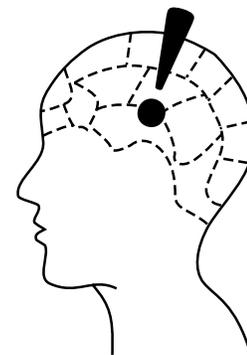


# Memory Skills



**Overview:** This lesson provides a basic look at how our memory works and how it can be improved by using some simple techniques.

**Objectives:** The objective of this lesson is for each student to (1) comprehend how memory works and techniques to improve it, and (2) appreciate the importance of memory skills in education and in his or her life.

**Measurable Samples of Behavior:** The student will:

*Cognitive:* — Explain the basic concept of memory

— Explain memory techniques

— Demonstrate the principles of memory techniques in a hands-on exercise

*Affective:* — Appreciate the role memory skills play in educational success

**Skill and Standards Connections:** This lesson has connections to the Tennessee KSAs – *Think Creatively* and *Think Critically*, and the EFF Standards – *Reflect and Evaluate* and *Solve Problems and Make Decisions*. (Appendix II)

**Teaching Strategy:** This memory lesson simply introduces some basic concepts. First you will provide the students with a definition of short- and long-term memory. Guide the student discussion through the importance and use of these memory concepts. You will then have the students read and discuss 20 memory techniques. Ask the students for their understanding of each technique and how they could use it in their life. Develop any other usage of this lesson given your students' answers and insights you have to the students, community, and other local issues. At the end of the lesson they will have an opportunity of selecting a topic they would like to remember, selecting the techniques that work best for them, and creating an action plan to learn and remember that topic.

**Time:** 1 hour

**References:**

David B. Ellis, *Becoming a Master Student*, College Survival Inc., Rapid City, Michigan, 1991.

*Newsweek* article, June 15, 1998, Dr. Barry Gordon and A. Sunderland, et al.

# Lesson Plan

## Introduction

**Attention:** We are going to talk about memory skills, but let me first find out what you think about it?

**Question:** 1. What are memory skills?

**Anticipated Responses:** — *Our ability to remember things.*

— *Being able to recall and use things we need in our life.*

— *Remembering how to do certain things like math techniques.*

**Question:** 2. Why would memory skills be important?

**Question:** 3. How could you use memory skills in your life?  
...at home with your family?  
...at work?

Let's take a memory test to see how we do.

### Tested Your Memory Lately?

When it comes to our memories, we are our harshest critics, focusing not on countless facts recalled everyday but on the forgotten few. This quiz offers a rough guide to how your memory stacks up against the norm.

- 1 point Not within the last six months
- 2 points Once or twice in the last six months
- 3 points About once a month
- 4 points About once a week
- 5 points Daily
- 6 points More than once a day

\_\_\_\_\_ How often do you fail to recognize places you've been before?

\_\_\_\_\_ How often do you forget whether you did something, such as lock the door or turn off the lights or the oven?

\_\_\_\_\_ How often do you forget when something happened—wondering whether it was yesterday or last week?

\_\_\_\_\_ How often do you forget where you put items like your house keys or wallet?

\_\_\_\_\_ How often do you forget something you were told recently and had to be reminded of it?

\_\_\_\_\_ How often are you unable to remember a word or name, even though it's "on the tip of your tongue"?

\_\_\_\_\_ In conversation, how often do you forget what you were just talking about?

\_\_\_\_\_ Total points

Score: 7-14 = better than average memory

15-25 = average

26 or higher = below average

*Newsweek*, June 15, 1998. Adapted from: "Memory," by Dr. Barry Gordon and from A. Sunderland, et al. (1983-1986)

Well, that provides you with a general idea about your memory.

**Motivation:** The great thing about our mind is that we can improve our capacity to use it, and that goes for our memory also. We can use the information in this lesson to learn and practice techniques that will help us increase our memory capacity. We can then use that knowledge to help others in our family and at work.

**Overview:** During this lesson we will learn about short- and long-term memory. You will discuss 20 memory techniques. At the end of the lesson you will have an opportunity of selecting a topic you would like to remember, selecting the techniques that work best for you, and creating an action plan to learn and remember that topic.

## Body of Lesson

### Main Point 1: What Is Memory?

Memory is the ability of our mind to recall information. When we think we have forgotten something, we really have either not stored it properly or cannot recall the information.

**Teaching Tip**

Work with the student responses to help them understand.

**A. Short-Term Memory**

Short-term memory receives information for a very limited time and usage. The obvious example is looking in the phone book for the number to a pizza delivery, dialing the number, and forgetting it after you place the order. You never intended to store that information in your long-term memory. What are some other examples of short-term memory?

One of the techniques to retaining information for later usage is to organize it, repeat it, and work on moving it to your long-term memory. Let's talk about that process of not forgetting.

**B. Curve of Forgetting**

1. Have you ever heard the term "Use it or lose it"? It is so true. You need to organize important information you wish to remember and use it frequently. The graphic (next page) depicts how we can either "use or lose" information.

**C. Long-Term Memory**

Long-term memory is that capacity that allows us to recall information from day to day, a week later, and a year later. This information has been organized and stored properly. However, we still have to fight forgetting, so we need to review and use the information. Again, "use it or lose it."

There are numerous books on techniques of how to retain information. The 20 memory techniques comes from the college orientation guidebook, *Becoming a Master Student*.

**Main Point 2: 20 Memory Techniques**

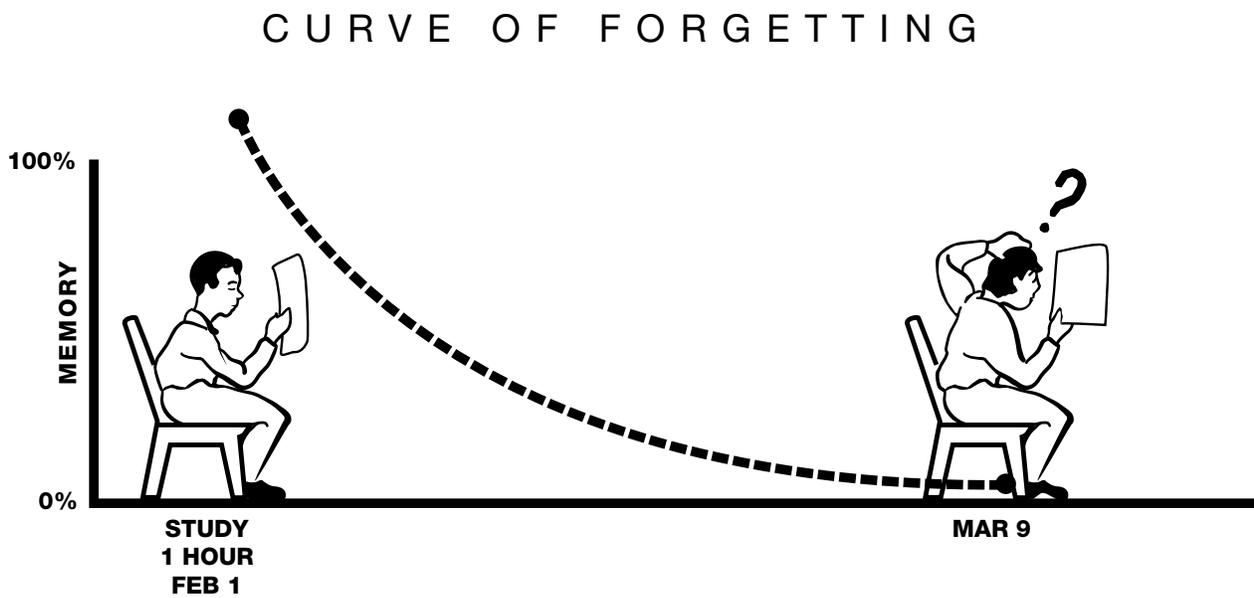
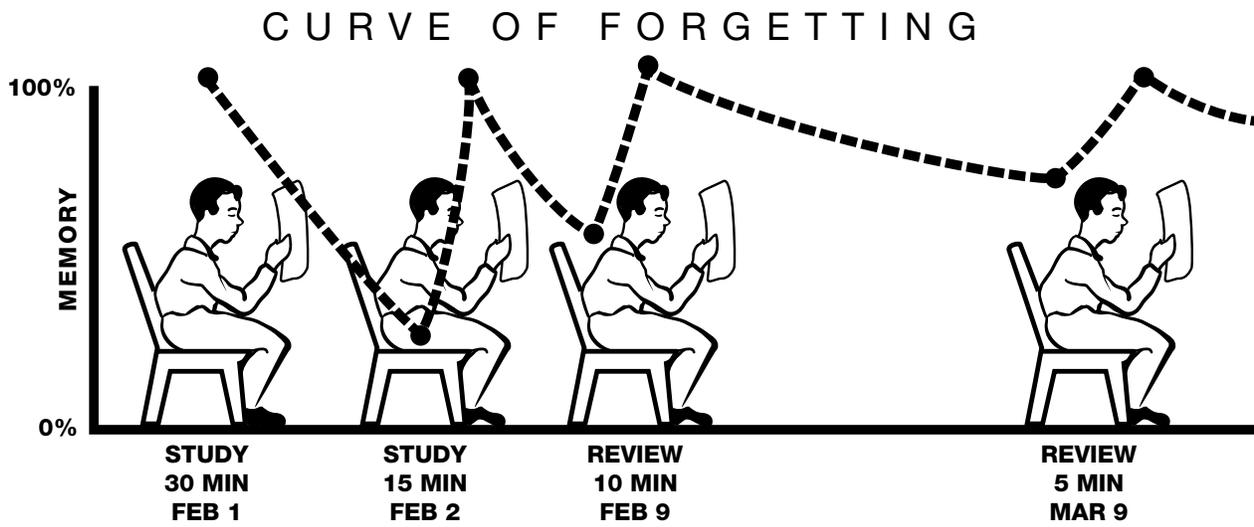
The following are 20 memory techniques. Let's read through each technique, discuss what it means, and how you can use the information.

**20 Memory Techniques**

(From *Becoming A Master Student*)

Experiment with the following techniques to make a flexible, custom-made memory system that fits your learning style. The 20 techniques are divided into four categories, each of which represents a general principle for improving memory.

1. **Organize it.** Organized information is easy to find.
2. **Use your body.** Learning is an active process; get all your senses involved.



Adapted from Air University -1 Volume II *Logical Thinking*, Alabama, 1974

3. **Use your brain.** Work with your memory, not against it.
4. **Recall it.** This is easier when you use the other principles to store information.

The first three categories (1 - 16 techniques) are about storing information effectively. Most memory battles are won or lost here.

### Teaching Tip



Talk the students through each statement. Help them to develop their own understanding and appropriate examples. Link these statements to in-class and out-of-class previous work and experiences.

### ORGANIZE IT

#### 1. Learn from the general to the specific.

- Look at the big picture: Use surveying, reconnaissance, and skimming techniques
- If you're lost, step back and look at the big picture

#### 2. Make it meaningful.

- Know what you want from your education, then look for connections between what you want and what you are studying.

#### 3. Create associations.

- When you introduce new information, you can recall it more effectively if you store it near similar or related information.

### USE YOUR BODY

#### 4. Learn it once, actively.

- Action is a great memory enhancer.

#### 5. Relax.

- When we're more relaxed, we absorb new information quicker and recall it with greater accuracy.

#### 6. Create pictures.

- Relationships within and among abstract concepts can be "seen" and recalled easily when they are visualized.

#### 7. Recite and repeat.

- When you repeat something out loud, you anchor the concept in two different senses: first, you're saying it and secondly, you're hearing it.

#### 8. Write it down.

- Writing a note to yourself helps you remember an idea, even if you never look at the note again.

**USE YOUR BRAIN****9. Reduce interference.**

- Find a quiet place that is free from distraction.

**10. Use daylight.**

- Many people can concentrate better during the day.

**11. Over learn.**

- One way to fight mental fuzziness is to learn more than you intended.

**12. Escape the short-term memory trap.**

- Short-term memory can decay after a few minutes and it rarely lasts more than several hours. A short review within minutes or hours of a study session can move material from short-term memory to long-term memory.

**13. Distribute learning.**

- You can get more done when you take regular breaks, and you can use them as mini-rewards.
- When you are engrossed in a textbook and cannot put it down, when you are consumed by an idea for a paper and cannot think of anything else—keep going.

**14. Be aware of attitudes.**

- All of us can forget information that contradicts our opinions.
- One way to befriend a self-defeating attitude about a subject is to relate it to something you are interested in.
- We remember what we find interesting. If you think a subject is boring, remember that everything is related to everything else. Look for the connections.

**15. Choose what not to store in memory.**

- Decide what's important to remember and what is not. Focus on the key elements of the concept.

**16. Combine memory techniques.**

- All of these memory techniques work even better in combination with each other.

**RECALL IT****17. Remember something else.**

- When you are stuck and can't remember something you know you know, remember something else that is related to it.
- Information is stored in the same area of the brain as similar information. You can unblock your recall by stimulating that area of your memory.
- A brainstorming session is a good memory jogger.

**18. Notice when you do remember.**

- To develop your memory, notice when you recall information easily and ask yourself what memory techniques you're using naturally.

**19. Use it before you lose it.**

- Even information stored in long-term memory becomes difficult to recall if we don't use it regularly.
- Read it, write it, speak it, listen to it, apply it—find some way to make contact with the information regularly.

**20. And, remember, you never forget.**

- Adopt the attitude that says: "I never forget anything. I may have difficulty recalling something from my memory, but I never really forget it. All I have to do is find where I stored it."
- You can say "I don't recall it right now"—not "I don't remember."

**Main Point 3: Putting It to Work**

Select a subject or something you want to learn or remember and select the techniques that would help you master the subject. Use a PDSA goal form to state your goal, select the techniques that will work for you, and chart your plan of action.

**Conclusion**

**Summary:** We have looked at thinking skills that can help all of us with our education and other aspects of life. We can never spend too much time building these skills, because they are important to our growth.

- *What have you learned about memory skills?*
- *Why are memory skills important?*
- *How can you use memory skills to help at home, work, and in the community?*

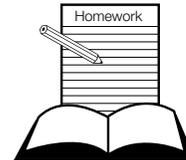
**Teaching Tip**

Ask the questions allowing the students to summarize the lesson. Fill in any gaps and items they miss.

**Re-Motivation:** Remember the great thing about our mind is that we can improve our capacity to remember things. We can improve our memory. Put this knowledge to work helping yourself, others, and the community.

**Close:** Remember: “USE IT OR LOSE IT!”

**Homework Assignment:** “Putting It to Work” (in Appendix I)



**Homework Review:** Watch the world news (in Appendix I)

### Thought for the Day

**“The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitude.”**

—*William James*

The way you feel can affect how you do. Changing your life may be as simple as changing how you feel.

### Teaching Tip



Begin each day with a review of the previous day’s homework. Allow 15-20 minutes to review the homework.

Then begin the “Thought for the Day.” Give students time to answer the four questions. Then discuss the “Thought for the Day.”

## ACTIVITY: Reviewing the TABE Test Using the Shewhart Cycle to Improve Test-Taking Strategies

**Overview:** The first TABE test review focuses on test-taking strategies using the Shewhart Cycle to create an action plan in order to improve learners’ test-taking strategies. Using the quality tool—Shewhart Cycle—learners are asked to focus on how they can improve their test scores by carrying out a plan. Knox County Adult Education uses the TABE test. This lesson is adaptable to any adult education test.

**Educational Goal:** The goal of this lesson is for learners to (1) Comprehend how a plan of action can improve test-taking strategies, and (2) respond positively to the Shewhart Cycle and how it can be used to plan out any goal in learners’ lives as parents, workers, and citizens.

**Objectives:** The learners will:

- Cognitive:*
- Explain how they can use the Shewhart Cycle to use their test-taking strategies.
  - Identify how they can use the Shewhart Cycle to achieve their goals as parents, workers, and citizens.

**Procedure:** When learners begin their test review, ask them to use the Shewhart Cycle to create an action plan. The plan will help them to improve their test-taking strategies by using the Shewhart Cycle as a step-by-step process toward improvement. Learners should be asked to begin their review and take notes on what they need to do to improve their test scores for the post-test. After learners have taken notes during their review, they should create a plan that will assist them. The plan becomes a checkoff list of strategies to use to improve. Examples of learn-

## ACTIVITY: Reviewing the TABE Test Using the Shewhart Cycle to Improve Test-Taking Strategies

ers' plans are: create a schedule that allows nightly study time, develop a structured system of studying including appropriate books and amount of practice work, work on memory skills, or learn to reduce frustrations or stress when taking tests. The following review session will ask learners to focus on the *Do* step of the Shewhart Cycle, but for this day only the *Planning* step should be completed.

**Summary:** After learners have completed their plan, discuss what they have written and how they will follow through with their plan. Check to see whether learners are sticking to their plan throughout the *Learning Skills* course by discussing what they have done to improve their test-taking strategies.

## ACTIVITY: TABE Test Review

**Overview:** The objective of giving a test review is for learners to become aware of what problems they missed and what test-taking strategies could help them to improve their test-taking skills. The review is given after the complete battery has been given. Learners are asked to look back at the problems that they missed and figure out why they missed them. The review does not ask learners to learn the test, but rather encourages them to learn test-taking strategies.

Many of our learners have problems taking tests. Some learners are scared of taking tests, others rush through them. Sometimes learners will make a mistake like filling in the wrong circle while taking the test. The TABE test review does not mean that we are teaching to the test. We ask learners to look at the problems they missed and to figure out what strategies they could use to improve their ability of taking tests. Most of our learners find that they need to slow down, stay focused, be more careful, or even in some cases speed up in order to improve their test scores.

Giving a test review for test-taking strategies has helped our learners to take more responsibility for their learning. They have the ability to look at their test, see their mistakes, and understand what the objectives are. Reviewing has allowed our learners to take ownership of their education. Again, the focus is not about the right answer versus the wrong answer. The objective is to help learners realize what they can do to overcome the fear of taking tests. They are taught to be patient while taking tests, pace themselves, stay focused, read the directions.

**Educational Goal:** The goal of this lesson is for each learner to comprehend how she can benefit from test-taking strategies.

**Objective:** The learners will:

*Cognitive:* Explain why test-taking strategies are important.

*Affective:* Predict how they will use test-taking strategies to improve their test scores.

**Procedure:** When learners have completed the complete battery of the test, they are asked to go back over every test and review the problems they missed. Learners are also asked to take notes on what they discover. It is important to take time out to talk with the learners about what they may discover when they begin the review. Tell them about the past experiences of other learners and what they realized after a review. In the past, many learners have discovered that they just didn't take enough time to fill in the right answer or they didn't read the question correctly. Many test takers will become shocked or even more motivated when they realize that they may have missed a problem because of a simple mistake. When they go back and look at the problems that they have missed, they begin taking notes and writing what they are discovering. We have found the test review to be helpful in many ways. The learner under-

## TABE Test Review, continued

stands how test-taking strategies are important and begins to predict how to use the strategies to improve her next scores. Listed below are some examples of what one learner wrote during her review.

**Summary:** When learners complete the review of their tests, they are asked to create a plan to improve their test-taking strategies using the Shewhart Cycle. You will need to set aside some time for learners to discuss their discoveries with you and the class. Make copies of their review to place in their file for the next class. The discoveries that they make will be helpful for their next teacher to see.

### Reading Review

I misunderstood.

I tried to look back to find the right answer but I must not have understood it.

I marked the wrong one.

Okay, I see now after reading.

I didn't take my time on it.

I didn't understand the chart.

I didn't understand the chart and what it was asking.

I didn't know what the word meant.

I should have read the novel again to get the right answer.

I should have read and understood it more; next time I'll be more careful.

I should have read it carefully, to understand, or looked back at the passage.

I didn't understand the question at the time, but now as I look back I do.

### Math Test Review

Don't know how to do decimals and forgot to round.

Don't know it.

Don't know it.

Don't know what to use to come up with the answer.

Don't know how to come up with that.

Didn't look at the chart good enough.

Don't know.

Didn't study the chart and understand the question.

### Language Test Review

Marked the wrong one.

Same. Marked the wrong one.

Didn't read careful.

Didn't read careful again.

Didn't understand.

I should have read it over more.

Didn't understand.

Marked the wrong one.

Didn't know the answer.

I should have known the answer. I know the answer after looking at it again.

Didn't understand.

Didn't know the answer.

Don't know.

**ACTIVITY: Basic Skills Work**

**Goal:** The goal of this hour is for learners to (1) comprehend how independent study on their basic skills will help them to take responsibility for their learning and (2) respond positively to independent study as it applies to their lives and goals.

**Overview:** The independent basic skills work time is a time for learners to take responsibility for their learning by practicing effective study skills. Ask learners to take the time to work in their workbooks in the subject of their choice. Either way, independent study allows learners to take ownership of their education.

Allow learners to study independently in their workbooks. They can work on any subject they wish and do as much work as they want. Assist learners when they have questions and ask them to check their answers and/or review their work. Have learners write down any questions or comments about the independent study. During the last few minutes of this hour ask learners the following questions. Having this discussion allows learners to communicate what they learned independently and keeps the class connected.

1. What did you work on?
2. What did you learn?
3. Write down any comments or questions.

**Summary:** This end discussion promotes openness within the group and helps learners to understand that even when they are working independently, they should still encourage one another to share what they have learned and to give feedback on how it is going. Learners need to know that they are not alone in their learning or frustrations with learning.