

How to Improve Your Ability to Learn Quickly

- Explore this Article ■ Take notes by hand. ■ Create a learning schedule you can stick to. ■ Learn in short chunks of time. ■ Keep a positive attitude when you're learning. ■ Repeat what you want to remember out loud. ■ Use mental images to help remember things. ■ Try using mnemonic devices. ■ Test yourself as often as you can. ■ Practice a task in different ways to learn more quickly. ■ Reflect on what you know to identify gaps in your knowledge. ■ Calm your mind with meditation. ■ Exercise regularly. ■ Follow a healthy diet. ■ Get at least 8 hours of sleep each night. ■ Questions & Answers ■ Tips and Warnings ■ References

Co-authored by **Natalia S. David, PsyD** and **23 contributors**

Last Updated: September 16, 2021

If you've got a lot of information coming at you fast, or you need to pick up a new skill in a short amount of time, no worries. The good news is there are definitely some concrete strategies and tools you can use to boost your learning ability. To help you do it, we've put together a handy list of things you do to improve your ability to learn quickly and effectively.

Method
1

Method 1 of 14: Take notes by hand.

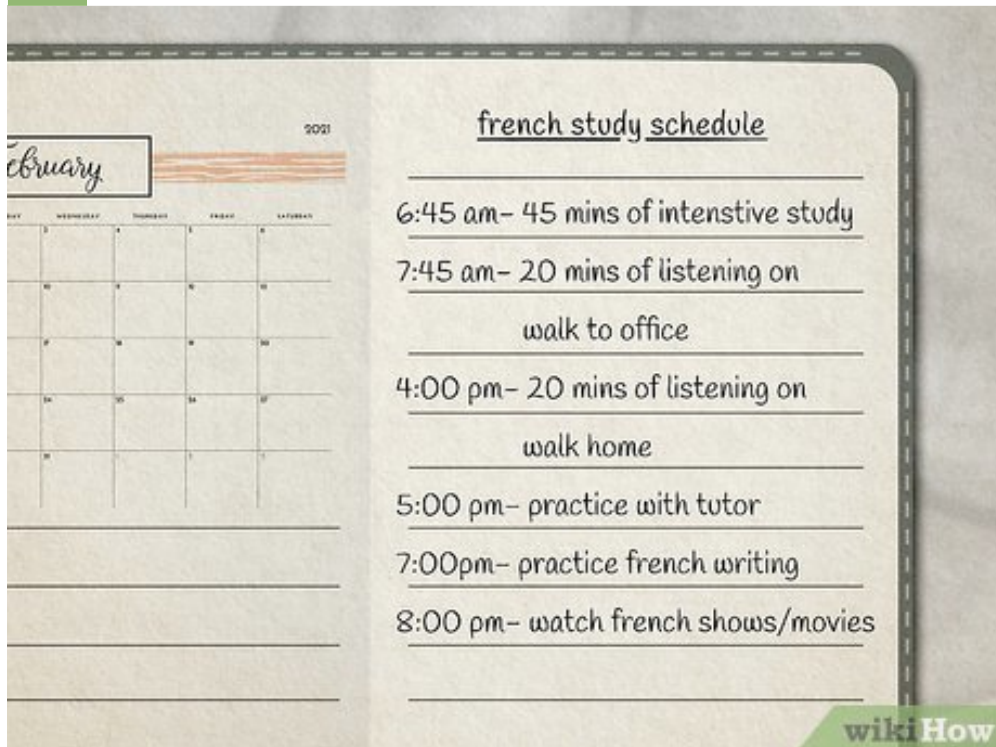


9
9

1 Research shows it can help you learn more effectively. Make sure you bring a pen (or pencil) and plenty of paper whenever you're heading to class or studying. Jot down important information and try reframing the information in your own words, which can help improve your recall. Write in phrases instead of complete sentences so you can still pay attention and won't waste time on every little word.^[1]

- Sure, you can probably type faster than you can write, but taking the time to write out everything by hand can actually retain the information more effectively.

Method 2 of 14: Create a learning schedule you can stick to.



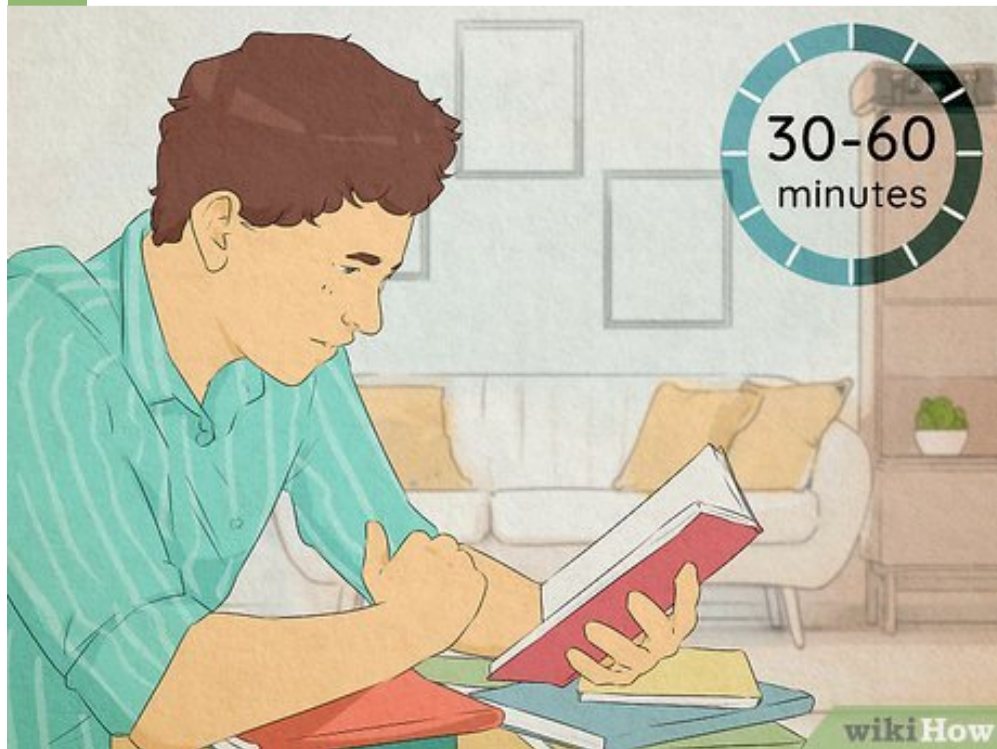
3

7

1 **Stick to a stable routine to help your mind retain more information.** Make a rigorous study or practice schedule instead of trying to learn something in your spare time. Follow the schedule you make and focus only on studying or learning during that time period.^[2]

- A consistent study routine can help you learn more quickly and effectively.

Method 3 of 14: Learn in short chunks of time.



7
3

1 You'll retain more information if you study in 30-60 minutes sessions. Distributed practice, also known as "time-chunking" or simply "chunking," essentially just means you spread out your practice or study sessions over multiple, short periods of time. Stick to shorter sessions focused on specific material.^[3]

- Cramming or super long study sessions (something like 2-4 hours) may help you remember information in the short-term, but you won't actually retain as much of it.
- One way to use distributed practice is to review your notes immediately after a class while it's still fresh in your mind. You can then study for 30 minutes to an hour each day after to improve your recall.

Method 4 of 14: Keep a positive attitude when you're learning.



7
8

1 The right mindset can help you learn more effectively. Try to remind yourself that you're learning something to improve your knowledge and skills. Think about all of the benefits that come with it, whether they're professional, financial, or creative. Avoid worst-case-scenario thinking and focus on the potential positive outcomes. It can make a huge difference.^[4]

- For instance, instead of thinking about all of the things you're missing out on while you study, try thinking about all of the things learning a new skill or getting a good grade in a class can allow you to do.

Method 5 of 14:
Repeat what you want to remember out loud.



5
5

1 **It can help information stick in your mind.** As you review or study information, use your own speech to add an active element to a word or phrase. Say something you really want to remember out loud. It can help it become more distinct in your long-term memory.^[5]

- For instance, if you're studying the rules of grammar and you want to remember what a gerund is, you can say something like, "Gerund. Gerund. Ends in 'I-N-G'."
- Try repeating the word or phrase multiple times to really drive it home.

Method 6 of 14: Use mental images to help remember things.



2

3

1 Make visual associations with information you're studying. Try thinking of words, phrases, and information that you're learning as specific images in your mind. Turn large amounts of data into charts and graphs you can use to study. There are a ton of different ways you can visualize information, so try coming up with your own, too!^[6]

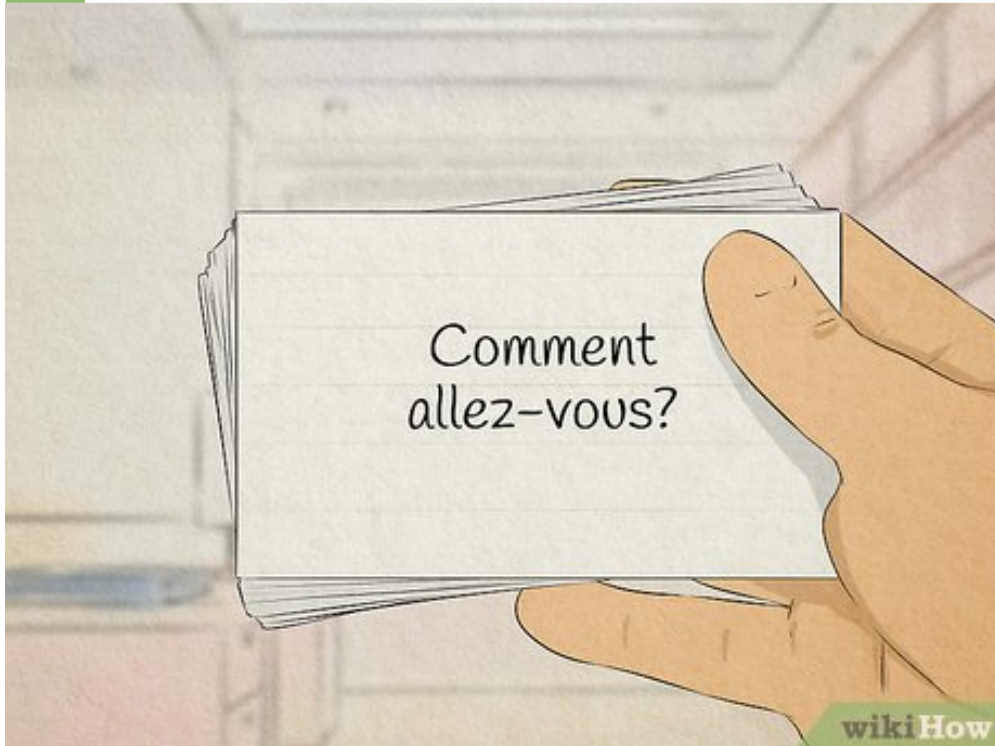
- For instance, if you're learning about the different parts of a cell, you could picture the nucleus as an office. The membrane could be like a castle wall and the mitochondria could be little factories in your mind. Find creative ways to help the information stick!
- Graphs and pie charts can be a super effective way to study large amounts of data.

Method 7 of 14:
Try using mnemonic devices.2
5

1 **They can help you memorize a large amount of information.** A mnemonic device uses a pattern of letters, sounds, or some other association to help you remember something, and if you know the “ABCs” song, then you know exactly how effective they can be! Create mnemonic devices with the information you’re trying to learn and it can help improve your recall.[7]

- Mnemonics help you simply and summarize things, so it’s really useful for a large amount of information.
- For instance, if you’re trying to remember the first 5 US presidents, you could come up with a mnemonic like “White Apples Just Mean Mice” or something like that to represent the first letters of Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe.

Method 8 of 14:
Test yourself as often as you can.



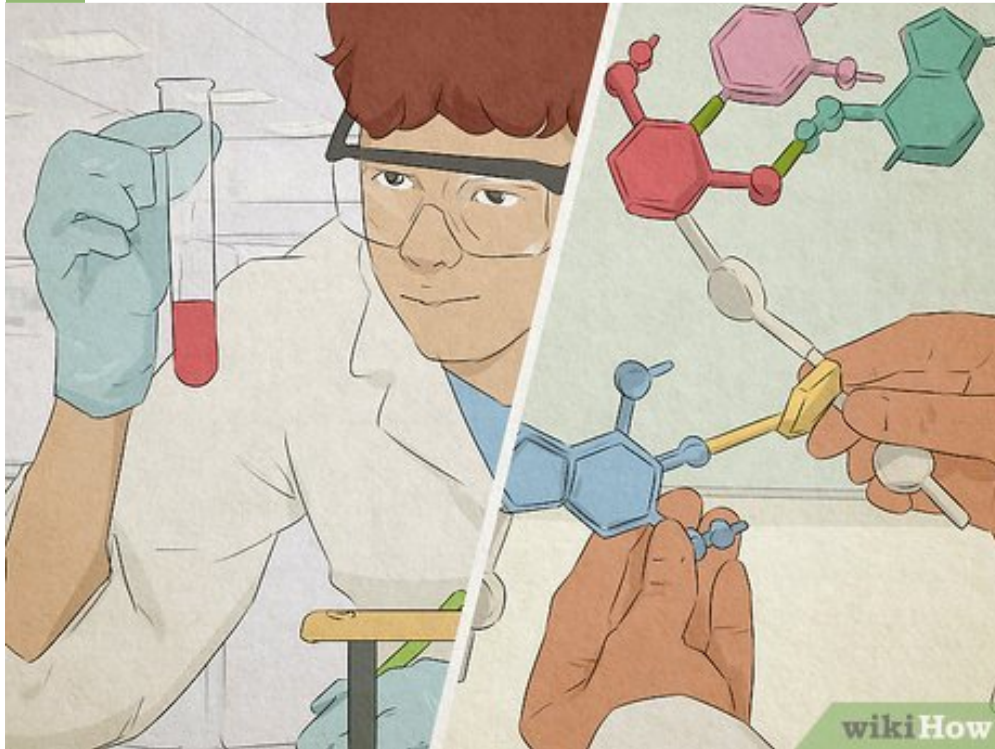
7

7

1 **It's a great way to figure out what you need to learn.** Go through the information you're trying to learn and ask yourself questions about the material. If you answer correctly, great! If not, find the right answer and try to remember it. If you have access to practice tests or quizzes, use them to challenge your recall. If you're giving a talk or presentation, rehearse it and test yourself by listing all of the information you'll cover as well as any stats or data you'll use in it.^[8]

- The more you test yourself, the more confident you'll be that you know the information.

Method 9 of 14: Practice a task in different ways to learn more quickly.

0
5

1 Changing up the way you practice can help you improve. If you're trying to learn a task or skill, practice is super important and one of the most effective ways to get better. But don't just practice the same way over and over. Instead, try mixing it up and practicing a different way each time, which can help your mind consolidate your memories and recall, making you learn more quickly.^[9]

- For instance, if you're giving a presentation on a specific topic, try rehearsing it normally, then try rehearsing it faster than you normally would. After that, you could try rehearsing it more slowly than usual. You can also try breaking it up into smaller chunks and going through each bit multiple times. Find different ways you can practice!

Method 10 of 14:

Reflect on what you know to identify gaps in your knowledge.



5

2

1 **It can help you figure out what you need to focus on learning.** Metacognition is basically thinking about thinking and it can be a really useful learning tool. As you're studying or testing yourself, ask yourself questions about how well you know something.^[10]

- For instance, if you're learning about the geography of Africa, you could ask yourself questions like, "Do I know where Libya is?" or "Could I show someone where Ethiopia is on the map?"
- Metacognition can also help you avoid wasting time on things you already know.

Method 11 of 14: Calm your mind with meditation.



1
10

1 **It can help you stay focused and relaxed.** Studying for a test, presentation, or anything else can be really stressful and it's easy for your mind to feel overwhelmed. Cultivate a calm and relaxed mind by [practicing meditation](#) or other techniques such as deep breathing exercises.^[11]

- The calmer your mind, the more you can focus and the better you'll be able to retain information.

**Method 12 of 14:
Exercise regularly.**1
3

1 **It'll improve both your health and your memory.** Studies indicate that regular periods of high-intensity exercise can significantly improve your memory. Try to get at least 30 minutes each day. Use exercise as a healthy way to take a break from your studies that will also actually help with your recall.^[12]

- Try out a group fitness class, go for a run or bike ride, or lift some weights. Do whatever you feel comfortable doing—just get active!
- Fun fact: exercise actually increases a chemical called brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which helps improve the health of your brain cells. Neat!

Method 13 of 14:
Follow a healthy diet.0
5

1 Give your body and mind the fuel it needs to succeed. The age old saying that “you are what you eat” may actually have a ring of truth to it. Research shows that eating brain-healthy foods like leafy vegetables, fatty fish, berries, and nuts can boost your brainpower, which may help improve your ability to learn new things. Focus on eating a well-balanced diet that includes lean protein and lots of fresh fruits and veggies and your body and mind will thank you for it.^[13]

- Take care of your body and it'll take care of your mind.

Method 14 of 14: Get at least 8 hours of sleep each night.

2
8

1 **A well-rested mind can learn more effectively.** Sleep isn't a luxury if you're focused on learning something—it's an absolute necessity. Your brain consolidates the information you learn while you sleep, and studies indicate that people who get a full night's sleep have better long-term retention of information.^[14]



Community Q&A

Question

How can we have fun while studying for exams?



Community Answer

It is possible to enjoy preparing for a test, but you have to be open to creative studying approaches. Make studying into a game, give yourself points or rewards for major concepts that you master. Use notecards to memorize definitions and play a card game to see how many you can get right in one sit down. One of the best ways to have fun is to study with other people, but make sure to stay on task.

Helpful 21 Not Helpful 3

Question

How do I get good marks?



Community Answer

Study daily, review your work, pay attention in class and take good notes.

Helpful 10 Not Helpful 2

Question

When is the best time of the day to learn?



Community Answer

The late morning is generally the best time of the day to start working on a difficult project or to begin studying for an exam. Body temperatures have started to rise by this point, but are not high enough to make you sleepy (like in the afternoon with naps). Taking a warm shower right after waking will also get your body awake and ready to focus on the task at hand. That being said, if another time of the day seems to work better for you, pay attention to your body/mind.

Helpful 10 Not Helpful 3



Tips

- Take breaks whenever you need them, too! If you're trying hard to study or learn something, your brain may need a 5-10 minute rest every now and then.
- It can also be helpful to find a comfortable, quiet place to study free from distractions so you can stay focused.



Warnings

- Avoid taking drugs or stimulants to help yourself stay up studying. You could get addicted to them and they may cause other health problems.^[15]

References

1. ↑ <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/323450>
2. ↑ <https://www.cornerstone.edu/blog-post/12-methods-to-significantly-improve-your-studying/>
3. ↑ <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/323450>
4. ↑ <https://www.cornerstone.edu/blog-post/12-methods-to-significantly-improve-your-studying/>
5. ↑ <https://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/these-10-scientific-ways-to-learn-anything-faster-could-change-everything-you-know-about-dramatically-improving-your-memory.html>
6. ↑ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/get-psyched/201207/learning-through-visuals>
7. ↑ <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/323450>
8. ↑ <https://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/these-10-scientific-ways-to-learn-anything-faster-could-change-everything-you-know-about-dramatically-improving-your-memory.html>
9. ↑ <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/323450>
10. ↑ <https://hbr.org/2018/05/learning-is-a-learned-behavior-heres-how-to-get-better-at-it>
11. ↑ <https://hbr.org/2015/06/improve-your-ability-to-learn>
12. ↑ <https://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/these-10-scientific-ways-to-learn-anything-faster-could-change-everything-you-know-about-dramatically-improving-your-memory.html>
13. ↑ <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/foods-linked-to-better-brainpower>
14. ↑ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0956797616659930>
15. ↑ <https://www.addictioncenter.com/community/dangers-facing-students-who-use-study-drugs/>

About This Article



Co-authored by:
Natalia S. David, PsyD
Psychologist

This article was co-authored by **Natalia S. David, PsyD**. Dr. David is an Assistant Professor in Psychology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and a Psychiatry Consultant at Clements University Hospital and at Zale Lipshy University Hospital. She is a member of the Board of Behavioral Sleep Medicine, the Academy for Integrative Pain Management, and the American Psychological Association's Division of Health Psychology. In 2017, she received the Baylor Scott & White Research Institute's Podium Presentation Award and scholarship. She received her PsyD from Alliant International University in 2017 with an emphasis in Health Psychology. This article has been viewed 83,471 times.

★★★★★
54 votes - 92%

Co-authors: **23**
Updated: **September 16, 2021**
Views: **83,471**

Categories: [Featured Articles](#) | [Studying](#) | [Improving Your Study Focus](#)

<https://www.wikihow.com/Improve-Your-Ability-to-Learn-Quickly>

The text and visual content in this PDF is intended only for your personal, non-commercial use. Any commercial reproduction of the contents of this document without the express written permission of wikiHow, Inc., is prohibited.