Go through everything again

Table 1: Basic framework for repetition

Explanation

Hour: You study about 45 minutes, have a short break and before you carry on studying, you first spend 10 minutes looking at what you did the previous 45 minutes. You can, for example, make your summary or mind map (for this also see the pdf: 'How you do process the study material?'). Ask yourself questions: What is the essence of this chapter? Why is that the case?

Day: The following day, you look once again at your notes, things underlined and your summaries. If everything is clear, then you carry on. You do this approximately five minutes per block that you studied the previous day. Even if you don't study that day, you still take those few minutes for repetition.

Week: You take 15 minutes per day going

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mind mapping classes

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TIME MANAGEMENT peer coaching

self-knowledge CHALLENGE

STUDYING SUCCESSFULLY

self-discipline persistence context

remembering INDEPENDENCE CRITICAL THINKING

flexible thinking EFFECTIVENESS

learning styles repetitions

making connections exams

through what you did on the same day the previous week.

Month: This often is already too close to the exam, but if you still have time for repetition, then you should go through what you learnt the previous month once again and how it all ties together.

Exam: You go through everything again thoroughly in order to know for sure that it has really stuck in your mind.

Actively repeat

In the same way that you study everything in a circular fashion, you can do this repetition by going through your notes again, but this is passive repetition. You can also (and this is recommended) actively repeat. Consider what you still know studied and what this actually adds to your understanding.

In this way, you will be immersed in the material, you will have time to store it in your long-term memory and you can develop a helicopter view. To be able to remember something well, it can also help to hang up outlines and definitions or formulas that are difficult to remember somewhere where you often look. For example, on a mirror, door or in a toilet. In this way, you can always look at it again. Or add a new definition every day, until you know them all.

Do you really need to do it like this? No, but it does help to get the knowledge in your long-term memory and also to ensure that you can still access this knowledge after your exam. As a result of this, you can actively study instead of passively ploughing through pages at the last minute. Active studying means that you are steering the process instead of chasing it. You have more control over the study material.

Stick up outlines or definition that are difficult to remember at spots where you often look, such as a mirror, window or toilet door.

A trick: 'The Roman Room Technique'

Our brain can remember things in the most diverse ways. For example, our brain is sensitive to things that are personal, strange that move or which we associate with something. These are all aspects that you can apply to remember more easily.

One example is the 'The Roman Room Technique'. This entails taking a room you know well, such as your own room, and following a fixed route within it (for example via your desk to your lamp, to your window, etc.). At certain places along this route, you make a connection with those study elements that you want to remember. You link them together in an image of that object in that room (placing, for example, something that you need to know in thoughts (in a strange way) on the desk, and you hang the following element on the lamp, and you carry on in this way). If you need the knowledge again later, or in an exam, then you walk that route through your room in your head. As a result of imagination and (bizarre) associations, all elements automatically come to the surface in your memory. There are many more techniques for remembering. Take a look on the internet. And try experimenting.

Most important points

- Keeping up and repetition are the keys to remembering well.
- Your long-term memory needs repetition.
- There are different techniques that can help you to remember well.

Further reading

- Jan Willem van den Brandhof (2007), *Gebruik je hersens* ('Use your brain', Dutch only)
- Tony Buzan (2007), *Use your memory*.

Training courses/workshops

- Studie op de rails (On the right track)
- De stapel te lijf (Tackling the pile)

Questions?

Do you still have questions about remembering study material? Send an email to the student counsellor Ans Rekers: a.m.rekers@uva.nl.

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