

Learning

How To Learn



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“ Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever. -Mahatma Gandhi ”

There is a saying amongst the aspirants concerning the syllabus prescribed by UPSC, if you ask them what is the syllabus of UPSC, the most frequently encountered answer is "EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN".

Well, the answer itself raises many queries and concerns that usually trouble the aspirants. Finding the desired destination while tracing a shadowed path is a tough task in this intense competitive heat.

Learning and forgetting curve

The longer a person can recall anything, the stronger their memory is. According to a standard forgetting curve graph, unless people intentionally examine the information they've learned, they tend to forget half of what they've just learned in a couple of days or weeks.

This illustrates how information deteriorates over time when no effort is made to keep it. The strength of memory is a related idea that describes the longevity of the memory.

The pace of forgetting, according to Hermann Ebbinghaus' theory, is influenced by several variables, including the difficulty of the learned content such as how meaningful it is, how it is represented, and other physiological variables like stress and sleep. He also proposed that there is little between-person variation in the basal forgetting rate.

Aspirants feel trapped in these curves quite often, which has an impact on their performance as well. My advice to the aspirants is quite simple and based on experience and has been frequently tested.

RRRR - Reading, Revision, Retention, Replication

One must understand that the key to active retention is to learn the art of consolidation and revision. For effective learning and revision, you must consolidate your text, Try to use the mind map technique for centralizing the information in the crux. Mind maps strengthen your pictographic memory as well. Revision and replication of information shall become effortless once you have your notes consolidated.

Throughout my pedagogy, I have emphasized mind maps as an efficient way of note-making and revision and have been bearing fruits for many aspirants.

LEARNING TECHNIQUES

Well, It is scientifically believed and proven that the following techniques are the most effective for improving memory:

- **MNEMONIC TECHNIQUE**- make funny and relatable mnemonics with the text in your hand. It makes it easy for us to remember things rapidly.
- **SPACED REPETITION TECHNIQUE** - based on the 1-2-7-30 algorithm

Give the maximum amount of time—let's say two hours—when you are studying for the first time. Try and relate context to the text you are reading. Contextuality enhances and enriches your pictographic memory.

First-day review- the very next day, giving it a revision for 10-15 minutes.

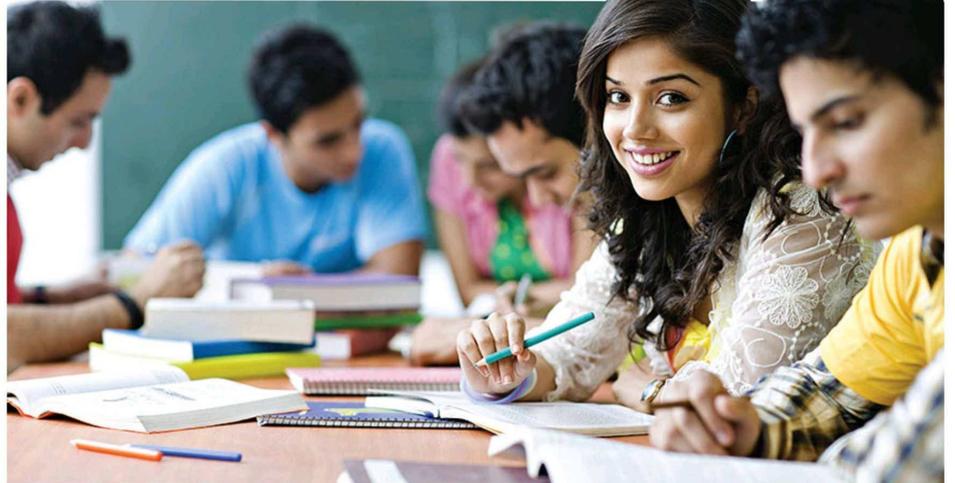
Second-day review-Then, revise it again in 5–10 minutes after 48 hours, it will help you consolidate the learning lapses.

Seventh-day review-after 6-7days, you will need to revise one more time to ensure that it is permanently stored in your memory.

SPREAD THE WORD

"In learning, you will teach, and in teaching, you will learn."

While you teach, you also learn. It is a celebrated saying the more you spread and distribute the knowledge, the more you earn the same. While you teach someone, your conscious brain tries to recover information from the subconscious brain, and hence both parts of your brain actively participate while you are addressing someone.



Last Day review- And finally, at the month-end, revise whatever you have read in the entire month on the 30th day.

AUDIO-VISUAL LEARNING

Evidence suggests that the human brain catches and stores information more promptly when it is sourced from an audio or visual aid. Try and learn concepts related to geography, science, technology, art, and culture through audio-visual learning platforms such as youtube.

DEBATE, DISCUSS, DECIPHER

While studying with your peer group, participate in the discussion over burning issues, and exchange both ideas and information with each other during such debates. The more you discuss, the more insightful your perspective and learning become.

As Confucianism proudly propagated that "Learn as if you were not reaching your goal and as though you were scared of missing it".

My sincere advice to the aspirants is before even they start to read the text, try and gauge the scope and mindset of the examiner by critically examining the previous years' question papers. Your mind automatically focuses your attention on exam-oriented information.

UPSC does not expect a candidate to be a specialist rather they are more focused on recruiting candidates who are "Jack of all trades, master of none". Aspirants should keep in their mind that the key to success in this exam is, consolidation of information in a smart way and following the Reading-Revision-Retention-Replication trail.

"EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN IS FED BY LIGHT, LIFE, AND ENERGY"

I sincerely hope that this article gives a boost to your preparation. Do not find a followed path, make your own.

Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.
Benjamin Franklin