

The chief task in life is simply this:
to identify and separate matters so
that I can say clearly to myself which
are externals not under my control,
and which have to do with the
choices I actually control.

Where then do I look for good and evil?
Not to uncontrollable externals,
but within myself to the
choices that are my own...

EPICTETUS, DISCOURSES, 2.5.4–5



Introduction

This is a quotation from the Stoics; the name derives from the porch (stoa poikilê) in Athens where members of the school congregated for lectures and learning. Essentially, proponents of the philosophy believe that wisdom stems from the ability to differentiate between that which we cannot change and that which is within our power to influence. This type of wisdom offers us good sense, good judgment, quick-wittedness, discretion, and resourcefulness, all values essential to individual and collective wellbeing.

The colloquial use of the word stoic is equivalent to what contemporary psychologists refer to as naïve optimism: gritting one's teeth and ignoring the circumstances in order to weather the storm. But, for all their faults, the Stoics encouraged a far more effective practice. They considered their philosophy to be an exercise (askêsis), or what contemporary psychologists call wise optimism.

This is how you practice wise optimism:

- **Reflect** on your current circumstances;
- **Identify** circumstances that you cannot change and circumstances that are within your power to influence;
- **Consult** with those who are known to be honest and wise on the topic; and
- **Act** to improve your circumstances by taking considered steps to adjust your actions, attitudes, or your treatment of others, to bring about positive change.

There is substantial research that routinely engaging in this practice improves productivity and motivation.



High & low utility strategies

Researchers looked at the impact of different study strategies used by students. Generally, they found some strategies were far more effective – minimum input for maximum output.

Low utility

- Summarising
- Highlighting
- Mnemonics
- Use of imagery for text learning
- Rereading

Medium utility

- Elaborative interrogation
- Self-explanation
- Interleaved practice

Maximum utility

- Practice testing
- Distributed practice

They observed that the majority of students practised content they already knew because it required less cognitive effort but still made them feel productive. Students who made the most progress targeted areas of weakness and used high utility strategies, strategies often requiring less time but more cognitive effort.

It's a bit like going to the gym and doing light weights because they're easy and you feel productive, but to really increase strength, you need to gradually lower the reps and increase the load.

Dunlovsky, et al., 2013
Improving Students' Learning With Effective Learning Techniques

Which study strategies do you use?

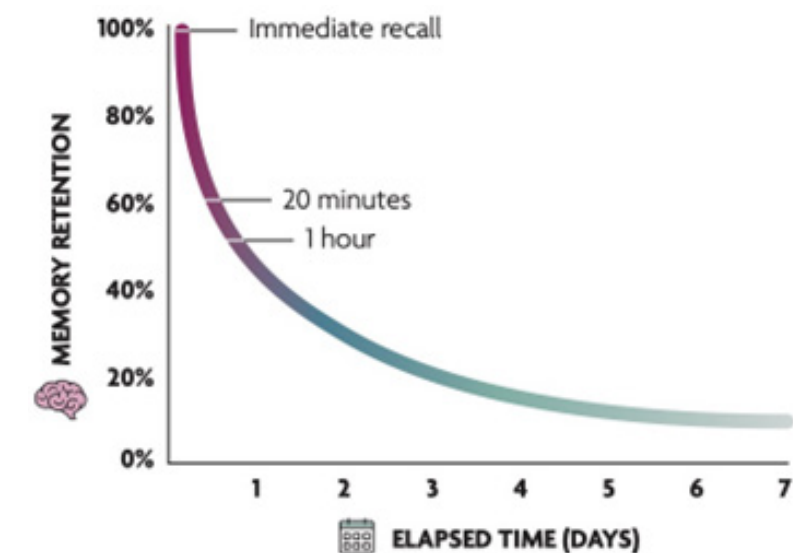
Which study strategies to you currently use? Why?

Which strategies should you use? Why?

When you study, do you think you target areas of academic strength or weakness ?

The Forgetting Curve

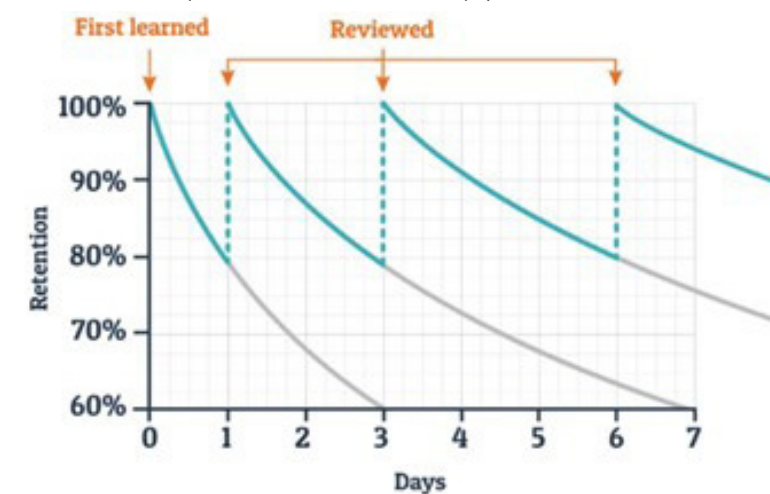
This curve demonstrates how information you learn is lost over time if there is no attempt to review or re-learn. Other factors that affect memory include: memory strength; how meaningful the material is; and physiological factors such as stress.



<https://organisingstudents.com.au/2021/07/the-forgetting-curve/>

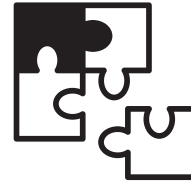
Improving Your Memory

Studies have shown that spacing your study will help you memorise information. The time when forgetfulness occurs is immediately after the class, on the evening of the class, the next day, the next week, the next month, and so on. Thus, it is suggested that your review content as follows: right after the lesson, the evening of the lesson, one week later, and one month later. These repeated reviews will help you retain information over the long term.



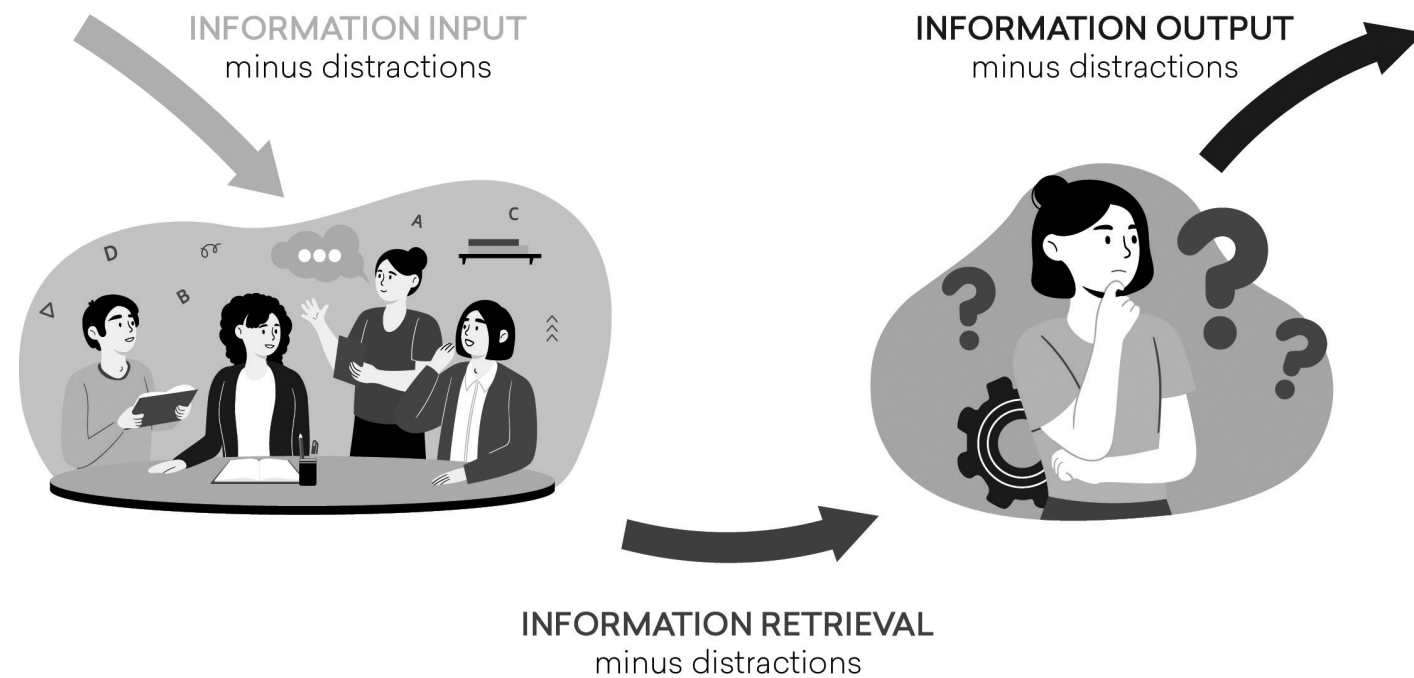
Ebbinghaus' forgetting curve and review cycle.

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Ebbinghaus-forgetting-curve-and-review-cycle_fig1_324816198



Focus

You have a lot more power over your learning than you might think. You control your focus by deciding to what, and when, you pay attention. Focus during classes is just as important as focus during independent study sessions. The context for each activity is different, as are the distractions, and the demands on your brain. In class you receive information and at home you retrieve, or consolidate information.



How can you maintain focus and attention?

What are the information 'inputs' (including distractions) in class and during independent study?

What are the demands made on you to 'retrieve' information in class and during independent study?

What are the information 'outputs' required in class and during independent study?

How can you control each context to ensure you are best placed to maximise information input, retrieval and output?

Why is this important?

MARVIN MINSKY

You don't understand
anything until you learn it
more than one way.

