

Teaching of Psychology

How to help students remember what you have taught?

No matter how well university students do on quizzes and unit exams, the question always is: how much will they remember later? And if they don't well on tests it may be that they either don't know how to study, study the wrong information, or try to study at the last minute. Using some basic methods of cumulative review faculty can help students learn how to study and remember what they have learned.

After 25 years of teaching here is what I recommend for teaching the Intro to Psychology course:

What students can do:

- 1) Use about 25 study objectives identifying key concepts in the chapter. Students should write out the answers to each of the study objectives for homework.
- 2) Be prepared to take notes, either from the blackboard or a power point, and use a short review before the next lecture.
- 3) Some students may benefit from transferring notes to 3 X 5 cards which can be quickly reviewed.
- 4) Arrange to get into a small study group which meets the day before an exam to compare notes.
- 5) It is best to memorize by standing up or pacing while reciting your notes out loud.
- 6) Use practice tests when available.
- 7) Study habits should include either 30 minutes/night or 60 minutes every other night; this type of spaced practice promotes long term memory.
- 8) Use a short 20-minute cram session either the night or morning before the test to strengthen short-term memories of verbal lists and facts.
- 9) Get a good nights sleep to help consolidate memory before the exam.
- 10) Make sure you eat a healthy breakfast before a morning exam.
- 11) Find a calming technique so you are more relaxed during the actual test writing.
- 12) Keep all class notes and handouts in a notebook for easy access.

What faculty can do:

- 1) Start each class with a prayer or poem or quotation or musical selection which is inspiring. Make sure students have their notebooks and/or textbooks open ready when class begins.
- 2) Use a 5-minute outline and review of material covered in the previous class.
- 3) Ask if any previous concepts need extra review.
- 4) As you lecture use visual displays of either power points, notes on the board, or handouts so students can follow along more easily.
- 5) Try to find an interesting story or clinical vignette to help illustrate the concepts. Examples in psychology include Phineas Gage for brain damage, patient H.M. regarding memory loss, Karen Carpenter for eating disorders, Glenn Gould for musical prodigies, Koko the gorilla for language, Terman's Study of Genius for intelligence, etc.
- 6) Summarize concepts taught at the end of class.
- 7) After each 10 minutes of lecturing encourage a 5-minute class discussion.
- 8) Short Youtube video clips can help keep the class period interesting.
- 9) Present a quick review the night before the exam for students who need extra help.
- 10) Provide corrective feedback when grading exams. Be willing to review questions missed by many students.
- 11) Use a cumulative final exam which focuses more on applications than rote learning. I often use actual questions from each of the previous exams.
- 12) Students often like some chapters more than others. Remind students that for each chapter in the Intro to Psych textbook they found interesting or relevant there is an advanced course which covers that material in more detail.

Students may choose their university major based on their experiences with 1st year introductory courses so make sure it is a great course!