HOW TO PREVENT FORGETTING

1. **Intend to remember.** Remembering well requires that you want to remember. If you have not made a decision to remember what you are reading/studying, you will forget almost immediately.
   a. Describe the place where you usually read. (Is it quiet? No TV? No stereo? No talking?)
   b. Are you motivated to remember what you read/study? For example, can you give a reason for remembering these ideas:
      - score of the football game
      - directions for “jumping” a dead battery – when your battery is dead
      - directions for getting to a job interview
      - textbook material for a test
   c. Even though you are not interested in the subject you must read about, are you willing to use good reading strategies?
      - Do you preview before you read?
      - Do you ask questions and then read to answer your questions?

2. **Don’t overload the memory.** Seven items is the most our memories can comfortably handle in one bite, but even seven is too much for most people. Your memory prefers to have only three, four, or five things at one time. Therefore, if you need to remember something that has more than four or five items in a group, you will have to break up the group into smaller bites.

3. **Understand before you try to remember.** If you don’t understand something, your memory will have difficulty storing it. Work on understanding before you try to remember.

4. **Select the most interesting points.** You can’t expect to remember everything you read. Select the most important points by looking for answers to questions you have formed. No one can remember everything. If you try to remember every idea, you will probably not remember much of anything.

5. **Organize the material to be learned.** Your memory works best when the information is organized. Organize first. Use formal or informal outlines or use mapping, and your memory will work for you. You may understand something when you see it, but if your mental filing system isn’t working, you may not be able to find the right information when you need it.

6. **Relate the ideas to what you already know.** Your memory will store new ideas if you relate them to old ideas. Make an association, create a mental picture, or use mnemonic devices to relate unknown information to information you already know.

7. **Use mnemonic devices.** These memory devices aid memory, but should be simple, clear, and vivid. You remember the unusual, the funny, or both.
   a. Rhymes: This method uses rhyming words to help you remember.
      Example:
      “I before E, except after C, or when sounded like A, as in neighbor and weigh.”
b. Acronyms: A word made from the first letters of other words aids memory.
   Examples:
   “I. R. Soul” from the 6 strategies for better memory
   I ------ Intend to remember
   R ----- Relate the information
   S ----- Select important ideas
   O ----- Organize the details
   U ----- Understand the ideas
   L ----- Limit the amount
   “PRELIMINARY” to help police officers remember what steps to follow when called to the scene of a crime.
   P Proceed to the scene.
   R Render assistance to the injured.
   E Effect the arrest of the perpetrator.
   L Locate and identify witnesses.
   I Interview complainant and witnesses.
   M Maintain the scene and protect evidence.
   I Interrogate suspects.
   N Note all conditions, events, and remarks.
   A Arrange for collection of evidence.
   R Report the incident fully and accurately.
   Y Yield Responsibility to detectives.

c. Sentences: Memory sentences are made where the first letters of words in the sentence are the same as the first letters of words that need to be recalled.
   Examples:
   “I Remember So Little Unless Organized.”- from the first letter of each of the 6 strategies of memory (listed previously).
   “Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally.”- for the order of operations in a math problem (parentheses, exponents, multiplication, division, addition, subtraction).

c. Mnemonic devices are handy when studying for tests, but they should not be used as a substitute for understanding.

8. **Test yourself repeatedly.** Memorize the material through repeated self-testing. Look at the first item in your notes; then look away and try to repeat it to yourself. After you learn each new item, go back and test yourself on all the previous items.

9. **Over learn the material.** If you study a subject beyond the time needed for perfect recall, you will increase the length of time that you will remember it.

10. **Study before going to bed,** but not ON your bed! Study thoroughly the material to be learned. Then go right to sleep without watching a late movie or allowing other activities to interfere with your new learning. Your mind will work to absorb much of the material during the night. In the morning spend a few minutes reviewing to solidly fix the material in your memory.
Curve of Forgetting

Study
30 min.
Sept. 30

Review
15 min.
Oct. 1

Review
10 min.
Oct. 8

Review
5 min.
Nov. 8

100% Memory

Study
1 hour
Sept. 30

? Nov. 8