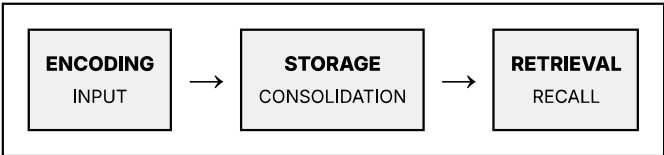




HOW MEMORY WORKS



KEY INSIGHT

Retrieval strengthens memory more than re-reading.
Every time you successfully recall information, the neural pathway gets stronger.

STAGE	WHAT HAPPENS
Encoding	Information enters through attention. Deep processing (meaning, connections) creates stronger memories than shallow processing (highlighting).
Storage	Memory consolidates during sleep and rest. Neural pathways physically strengthen through long-term potentiation.
Retrieval	Actively pulling information from memory. Each retrieval makes the next one easier (Testing Effect).



FOCUS IMPROVEMENT

Bottom-up attention (novelty, notifications) hijacks **top-down attention** (effortful focus).

TRIGGER	SOLUTION
Phone	Another room or airplane mode
Tabs	Close all except one
Noise	Noise-cancelling headphones
Clutter	Clear desk to current material only

THE FOCUS BLOCK

25-45 min focused work → 5-10 min real break (walk/stretch, NOT phone)
→ Repeat 3-4x → 15-30 min longer break

ACTIVE RECALL FRAMEWORK

Stop re-reading. Start retrieving. Close the book and force your brain to recall information from memory.

- **Read** one manageable chunk of material
- **Close** the book/remove source from view
- **Recall** everything you remember on blank paper
- **Check** against source, mark gaps in different color
- **Repeat** on gaps, then move to next chunk

COMMON MISTAKE

Re-reading creates "fluency" — the text feels familiar, which your brain mistakes for knowing. This evaporates the moment the book closes.

SPACED REPETITION BASICS

Review information at expanding intervals to flatten the Forgetting Curve.

DAY	ACTION
Day 1	Learn — first exposure, initial recall
Day 2	Review — full recall attempt
Day 7	Review — identify gaps
Day 14	Review — should feel easier
Day 30	Review — stretch interval further

PRO TIP

Score your recall 1-5. If you score 1-2, review sooner than scheduled. If 4-5, stretch the interval.

THE N.E.U.R.O. METHOD

- **N — Notice:** Capture important information intentionally
- **E — Encode:** Turn facts into patterns, stories, images
- **U — Understand:** Create connections to what you know
- **R — Retrieve:** Practice active recall regularly
- **O — Optimize:** Improve environment, sleep, timing

COMMON STUDY MISTAKES

- **Cramming:** Creates fragile connections that fade in days
- **Passive re-reading:** Creates fluency, not mastery
- **Multitasking:** Multiplies cognitive load, doesn't split attention
- **No sleep:** Interrupts memory consolidation
- **Highlighting everything:** Shallow encoding, no deep processing
- **Waiting for motivation:** Motivation follows action, not vice versa

THE SWITCHING COST

Every interruption takes several minutes to fully re-engage. 10 interruptions = 30-40% effectiveness, not 90%.



QUICK WINS

- **5-Minute Start:** Commit to just 5 minutes. Momentum builds from starting.
- **Blurting:** Write everything you know about a topic from memory in 5-10 min
- **Teach it:** Explain concepts out loud as if teaching a 12-year-old
- **Protect sleep:** 7-9 hours. Memory consolidates during sleep.
- **One task at a time:** Reduce extraneous cognitive load

WE'RE HERE IF YOU NEED US

Keeping this cheat sheet beside you is a great first step. If these strategies helped you feel more in control of your learning, we'd love to support you further.

There's no pressure at all. But if you ever want to explore more tools, or if you just have a question about your specific learning style, our door is always open.

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