

## IMPROVING YOUR MEMORY: DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE STUDYING

### Understanding how your memory works can help you develop strategies for effective studying

Have you ever noticed that people remember some things better than others do? This is because we tie those things that we want to remember to something that we already know (i.e. something that happened on your birthday, something associated with a certain song). We also remember things because we choose to. How many phone numbers do you know? How did you learn them?

Everyone has a different method for remembering things: some people repeat things aloud, others remember things for their significance, and other people remember things visually. Figuring out how you remember things best will help you develop effective study skills. Memory is like a computer: Information that is on the screen is like the information you get from a lecture. Both of these things are waiting to be put into short-term memory. To save this information, you have to save it on the hard drive, or your long-term memory. However, how do you make sure this information stays in your long-term memory?

### FIVE METHODS TO IMPROVE MEMORY

#### 1. Motivation

One reason you remember things like phone numbers is because you want to. You choose the information you want to keep, and then you make an effort to retain it. Ask yourself what motivates you to learn this information.

#### 2. Selectivity

Nobody can remember EVERYTHING. Decide what the key points are and focus on remembering them.

#### 3. Clarity

It is hard to remember things that are not clear to you. Make sure that everything you are trying to remember is clear to you.

#### 4. Association

*Try this exercise:* Read aloud the following set of numbers. See how many of them you can remember, then write them down. Do not start writing until you have recited all the numbers.

- 149217761999

Did you get all of the numbers? Did you catch the fact that they are all dates? If you did, then you created an **association**. It is easier to remember and recall information if we tie it to something we already know.

- 1492—1776—1999

#### 5. Review

How much do you think you can remember from a lecture you heard yesterday?

- Studies show that if you pay attention in class, take notes and understand the material on Monday, but go home and do not look at the material until Wednesday, you will have probably forgotten 80% of what you learned.

However, if you look at your notes, clarify them, put them into context, and look at them that night, and the next, then you will retain 80% of what was learned.

- Reviewing your material continually will pay off, especially around test time.
  - It will also save you from having to cram!