Paperlike

10 Ways to Study:

A Paperlike Guide to Learning Anything

Introduction

Here's the thing about studying: we've all been told to "study smarter, not harder," but nobody actually explains what that means. Most of us (even lifelong learners like me!) end up highlighting entire pages, cramming until 3 AM, and stuck in the cycle of memorize-regurgitate, but never actually retaining info.

I get it. That's why we created this guide.

At Paperlike, we're obsessed with helping people learn better, not just harder. Our community kept asking the same question: "What's the best way to study with my iPad?"

The answer? It's not necessarily about the device. It's about finding the right approach (using the tools available to you—like an iPad) for **you.**

We delved deep into learning research and pulled together ten study strategies that actually work (no fluff or outdated techniques your professors swore by). Then we built a quiz to help you figure out which ones fit your brain best, because let's be honest—what works for your study buddy might be tedium for you.

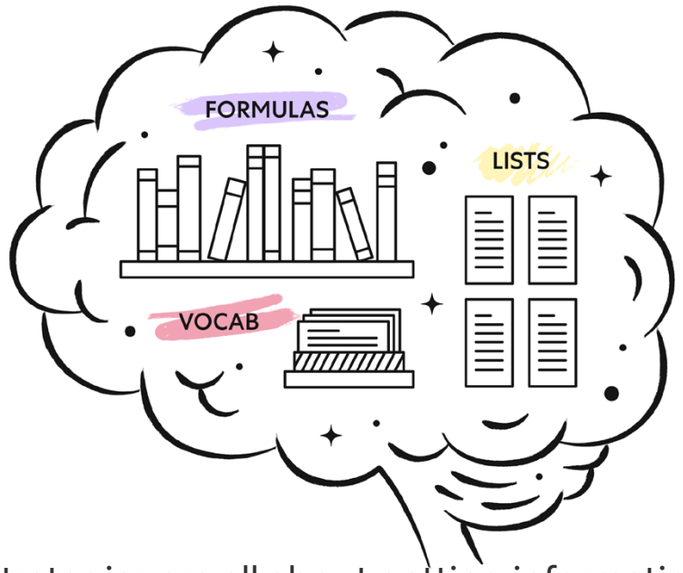
Think of the Ginkgo leaf: it's been a symbol of memory, focus, and resilience for thousands of years. Those qualities don't happen overnight. They're built through the right kind of practice, repeated over time. That's what real learning looks like, and that's what this guide is all about.

Whether you're cramming for finals, working toward a certification, or just tired of forgetting everything you read five minutes later, we've got you covered.

Hope it helps you figure out what actually works for your brain. Once you do, everything else gets a lot easier.

Contents

For Memorization



These strategies are all about getting information into your brain and keeping it there. Whether you're memorizing vocab, formulas, or long lists, these tools will help you recall facts faster and remember them longer.

1. Active Recall

Active Recall is the ultimate brain workout. Instead of rereading or highlighting (which feels productive but isn't), you pull information out of your brain by testing yourself. No notes and no peeking!

Think flashcards, mini quizzes, brain dumps. It's one of the most effective study strategies out there, hands down.

The goal? Pull the answer from memory before your notes can bail you out.

When should you use it?

- Memorizing facts, definitions, or vocab.
- When learning subjects that require recall over recognition (e.g., science facts, math formulas, or historical events).
- Prepping for quizzes, exams, or presentations.
- Anytime you're aiming for long-term retention, not just passing the next quiz.

Why it works

Your brain isn't a sponge; it's more like a muscle.

And the best way to strengthen a memory? Use it.

When you retrieve a memory, it strengthens the neural pathway that holds that information.

Every time you reach for that knowledge, the connection gets stronger, faster, and easier to access.

That's why active recall is more effective than rereading: You're training your brain to find the info, not just recognize it on a page.

How to use it

1. Learn the material.

Before you can recall anything, you've got to put it in your brain first.

That could mean reading a chapter, listening to a lecture, or watching a video.

Take notes if you want—but keep them clean and concise. You're not trying to make an art project here. You're prepping for battle.

2. Test yourself without peeking.

This is where the magic happens.

Put everything away, and try to recall what you just learned without looking.

That could mean:

- Writing down everything you remember (aka a brain dump).
- Saying it out loud like you're explaining it to a friend.
- Drawing a diagram from memory.
- Answering questions you made up (or found online).

The key? Get the info out of your head, not just glance over it again.

Retrieval Techniques

TECHNIQUE	HOW / WHEN TO USE IT
Brain Dump	Write everything you remember from scratch
Say It Out Loud	Teach it like you're explaining it to a friend
Diagram from Memory	Sketch the concept or process without peeking
Flashcards	Quiz & flip on paper or digital
Practice Questions	Simulate the real test format
Voice Memos	Record and play back your own explanations

3. Check your answers.

Now you can open your notes.

See what you got right, what you missed, and what you totally butchered.

No shame. That gap between what you thought you knew and what you actually remembered? That's where real learning happens.

4. Focus on the misses.

Circle the stuff you struggled with.

Then review it again, and try to recall it later without looking.

(Yes, again. Your future test-taking self will be eternally grateful.)

5. Make it a routine.

The more you quiz yourself, the better your recall becomes.

It doesn't have to be a two-hour marathon.

Even 10–15 minutes a day is enough to build serious memory strength, especially if you space out your reviews (see Chapter 7).

6. Mix up the method.

Variety = deeper learning.

Use flashcards one day, brain dumps the next. Try practice questions or teach the concept to someone else (even if it's your dog).

Different forms of retrieval challenge your brain in various ways—and that's a good thing.

7. Keep going until it's second nature.

Repeat the process until you can write an essay about the topic from scratch.

Or recite it from your couch, in your pajamas, without even grabbing your notes.

When it feels that automatic, you're good.

Tools

- **Notetaking apps** like Apple Freeform or Nebo for brain dumps, sketching processes, or writing everything you remember after a study session. No structure = no crutches = full recall mode.
- **Voice memos or recording apps.** Try explaining a concept out loud and recording it. Listen back later to see if you were clear or if it sounded like nonsense. (If it's nonsense, congrats—you just found your next review topic.)
- **Practice test questions** from your textbook or teacher to simulate the real deal.

TL;DR

- Active Recall is a study technique where you test yourself by retrieving information without looking at your notes.
- Best for memorizing facts, vocab, key concepts, and prepping for any kind of quiz or exam.
- Read or learn the material, then close your notes and try to recall it by writing, speaking, or drawing. Check your accuracy, then repeat. Focus on what you missed.
- Try using Nebo, voice memos, and practice test questions to help you put this into use.
- Always recall before you review, even if it feels hard. That struggle is where the learning happens.

2. Dual Coding

Dual Coding is all about bringing your notes to life by pairing words with visuals.

Instead of just reading or writing about a topic, you also draw, map, or diagram it.

The idea? Your brain processes information through different channels, and when you use both, you're way more likely to remember it.

Bonus: Stick figures 100% count.

When should you use it?

- For topics that involve processes, systems, or relationships.
- Perfect for science, history, anatomy, or anything with a lot of details.
- When your notes are starting to feel like a wall of text.

Why it works

Text hits your brain one way. Visuals hit it another.

When you combine the two, you're using both sides of your brain to create multiple entry points for recall.

It gives your brain a second chance to understand—and remember—what you're learning.

Plus, it forces you to slow down and think about how things connect.

How to use it

1. Start with your written notes.

Don't overcomplicate it. Take notes like you normally would.

Bullet points, summaries, whatever works for you. This provides your foundational understanding.

2. Identify what needs a visual.

Look for parts that are process-based, spatial, or just hard to describe in words.

Think: timelines, steps in a cycle, how one part affects another, or how things are grouped.

3. Add a visual element.

This could be a quick sketch, flowchart, labeled diagram, table, or mind map.

Use arrows to show relationships. Boxes to group ideas. Doodles to jog your memory.

You're not creating art... You're building memory hooks.

4. Keep it simple.

The goal is clarity, not creativity.

If you're spending more time shading than studying, you're doing too much.

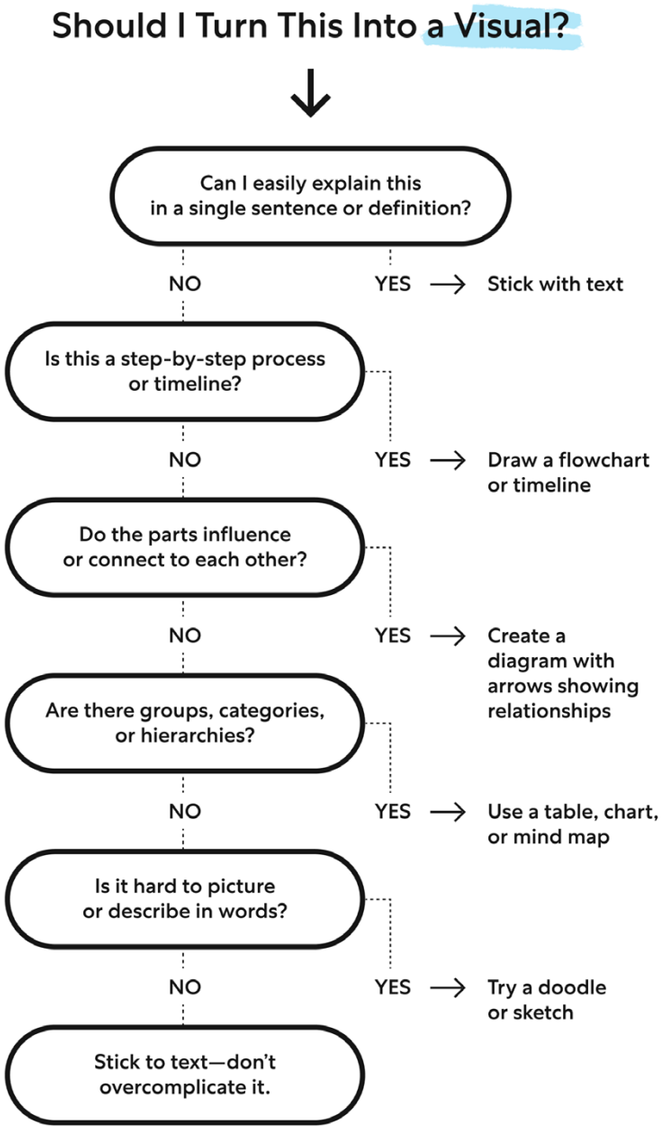
Stick to clean lines, color-coding, and concise annotations. You'll retain way more with less.

5. Review both sides.

Look at the visual → recall the concept.

Or cover the visual and quiz yourself using the text.

The beauty of Dual Coding is that you can approach the material from both angles and reinforce the connections.



Tools

- **Drawing-friendly apps** like Noteshelf or Concepts will help to combine visuals and written notes in one place. (Ideal for diagrams, mind maps, and color-coded sketches.)
- **Mind mapping tools** like MindNode, Miro, or even the sketch tools inside Apple Notes.
- **Colored pens or digital pencils** for structure and emphasis (not decoration).
- **Paperlike's Screen Protector.** And of course, if you're using an iPad, drawing and writing feel more natural with our screen protector.

TL;DR

- Active Recall is a study technique where you test yourself by retrieving information without looking at your notes.
- Best for memorizing facts, vocab, key concepts, and prepping for any kind of quiz or exam.
- Read or learn the material, then close your notes and try to recall it by writing, speaking, or drawing. Check your accuracy, then repeat. Focus on what you missed.
- Try using Nebo, voice memos, and practice test questions to help you put this into use.
- Always recall before you review, even if it feels hard. That struggle is where the learning happens.

3. Mind Palace (Method of Loci)

Welcome to your brain's real estate portfolio.

The Mind Palace, also known as the Method of Loci, is a memorization technique that utilizes **spatial memory** to store and recall information.

Imagine a familiar place (like your house or school), assign each piece of info to a room or object, and mentally walk through the space to recall what you've stored.

Yes, it's weird. Yes, it works.

When should you use it?

- Memorizing lists, steps, or sequences in order.
- Studying things like anatomical parts, historical timelines, speeches, or exam definitions.
- Whenever you need to remember a lot of information without blanking halfway through.

Why it works

Your brain is excellent at remembering places and images, way better than it is at memorizing raw data.

By linking abstract info to vivid, visual locations, you're giving your brain hooks to grab onto.

This technique taps into your spatial memory, which is deeply rooted and hard to shake once formed.

It's similar to Dual Coding (see Chapter 2) in its use of imagery, but here, location is everything.

How to use it

1. Choose your palace.

Pick a place you know well: your childhood home, your apartment, your walk to class.

You should be able to picture it clearly without much effort.

2. Map out a route.

Mentally walk through that space in a fixed order. For example: front door → hallway → kitchen → bedroom → bathroom.

This route is the skeleton of your memory palace.

3. Assign info to locations.

Take the material you want to memorize and assign each item to a specific room, object, or stop along your route.

Make the images as vivid and ridiculous as possible because this helps them stick.

Want to remember the optic nerve? Picture a giant eyeball blinking from your kitchen sink.

4. Visualize it clearly.

Walk through the space in your mind and see each image where you placed it.

The clearer and more memorable the mental image, the easier it is to recall.

5. Review regularly.

Just like Spaced Practice (see Chapter 7), revisit your palace to keep everything fresh.

Mentally walk through the route and retrieve each item as you go. The more you “visit,” the stronger it becomes.

6. (Optional) Draw it out.

If it helps, sketch a simple floor plan or map with labels. This can reinforce your spatial associations and help during early practice.

Tools

- **Your imagination**—seriously, that's the core tool.
- **Mnemonic imagery** (memorable mental images) to link ideas, like picturing a giant banana wearing sunglasses to remember potassium. The weirder the image, the better it sticks.
- **Sketches, pictures, or floor plans,** if theatre of the mind doesn't work and you need something more tangible.
- **Voice memos or prompts** to guide you through your route aloud for review.

TL;DR

- The Mind Palace uses familiar physical spaces (like your home or a daily route) to organize and recall information.
- Best for memorizing long lists, sequences, or anything where order matters (like anatomy terms or steps in a process).
- Visualize a familiar place, assign each item to a specific location along a mental path, and "walk" through it to recall the info.
- Use tools like your imagination, vivid mnemonic images, and (optionally) sketched floor plans for reinforcement.
- If you can "see" it clearly and tell a story as you walk through, you're doing it right.

4. Self-Explanation

Self-explanation is exactly what it sounds like: talking yourself through the learning process while you're learning.

Whether you're solving a math problem, reading a tricky paragraph, or learning a new process, pause to explain what you're doing and why.

Yes, you're thinking out loud, but unlike Ed Sheeran, you're doing it to learn, not to fall in love.

When should you use it?

While learning new concepts or processes.

When solving step-by-step problems in math or science.

Reading dense or complex material where you're trying to understand, not just finish.

Why it works

Saying things out loud forces your brain to process more deeply.

By pausing to explain a step or concept, you expose gaps in your logic, clarify your thinking, and lock in new knowledge.

Unlike the Feynman Technique (see Chapter 6), which happens after you've learned something, self-explanation happens during the process, making it a powerful learning companion in real-time.

How to use it

1. Start small.

Pick something you're currently working through, like analyzing a character's motivation in a novel, outlining your argument for an essay, or any idea you're still trying to wrap your head around.

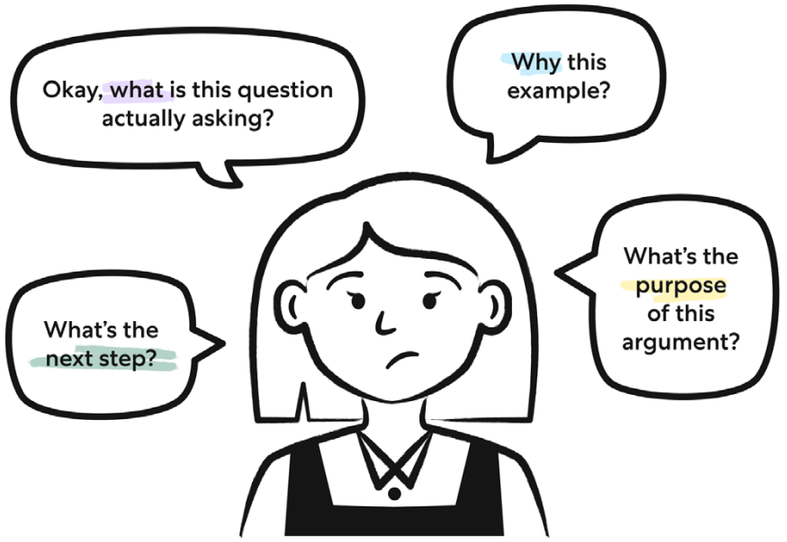
Don't wait until you've figured it all out. This method works because you're still in the middle of making sense of it.

2. Work through it step by step.

As you go, pause and explain what you're doing and why.

"What does this step mean?" "Why am I adding it here?" "How does this part connect to the bigger idea?"

You can talk out loud, write it in a notebook, or even whisper it to yourself in the library (no judgment).



3. Ask yourself "why" at each decision point.

Every time you make a choice, like applying a formula, deciding on an answer, or drawing a conclusion, pause and ask: "Why am I doing this?"

This is similar to Elaborative Interrogation (see Chapter 5), but more process-focused than fact-focused.

4. Be honest about confusion.

If you can't explain a step clearly, that's not failure. That's feedback.

Circle it, slow down, and dig deeper. That moment of friction means your brain is about to grow.

5. Use a journal or voice memo.

Writing or recording your explanations gives you something to look back on later and helps you spot progress over time.

Bonus: If you can explain it clearly tomorrow, you're golden.

6. Don't rush.

The whole point of this method is reflection in motion.

It might feel slow at first, but it pays off by strengthening your understanding and making mistakes easier to correct.

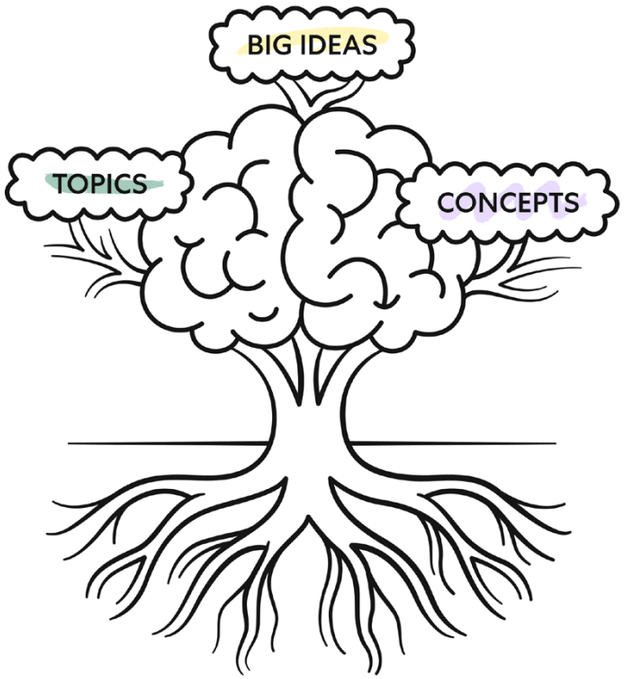
Tools

- **Voice recorder apps** for talking through problems out loud (try the built-in Voice Memos app or Otter.ai).
- **Study journals or digital notebooks** for writing out step-by-step explanations.
- **Study partners, tutors, or a rubber duck**—literally. Explaining the material out loud, even to an object, can help you catch fuzzy thinking in real-time.
- **iPad + notetaking apps** for combining handwritten steps with margin explanations.

TL;DR

- Self-explanation is the practice of explaining concepts or steps out loud as you learn them.
- Best for learning new material, solving multi-step problems, or reading complex content.
- Pause during each step to explain what you're doing and why. It reveals gaps and strengthens understanding.
- Use voice memos, a rubber duck, or journals to talk or write your way through.
- If you can't explain it yet, that's your cue to slow down and figure it out.

For Deep Understanding



Sometimes it's not about memorizing. It's about getting it. These strategies help you make sense of big ideas, connect concepts, and actually understand what you're learning (not just repeat it on a test).

5. Elaborative Interrogation

Elaborative Interrogation might sound like something from a spy movie, but it's actually a powerful (and surprisingly simple) study technique.

All it takes is one question: **Why?**

Instead of just memorizing a fact, you ask why it's true, then explain it in your own words.

This forces your brain to make connections and turn surface-level info into actual understanding.

When should you use it?

- When learning facts, terms, or concepts that seem isolated.
- Studying for science, history, or any subject where understanding **why** matters.
- Anytime you're tempted to just memorize without really thinking about it.

Why it works

Your brain loves connections.

When you ask, "Why is this true?" you prompt your brain to link the new info to something you already know.

That bridge builds meaning, and meaning is what makes facts stick.

It's similar to the Feynman Technique (see Chapter 6), but instead of explaining the whole concept, you're zeroing in on why one specific thing works the way it does.

How to use it

1. Find a fact or key idea.

Start with something you need to remember: a definition, a function, a cause/effect, a step in a process.

Example: "The heart has four chambers."

2. Ask, "Why is this true?"

Not "what does this mean?"—but why does it work this way?

Think: "Why does the heart have four chambers?"

If it helps, pretend you're answering a curious 10-year-old.

3. Try to answer it on your own.

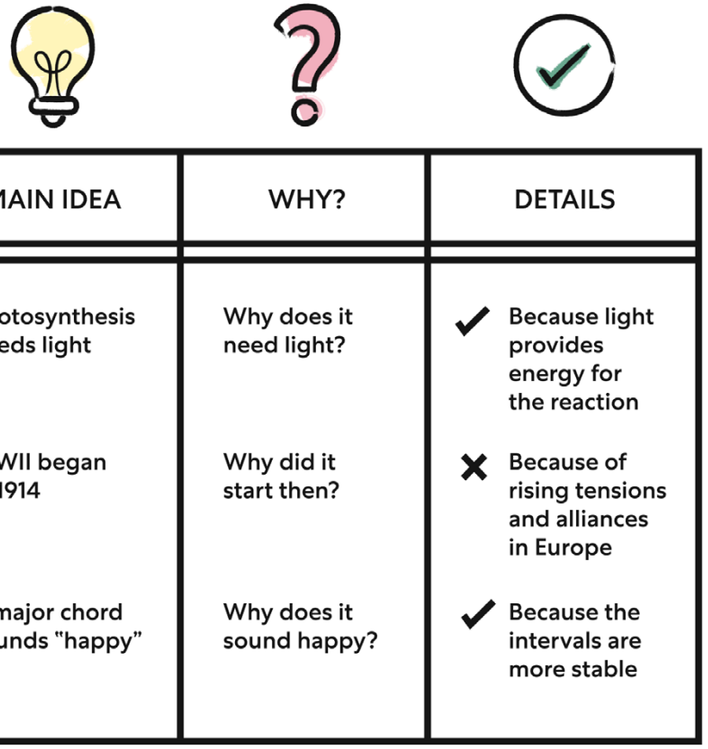
Use what you already know. Draw connections. Make a comparison.

If you don't know the full answer, take a guess. The act of thinking through it matters more than getting it perfectly right the first time.

4. Check your answer.

Look it up, ask your teacher, or confirm in your textbook.

Were you close? Did you miss something? Did you stumble onto a deeper insight?



MAIN IDEA	WHY?	DETAILS
Photosynthesis needs light	Why does it need light?	✓ Because light provides energy for the reaction
WWII began in 1914	Why did it start then?	✗ Because of rising tensions and alliances in Europe
A major chord sounds "happy"	Why does it sound happy?	✓ Because the intervals are more stable

5. Write it down.

Putting your explanation into words solidifies the connection in your memory.

Bonus points if you keep a running list of these “why” questions and answers to review later.

6. Repeat with other facts.

The more often you do this, the easier it gets, and the faster you’ll start thinking in connected ideas instead of isolated facts.

Tools

- **Question prompt lists** (some apps or websites have these built-in) to help you generate good “why” questions.
- **Study partners** to take turns asking and answering questions—great for building deeper understanding together.
- **Notetaking apps** like Notability or Goodnotes, where you can add side-column “Why?” questions next to your regular notes.
- **Sticky notes** or annotation tools to drop questions into the margins of your reading.

TL;DR

- Elaborative Interrogation asks, "Why is this true?" to help connect new info to what you already know.
- Best for facts, processes, and concepts that seem disconnected or memorization-heavy.
- Identify a fact, ask why it’s true, try to answer it, and then check and write down your explanation.
- Use study prompts, notetaking apps, or a partner to stay consistent.
- Channel your inner three-year-old and ask "Why?" about everything. If you can’t answer, you really don’t understand it yet.

6. The Feynman Technique

If you really understand something, you should be able to explain it to a five-year-old.

That's the idea behind the Feynman Technique, named after physicist Richard Feynman, who had a knack for turning complex concepts into clear, simple explanations.

This method helps you move beyond memorization by forcing your brain to simplify, organize, and clarify what you've learned.

If you can teach it, you know it.

When should you use it?

When you're learning something concept-heavy or abstract.

Studying for essays, oral exams, or anything that requires more than just definitions.

Anytime you catch yourself saying, "I kinda get it... I think."

Why it works

Teaching forces you to organize your thoughts, simplify core ideas, and identify any gaps in understanding quickly.

You'll discover whether you understand the material or you're just parroting words from a textbook.

Can't explain it in your own words? That's your signal to go back, fill in the blanks, and try again.

It's a reality check for your brain.

How to use it

1. Choose a concept.

Pick something you're trying to wrap your head around: a process, theory, or equation that's giving you trouble.

The Feynman Technique works best with big-picture concepts or tricky ideas that need to be broken down.

2. Pretend you're teaching it.

Now explain it out loud using super simple language.

Like you're talking to a kid. Or your dog. Or your future self who's running on no sleep and two granola bars.

No jargon. No technical terms. Just plain words.

3. Write it out (optional, but helpful).

Jot your explanation on your iPad or a whiteboard. Diagrams, stick figures, whatever helps.

Visual learners, this is your time to shine. The more clearly you can lay it out, the more confident you'll feel.

4. Identify what's fuzzy.

Did you get stuck? Use vague filler words like "thing," or "process," or "you just kinda…"? Those are your trouble spots. Highlight 'em.

5. Go back and review.

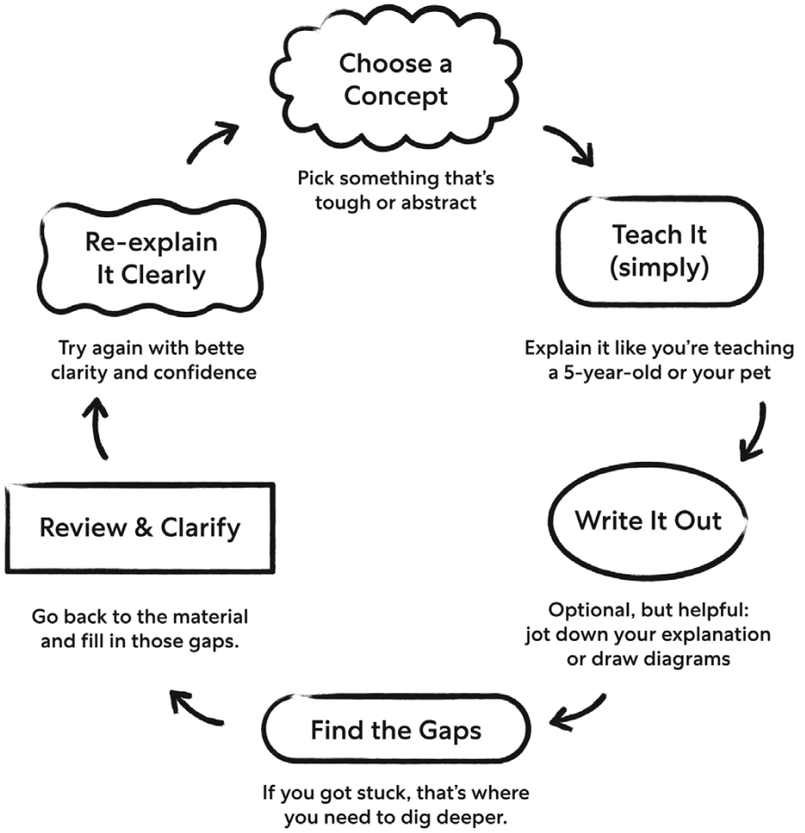
Revisit the source material and dig into anything you stumbled over.

Clarify definitions. Connect the dots. Figure out why the thing works the way it does.

6. Re-explain it, this time more clearly.

Try again, but simpler, clearer, more confidently.

Repeat the cycle until your explanation makes so much sense that you feel like a genius. (Which you are!)



Tools

- **Notetaking apps** with visual tools, like CollaNote or ZoomNotes, to break down ideas, sketch simplified diagrams, and organize your explanation visually, just like you would if you were teaching it.
- **Voice memos or video recordings** to practice teaching aloud and review how clear you sound.
- **A willing study buddy** (or unwilling pet) to listen as you explain the concept.

TL;DR

- With the Feynman Technique, you explain a concept in simple terms to test and deepen your understanding of it.
- Ideal for mastering complex or abstract ideas that go beyond rote memorization.
- Explain a concept like you're teaching someone with no background knowledge. Identify any confusing parts, review the material, and try again, making it simpler and clearer each time.
- Try tools like digital whiteboards, voice memos, or a (patient) friend.
- If your explanation relies on hand-waving or vague phrases, you've found a weak spot. Focus on that next.

7. Spaced Repetition

Spaced Repetition is a memory-boosting technique in which you review material over increasingly longer intervals of time.

Late-night cram sessions? 0/10, don't recommend.

Instead, space out your study sessions so your brain has time to forget—and then remember—what you've learned.

The result? Better retention with less effort.

When should you use it?

- When studying for exams spaced over time (like finals, midterms, or standardized tests).
- Learning a subject at a slower pace, over weeks or months (like a language or anatomy).
- To retain information long after the first study session, rather than just cramming for one test and then forgetting.

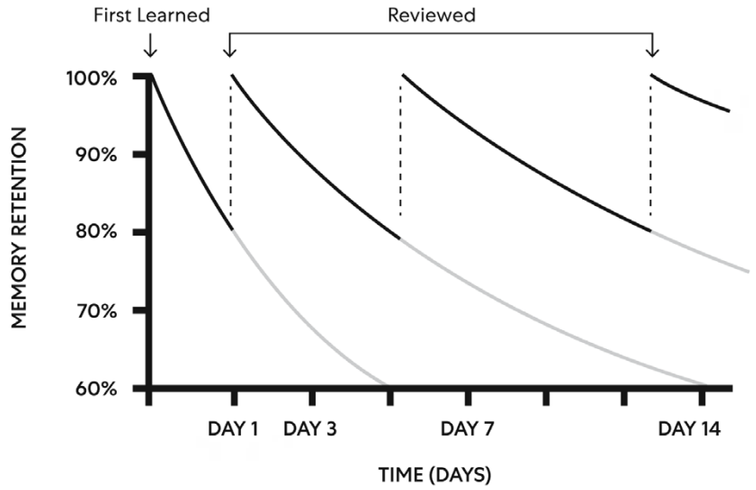
Why it works

Your brain naturally forgets things over time. That's just how memory works.

But when you revisit material right as you're about to forget it, you strengthen that memory and make it more durable.

Spaced repetition leverages the "forgetting curve" to establish long-lasting knowledge. The longer you use it, the less you have to study to remember something.

The Forgetting Curve



How to use it

1. Start with active learning.

Before you can space your practice, you need to learn the material. (See Chapter 1: Active Recall for how to do this well.)

That could mean reading the chapter, attending a lecture, or making flashcards. The key is to actively engage with the material.

Summarize what you read, test yourself, or explain the concept out loud. No passive skimming allowed.

2. Do your first review within 24 hours.

The forgetting curve kicks in fast.

Reinforcing the material shortly after learning it helps lock it in. Review your notes, quiz yourself, or revisit your flashcards.

You don't need to relearn everything, just reactivate it.

3. Create a review schedule.

Set up intervals to revisit the material. The classic spacing pattern is:

- Day 1 (same day or next)
- Day 3
- Day 7
- Day 14
- Day 30

You can adjust the timing based on how well you're remembering the material. Use longer gaps if it's easy, or shorter ones if it's not clicking yet.

4. Keep each review short and focused.

You don't need to reread or rewrite everything. Focus on retrieval.

Quiz yourself, explain the idea again, or do a quick summary from memory. If you get something wrong or it's foggy, spend a bit more time there. Otherwise, keep it moving.

5. Track your reviews.

Use a calendar, checklist, or flashcard app to keep tabs on what you've reviewed and when.

Spaced repetition only works if you stick with it over time, so it's helpful to have a visual cue that shows your progress.

6. Rinse and repeat.

Continue the cycle until the material feels solid like you could recall it mid-yawn on a Monday morning.

You don't need to review everything forever. Once you can recall it easily, space it out further or move on.

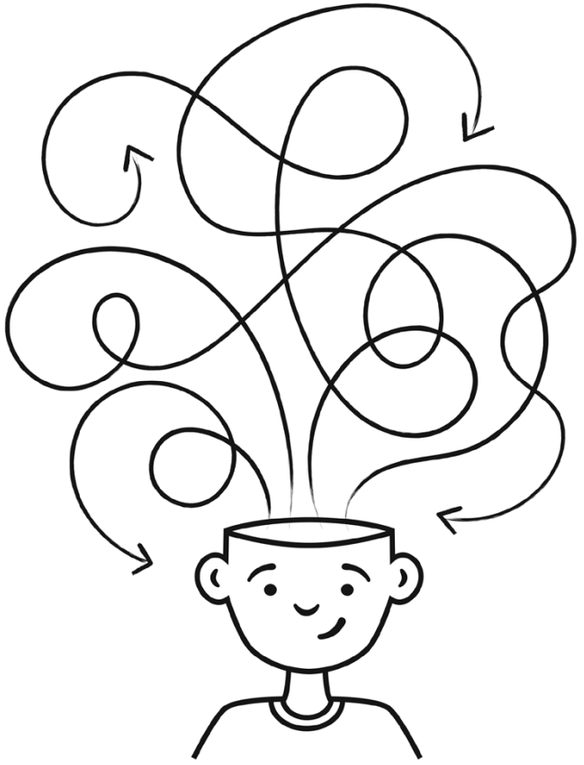
Tools

- **Flashcard apps:** Anki (free, powerful, and built for spaced repetition) or Quizlet (great for flashcards and review reminders).
- **Google Calendar or Paperlike's Free Digital Planner:** Use a planner or your calendar to schedule your study days.
- **Goodnotes or Notability:** Handwrite key concepts and build in review reminders. Some apps even have built-in flashcard features you can use instead of a separate app.

TL;DR

- Don't cram. Space your studying out over time.
- Works best for long-term retention (think: finals, vocab, big concepts).
- Review just before you're about to forget. Schedule these days to stay on top of the material: Day 1, 3, 7, 14, and 30.
- Tools like Anki, Quizlet, or your digital planner can help you schedule your study sessions.
- Start early. Your future self will thank you.

For Managing Complexity



When you’re drowning in notes, chapters, or a subject with a hundred moving parts, these studying techniques are your lifelines. These techniques help you organize, prioritize, and see the bigger picture without losing the details.

8. Interleaving

If your usual study method is grinding through one topic at a time until your brain melts, interleaving is about to change your life.

Instead of sticking with one subject for an entire session, you mix it up.

Switch between related topics or problem types to help your brain stay alert, spot patterns, and learn when (and how) to apply what you know.

It’s like cross-training for your brain.

When should you use it?

Studying subjects with overlapping skills, like math, science, or languages.

When working on problem-solving techniques.

Prepping for tests where questions aren't sorted neatly by topic (because, surprise: they never are).

Why it works

Your brain loves to settle into autopilot—and that's exactly what we don't want when studying.

When you interleave topics, you force your brain to constantly shift gears. That effort to distinguish and recall different methods strengthens understanding and prevents rote memorization.

Instead of asking "What's next?" you start asking, "Which strategy fits this?"

How to use it

1. Pick two to four related topics.

Choose topics that are different but connected enough to create some confusion.

Example: In math, that could mean alternating between algebra, geometry, and statistics. In science, try mixing physics formulas, chemistry equations, and bio diagrams.

2. Set a rotation schedule.

Rotate topics every 20–30 minutes or after a set number of problems.

You could do Topic A → Topic B → Topic C, then loop back around. Don't overthink the order. Just make sure you're not spending your whole session in one lane.

3. Use mixed problem sets.

Find or create assignments that jumble up the topics.

Instead of "20 algebra problems," look for (or build) a worksheet with a mix of question types.

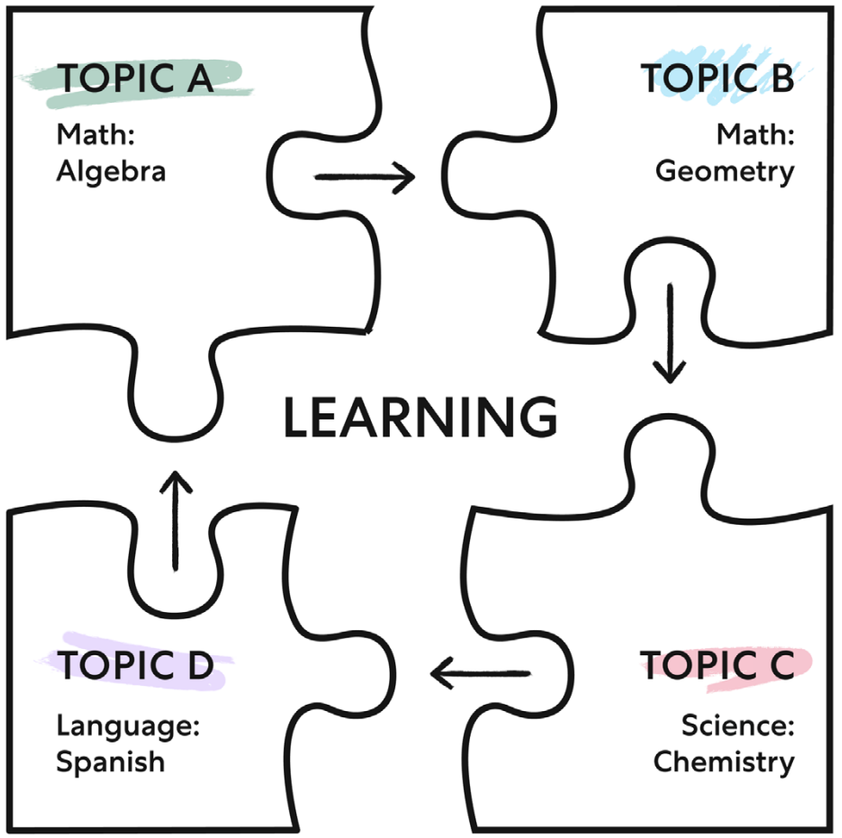
This forces you to think about which formula or method to use, not just repeat the last one on autopilot.

4. Compare and contrast.

As you switch topics, take a second to notice how each one is different.

What signals tell you which method to use? What makes one problem feel like geometry and another like stats?

This reflection step helps sharpen your ability to choose the right approach when it counts.



5. Stick with it (even if it feels messy).

Interleaving can feel harder than studying one topic straight through, and that's kind of the point.

It creates desirable difficulty, which leads to stronger learning. If it feels a little chaotic, you're probably doing it right.

Tools

- **Mixed problem sets** from textbooks, past exams, or apps like Khan Academy that blend question types.
- **Paperlike's Free Digital Planner** or calendar apps to schedule and time your topic rotations.
- **Notetaking apps** like Goodnotes or Notability to take notes across different subjects and visually separate topics with colors or headers.
- **Timer apps** like Forest or Session to signal when it's time to switch topics, which can be especially helpful if you tend to lose track mid-session.

TL;DR

- Interleaving is the practice of mixing up related topics during a single study session to improve learning and problem-solving.
- Best for math, science, or any subject with similar but distinct concepts or methods.
- Choose two to four topics and rotate through them every 20–30 minutes or after a few problems have been solved. Use mixed question sets and reflect on the differences between topics.
- Tools like mixed worksheets, timers, notetaking apps, and subject rotation schedules are helpful.
- If it feels harder than usual, that's the point—your brain's not on autopilot anymore.

9. Mind Mapping

Mind Mapping is like transferring your brain to a whiteboard.

Instead of writing line-by-line notes, you start with a central topic and branch out, capturing related ideas, subtopics, examples, and details in a web-like structure.

It's part notetaking, part brainstorming, and part creative chaos (in the best way).

Think of it as a study strategy and an organizational hack.

When should you use it?

- To organize big, complex topics.
- When planning essays, presentations, or study guides.
- During brainstorming sessions or early-stage project planning.
- Any time you're thinking, "Where do I even start?"

Why it works

Mind maps help you see how ideas are connected.

That visual structure mimics how your brain stores and retrieves information by linking related concepts together.

Plus, it turns passive reading or outlining into active engagement.

It's similar to Dual Coding (See Chapter 2), but mind mapping goes one step further by emphasizing relationships and hierarchy across a whole topic.

How to use it

1. Start with a central idea.

Write the main topic in the center of your page or screen.

This could be your essay subject, a chapter title, a big concept, basically anything that's acting as your anchor point.

2. Add main branches.

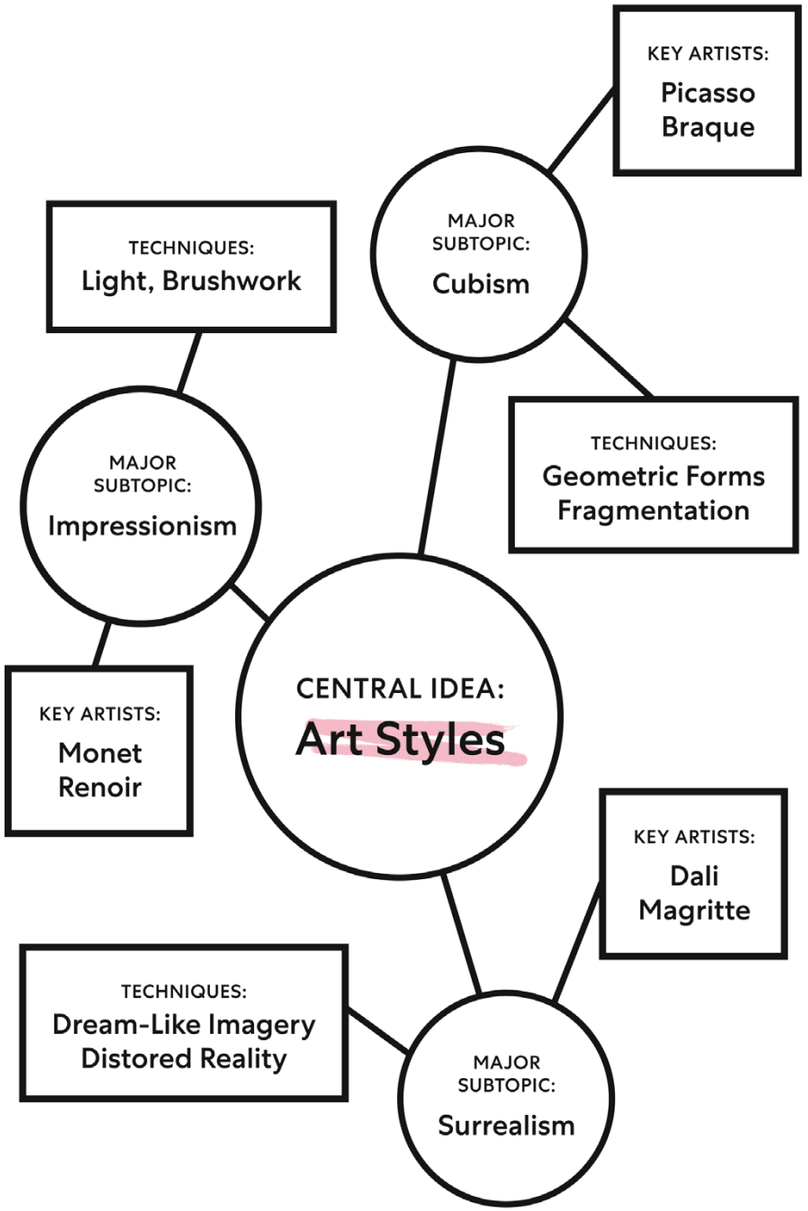
Draw lines outward from the center for your key subtopics or major sections.

Keep these broad to start. You'll zoom in later. Think of them as your chapter headings.

3. Build out sub-branches.

Off each main branch, add smaller lines with supporting ideas, facts, examples, or steps.

This is where you can start layering in detail and organizing your thoughts as you go.



4. Use visuals and color.

Even if you're not the artistic type, simple icons, colors, or doodles can help distinguish different sections.

A red star for "important," a blue circle for "needs review," or just different colors per topic.

5. Keep it loose and flexible.

Don't worry about being neat. Mind maps are supposed to evolve.

Add arrows between ideas that connect. Cross out things that don't work. You're mapping your thinking, not designing a poster.

6. Use it to explain or review.

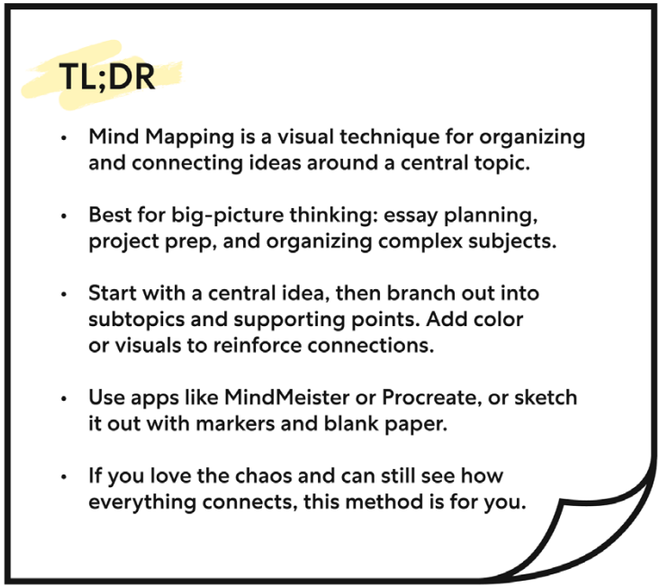
Once your map is built, use it like a study guide.

Review each branch out loud, or walk someone through it like you're giving a mini presentation.

If you can travel the whole map without getting lost, you're golden. If not, it isn't a bad thing! Practice makes perfect.

Tools

- **Mind mapping apps** like MindMeister, XMind, or MarginNote 4 for clean, digital layouts.
- **Notetaking or art apps** like Procreate or Apple Freeform for drawing your own map by hand.
- **Colored pens and highlighters (regular or digital)** to group ideas and add visual structure.
- **An iPad & Apple Pencil** for unlimited drawing space while you're on the go. And don't forget your screen protector (*wink wink*).



10. SQ3R Method (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review)

SQ3R sounds like a Star Wars droid, but it's actually one of the most time-tested ways to tackle textbook reading.

This five-step method helps you actively engage with dense academic material by transforming reading into a process instead of a blur.

The result? You retain more, zone out less, and actually understand what you just read.

When should you use it?

Reading dense textbooks, research articles, or long academic chapters.

Studying unfamiliar material when skimming isn't cutting it.

Any time you need to go beyond just highlighting and hoping for the best.

Why it works

SQ3R slows down the reading process in a purposeful way.

By previewing, questioning, and reciting as you go, you stay engaged and build comprehension layer by layer.

Instead of reading straight through and forgetting everything five minutes later, you process and revisit the content multiple times in one session.

How to use it

1. Survey

Start by flipping through the chapter. Look at titles, headings, bold terms, images, summaries, and review questions.

You're getting the lay of the land. What's covered, what stands out, and what you might already know.

2. Question

Turn the headings and subheadings into questions.

Instead of "The Structure of DNA," ask "What are the key parts of DNA and how do they work together?"

This step primes your brain to look for answers instead of passively scanning text.

3. Read

Now read the section carefully: slow down, stay focused, and look for answers to your questions.

Highlight sparingly if needed, but focus on understanding, not just annotating.

4. Recite

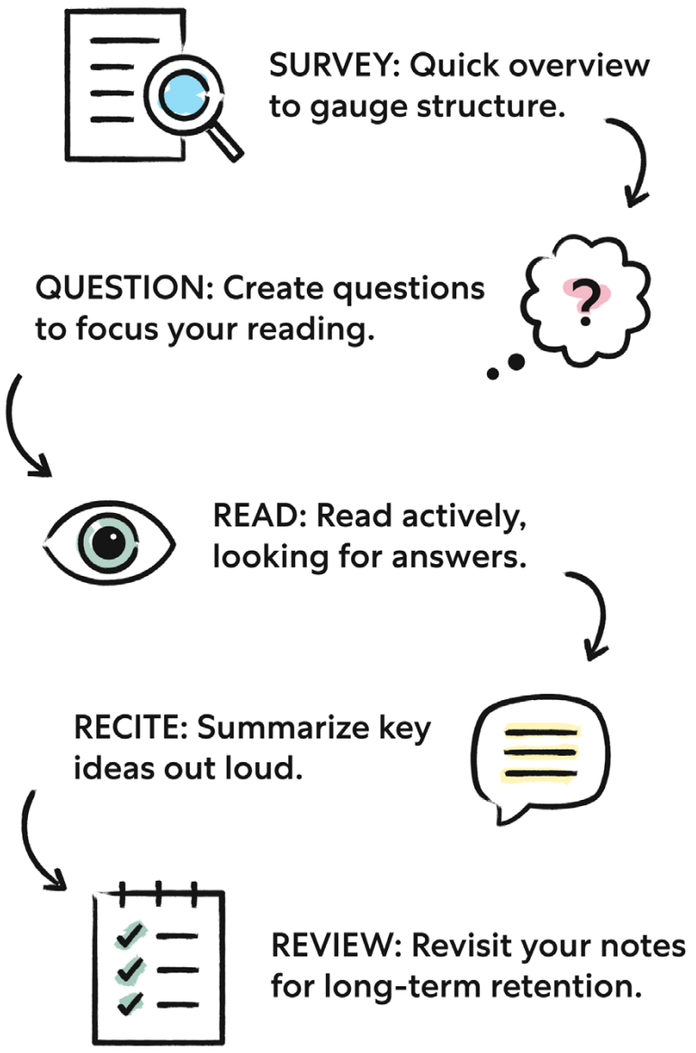
Pause after each section and summarize the key points out loud or in your own words.

Try explaining the concept without looking. If you can't, that's your cue to reread and try again.

5. Review

Once you've finished the whole chapter or reading assignment, go back and review your notes, summaries, and questions.

This helps move the information into long-term memory, and it's also great prep for quizzes, essays, or class discussions.



Tools

- **Notetaking templates** for SQ3R or Cornell-style layouts (many notetaking apps have these built-in).
- **Highlighters and margin notes** to mark key ideas during the “Read” phase (but don’t go overboard).
- **Annotation apps** like Apple Notes or LiquidText allow you to pull in a document or screenshot to annotate digitally.
- **Sticky notes or questions** written in the margins to trigger recall during your review.

TL;DR

- SQ3R is a five-step method for reading textbooks or academic material: Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review.
- Best for dense chapters where you need to slow down and actually understand what you’re reading.
- Preview the section, ask questions, read to find answers, explain what you learned, and then review your notes.
- Use notetaking templates, highlighters, or annotation apps like LiquidText to organize your process.
- Turning reading into a question-and-answer game keeps you focused and makes studying easier later.

Conclusion

Learning how to learn is probably one of the most valuable skills you can develop—and honestly, it's something most of us never get taught properly. We hope this guide gives you a good starting point and maybe a few "aha" moments about what actually works for your brain.

The truth is, getting better at studying isn't about finding some magic trick. It's about building habits that stick and using tools that don't get in your way. If you found a few techniques here that clicked for you, that's already a win.

For those who want to take it further, we designed our **Pro Planner** specifically for people who are serious about staying consistent with their learning. It's built around the same principles we've covered in this guide—helping you track what works, stay organized, and actually follow through on your study plans.

We've included a **special 50% discount*** in your download email because we genuinely want to see you succeed, not just sell you something. And of course, Paperlike's Screen Protectors are here to make your iPad feel more like paper when you're taking notes or sketching out ideas—because the little things matter when you're spending hours studying.

Keep experimenting, keep learning, and remember: the best study method is the one you'll actually use.

*The discount code expires 30 days after receiving the download email.