Memory

Why We Forget

-Forgetting is normal under certain circumstances, but in college, forgetting can lead to low grades.

-Below are 7 reasons why students forget and some suggestions about what you can do to overcome each one.

1. Changed Cues

-If you have information stored away in your mind you may be unable to recall it if the right cue or “handle” is missing. In other words, if you study material one way and a test question asks for the material another way, you may be unable to recall it.

* Learn material using your own words (this significantly increases your ability to remember).

1. Interference

-Recently learned material interferes with recall of previously learned material.

* Refresh all material by regular review and repetition.

1. Mental Overcrowding

-Too much input at one time into the senses (stereo, TV, talking in the background, worry about personal problems, etc) inhibits learning and remembering.

* Study where it is quiet and where it is going to stay quiet until you are finished studying.

1. Negative Thinking

-Students who *believe* that they cannot remember are the ones most likely to forget. You must believe you can remember before you can.

* See a counselor.
* Start reprogramming your mind with positive self-talk such as, “I will remember this,” and “I have a good memory.”

1. Under-Learning

-The most common reason why students forget is because the material is under-learned.

-For something to be remembered, it must first be learned, that is, stored in long-term memory. If you don’t do what is necessary to get information into your long-term memory, you have under-learned the material and forgetting is normal.

* Recite or quiz yourself repeatedly on your textbook and lecture notes (when material is only reviewed once or twice, it is difficult to remember for quizzes and exams).
* Discover what you have learned and have not learned before you take a test when you can still do something about it.
* Review new material within 24 hours to achieve long-term memory.

1. Disuse

-With the tight schedules of today's college students and those who have not yet mastered the skills of college level time-management, students either do not or cannot prevent other activities from interfering with this crucial 24-hour window for learning.

* Continue to recite and review material to be remembered until it is stored in long-term memory.

*Note: Most forgetting takes place immediately after hearing or seeing new material*.

1. Lack of Effort and Intention

-The art of remembering is a direct result of the amount of effort exerted coupled with the intention to remember.

**Effort** = what you need to do in order to remember and then doing it.

**Intention** = deliberately choosing to remember.

* Intend to remember something: if you don’t, you are telling your mind, indirectly, not to remember, so you don’t.

***Article adapted from: Study Skills Handouts by Dennis H. Congos, University of Central Florida***