

How to AVOID CRAMMING for Tests

Basic Principles about Review

I. ORIGINAL LEARNING must take place. You have to learn the material before you can review it.

II. EARLY REVIEW is most efficient, most productive.

A. Before you attempt to learn new material in class or through reading:

- Glance over previous chapters or notes.
- Run through your mind what you know already.

Since memorization of new material is most effective when it is associated with the material already known, this process brings all available mental "hooks" to the surface.

B. Immediately after learning:

- Rework your notes, adding material that comes to mind. (Don't recopy; this is wasteful.)
- Order and organize what was learned. (Star, use arrows, additional comments, etc.)
- Integrate new material with what you already know.

Forgetting is most rapid right after learning. Review helps combat this. Relearning is easier if it is done quickly. Don't wait until it's all gone.

III. Space initial early reviews to support original learning. Several brief periods spread over 5 or 10 days is usually enough to ensure good recall for intermediate review.

IV. Intermediate review is important when work is spread out over several months or longer. For example, when the final is 4 months away, follow this schedule:

- original learning
- immediate review of limited material same day (5-10 minutes)
- intermediate review of material covered so far, after 2 months
- final review, before exam

Intermediate and final reviews should stress understanding and organization of material.

V. Final review is a REVIEW, not "cramming" of unlearned material. No new learning takes place except to draw together the final main currents of thought.

- Be brief. Review entire semester's work in 2-4 hours. (Set a limit and stick to it.)
- Outline and organize from memory. Don't bother copying.
- Recite (in writing or out loud to a friend or self)

VI. USE SPACED REVIEW rather than MASSED PRACTICE. 60 minutes used in 3 groups of 20 minutes each is more effective than 60 minutes used all at the same time.

- break up learning period for any one subject
- avoid fatigue
- review and strengthen previous learning
- increased motivation, better concentration