

Effective Learning - Four Keys to Success

You can significantly enrich your learning by incorporating the following building blocks.

1. Prepare & Organize

? Define your goal as outlined above. In Stephen Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, his second habit is to begin with the end in mind.

? Identify your barriers and create a strategy to eliminate them. If you have a challenge finding barriers, review my article *Be Aware of Obstructions to Your Learning*.

? Based on the goal that you set, declare your intention for each and every study or class session.

? Generate some curiosity about the subject at hand. You can do this by brainstorming some wild and crazy questions - this primes the pump.

? Examine the big picture. You can do this by creating a concept map of the lecture or chapter outline.

? Establish a positive study environment. Consider air, water, sound, light, privacy, and temperature. Finally, do a few mind-body exercises.

2. Attract the Information

? Write out what you already know.

? Even though class sessions don't afford you much control, if you are prepared with an outline concept map, you will be able to make, not just take, superior lecture notes. Remember, the brain is naturally associative, so it's always looking for links and connections. The concept map facilitates this.

? Take frequent study breaks in order to maximize primacy and recency opportunities.

3. Practice, Elaborate, and Integrate

? Repeated review combats memory decay and entrenches the information in your mind. One suggested review schedule is immediately as you return from a short break, then at one day, two days, one week, one month, and six months. These reviews are of just the key points and take a very short time to complete.

? Convene peer groups to challenge and thrash out, summarize and paraphrase, rehearse and present, simulate and role-play. The power here is that those with whom you collaborate most likely have learning styles, and therefore perceptions, differing from yours.

? Explain your concept map to others.

? Play "What if?" Be creative by turning things upside-down and inside-out, play devil's advocate, or temporarily embrace a view opposite to your own.

? Produce a video or a song.

? Record yourself with a funny voice reading the lesson notes.

? Explain the subject to peers or younger siblings so that they can understand it.

? Convert your lesson to a "Jeopardy" game.

? Produce a flow chart.

? Create flash cards.

? Create a mock test for a friend, and have a friend do the same for you.

4. Associate, Activate, and Archive

? As each lesson is completed, build a concept map of the complete course. You can work on this with your team of classmates.

? Your team can also discuss how the learning is relevant in the "real world".

? Debrief your efforts. What did you do well? What could you have done better?

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About the Author

Bestselling author and international speaker, Brian E. Walsh retired from a 30-year management career to return to formal study. Within four years he achieved his Ph.D. His book, *"Unleashing Your Brilliance"* is available at <http://www.UnleashingBrilliance.com>