



Strategies for learning

Get the most out of your learning time by finding the strategies that work best for you.

We all learn in many different ways and while there are various learning models that differentiate how we learn, all recognise that we adapt and apply a range of skills and strategies, depending on the specific learning situation or task. Learning strategies can involve different senses and modalities that affect how we take in and process new information. Successful learners spend time reflecting on what and how they learn in order to improve.

While you may not be able to control the way you receive information at university (i.e. textbook, classroom, lecture, web-based content, group work, etc.), you can control your learning environment, learning routines, and the way you process that information. You can tailor your study strategies to best suit you and your situation. So don't be afraid to try new things! If something isn't working, change it! Find what works best for you, remembering that the effectiveness of different study strategies can change based on the content, your motivation, your environment, and even your mood or energy level at the time.

Examples of learning strategies

Check out the learning strategies below to see how you can incorporate different senses and modes of learning into your study routines.

Read/write

Learning by writing notes, lists, or summaries of information from readings.

- keep a study diary and write down what you remember after you have read a text
- annotate readings and identify connections
- make notes and underline key points
- write and re-write key words or phrases
- read other relevant information – do some research and read widely
- make written posters on key concepts
- use flash cards
- surround yourself with words while you study – put key ideas on post-it notes and attach to the walls
- use stories or concept maps to connect key ideas or events

Visual/pictorial

Learning by creating or using visual displays of information (e.g., diagrams, posters, visualising, etc.).

- draw concept maps, flow charts, labelled diagrams, or pictures as you read or review subject content
- use visual note making techniques, e.g., draw comics or cartoons based on key concepts
- use colour (highlighters or pens) to colour code different key concepts or ideas
- make mind maps to explore the connections between ideas
- make posters of key information and put them up where you will see them often; use coloured backgrounds and text

- make flash cards with pictures on one side and definitions or explanations on the other
- take photos and look up videos or pictures of difficult content/concepts in use
- study near a window, or somewhere with a pleasant view

Verbal/auditory

Learning by hearing and discussing (e.g., listening to lectures, reading aloud, creating songs or rhymes).

- read text aloud, or use text-to-voice software, such as Speechify
- play word association games using flashcards
- discuss the topic with a friend
- read the information, cover it, and then repeat it aloud to yourself
- make up songs or rhymes about the content
- do role plays of practical scenarios or content; be the teacher and explain key information
- listen to recorded lectures
- record notes for later; replay while you are running, working, or preparing to sleep
- listen to music (without words) while you study

Kinaesthetic

Learning through touch / using a hands-on approach.

Note: These strategies are particularly helpful when you are tired and/or easily distracted.

- incorporate movement into your study by taking a walk or riding an exercise bike while listening to or reading notes aloud
- discuss a topic with a friend while going for a walk or throwing a ball
- play with a stress ball or roll something under your foot while you study
- plan active breaks – pace, run, walk and stretch
- build 3D models or posters of key ideas
- remember experiences from classes and lectures: physically repeat your actions and tell yourself why you are doing each of those things
- sit wherever you are comfortable to study – outside, against a tree, etc.
- listen to music while studying, tap your foot or pen to the rhythm

Sensory associations

Activate your memory by connecting to information through the senses.

- Listen to a specific type of music or hum a tune while studying. Have the same tune playing just before an exam.
- Wear a specific perfume or have a specific scent nearby while studying. Then wear it during an exam.
- Set a routine prior to and during study, i.e., have a cup of tea, stretch your neck, and stretch your shoulders before you study. Then, periodically stretch your legs during study. Do the same before and during an exam.

Reach out for help

The Charles Sturt Academic Skills team is here to help you develop your learning skills. You can find all of our learning resources and support services at csu.edu.au/academicskills.

References

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