

This episode recommends the best way to study and gives a suggested way to create a file for the information you wish to remember and review. It also covers the Interval Reviewing or Spaced Repetition system and how you can apply it to your own study material.

You will need a good light, a comfortable chair, and table, a clock to time yourself, and ABSOLUTE SILENCE. You cannot engage your brain and give your full attention to a subject if you are distracted by conversation, television, radio, and NO - not even music.

I will repeat myself several times. It may be boring, but it is not an error. After all the hard work of learning the mnemonics, it is crucial that they are applied systematically for the best results.

This is a suggested study schedule. Try it and adapt it to what works for you.

Break up your study period into sessions of anything between 20 - 40 minutes (another repeat!). This is because you can more easily recall things that you studied at the beginning and at the end of a session - it is the bit in the middle that gets hazy. So, if you have broken up a long period of study into shorter blocks with a short respite in between, there are more beginnings and endings that you are more likely to remember without even trying, compared to one beginning and one ending if you slog away for hours without a break.

Classify your study material.

Use the chapters and headings in textbooks to help you. If you go into Wikipedia, notice, and use the boxes to the left and right of each article, which will also give you headings.

Either mind map or create individual numbered files in a spreadsheet for these classifications and turn your study material into a set of focal points or simple questions and answers: these are your 'flash cards'. To identify the questions, ask Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Mind Mapping is good for this, but I tend to use a spreadsheet, which has the date on the left in column A followed by the questions and it enables me to keep a daily track employing the Interval System. I will be publishing a website shortly and a blog to accompany these podcasts and there I will be answering questions and giving an opportunity for comment. For now, what is essential is that:

- You design a system of asking simple questions,
- answer them
- Put them in date form to review them on specified dates.

This is a suggested method for studying

- Study for a period of between 20 and 40 minutes. You cannot concentrate for longer than this without a short break (yet another repeat).

At the end of that time, stand up, do some deep breathing, and get a glass of water. Not long enough to break your momentum but sufficient to refresh your enthusiasm. The reason for this is that an adult cannot maintain peak concentration for much longer than 40 minutes.

- People naturally tend to remember beginnings and endings but lose the middle. By breaking up your sessions you will have more beginnings and endings than if you had one long slog over several hours.
- You are also more inclined to remember what is unusual, funny, or sexy, so when visualizing, use exaggeration and humour whenever possible.

- After your break, resume your study and answer your first question. If you got it right, go on to question 2. Follow this scheme for all your study material.

Using the Interval System:

1. Create your question then go on to create a second question from your study material and so forth.
2. After 10 minutes see if you can answer question 1 correctly. If so, leave it for an hour
3. After an hour, if you can still answer question 1 correctly – leave it for a day
4. After a day, if you can still answer question 1 correctly – leave it for a week
5. After a week, if you can still answer question 1 correctly – leave it for a month
6. After a month, if you can still answer question 1 correctly – leave it for 3 months
7. After 3 months, if you can still answer question 1 correctly – leave it for 6 months
8. After 6 months, if you can still answer question 1 correctly – leave it for a year

Follow the same procedure for question 2 and all your further questions.

Obviously, the above timing depends upon what works for you but it means that you will cover all your material and not waste time revising what you find easy but be able to focus on parts that are more challenging.

I think that is more than enough information for this podcast. It is most important, and I would like to give you time to understand the concept and practice it. It really does work, and I would especially like to emphasize the part about only focusing on

the challenging questions. We all know the comfort of answering a question when we already know the answer and the effort required to remember more difficult information. Think of it a bit like a jigsaw puzzle. You have got the corner pieces and the sides and created the frame. You have probably sorted out the pink bits which are the faces, but now you have to fill in that pesky sky, and last, you have the final few pieces, but it is so much easier to fill in those last few gaps when you have so much of the big picture already there.

In the next episode, I will briefly cover mind-mapping, briefly because there is so much already written about Mind Mapping, by more competent experts than me, and [Tony Buzan](#) springs to mind. I will also add a bit more about creating those spreadsheet files, which I have now been using for many years.

I hope you try the above – and if you do, well done!