

Learn Anything Faster

Memory and study techniques for adult learners: the six methods science says work, and how to use them.



6

power techniques

62

quiz questions, with answers

4

week Learn Anything Plan

1

memory challenge



● SKILLNUGGET STUDY GUIDE

Learn Anything Faster

Memory and study techniques for adult learners: the six methods science says work, and how to use them.

2026 edition · Large print · Printable

● THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

This book belongs to: _____

I'm learning: _____

Started on: _____



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This is a practical study guide. It is not medical advice. Research findings are summarized in plain English; full references are on the Sources page. All quiz questions and examples were written for this book.

FREE SAMPLE

Inside this free sample

The welcome, the myths quiz and two full chapters.

This sample includes the Welcome, the learning myths quiz, Chapter 1 (why we forget) and Chapter 5 (retrieval practice), each with its Check yourself quiz. The full book has 16 chapters, 62 quiz questions with answers and explanations, a 4-week Learn Anything Plan and a printable toolkit with a flashcard kit, a study planner and a surprise.

GET THE FULL BOOK

skillnugget.com/course/learn-anything-faster

WELCOME

Your brain is better than you think

How this book works, in five minutes.

You can learn faster than you think. Not by being smarter or studying longer, but by studying differently, with a handful of techniques that researchers have tested for over a century and most of us were never taught.

Think about how you learned at school. You read your notes again. You highlighted the important parts in yellow. Maybe you crammed the night before. It felt like learning, and it got you through the test. Then, a few weeks later, most of it was gone.

That wasn't your fault. Those methods *feel* productive, but research shows they're among the least effective ways to learn. This book replaces them with methods that work, for anyone, at any age: a new language, a new job, a certification, an instrument, a hobby or a subject you've always been curious about.

How this book works

Part 1 • How memory works

Four short chapters on why we forget, why good learning often feels hard, the myths to drop and the secret weapon you use every night.

Part 2 • Six power techniques

Retrieval, spacing, mixing, explaining, pictures and examples, and memory palaces: what each one is, why it works and exactly how to use it.

Part 3 • Learn real things

How to apply the techniques to a language, a physical skill, a course or exam, learning with AI, and staying focused and motivated.

Part 4 • Your plan

A 4-week Learn Anything Plan, a study session template and a final quiz that mixes everything you've learned.

This book practices what it preaches

Every chapter in Parts 1 and 2 ends with a short **Check yourself** quiz. Don't skip them. Testing yourself isn't a way to *measure* learning; as you'll see in Chapter 5, it's one of the most powerful ways to *create* it. The answers, with explanations, are at the back.

A SURPRISE IS WAITING

Your toolkit includes a printable challenge that will make you do something you probably think you can't. Don't open it until Chapter 10. You'll know why when you get there.

Start with a quiz (yes, already)

Before you read anything else, take the 12-question quiz on the next page. You're not expected to know the answers. Guessing first, then finding out, actually helps you remember the right answer later. Researchers call this the **pretesting effect**. Take it now, check your score at the back, and take it again when you finish the book.

QUIZ

True or false? The learning myths quiz

Twelve statements. Guess first, learn later.

True or false? Circle T or F for each one. Don't look anything up and don't worry about getting them wrong: a wrong guess followed by the right answer is still a step forward.

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1 | People learn best when teaching matches their learning style (visual, auditory or kinesthetic). | ☐ T ☐ F |
| 2 | Testing yourself is one of the most effective ways to learn, not just a way to measure what you know. | ☐ T ☐ F |
| 3 | Rereading your notes several times is one of the best ways to study. | ☐ T ☐ F |
| 4 | One hour of study on five different days usually beats five hours in one day. | ☐ T ☐ F |
| 5 | Most forgetting happens soon after learning, and then it slows down. | ☐ T ☐ F |
| 6 | We only use about 10% of our brains. | ☐ T ☐ F |
| 7 | Mixing different kinds of problems in one practice session can feel harder but lead to better results. | ☐ T ☐ F |
| 8 | If you understand something when you read it, you'll remember it later. | ☐ T ☐ F |
| 9 | Adults lose the ability to learn new skills after about age 50. | ☐ T ☐ F |
| 10 | Getting an answer wrong before you learn the right one can help you remember it. | ☐ T ☐ F |

11 Sleeping after learning helps your brain strengthen new memories.

☐ T ☐ F

12 Highlighting is one of the most effective study techniques.

☐ T ☐ F

First try: ____ / 12 Date: _____

After the book: ____ / 12 Date: _____

Answers and explanations are at the back of the book.

CHAPTER 1

Why we forget (and why that's useful)

Ebbinghaus, the forgetting curve and what it means for you.

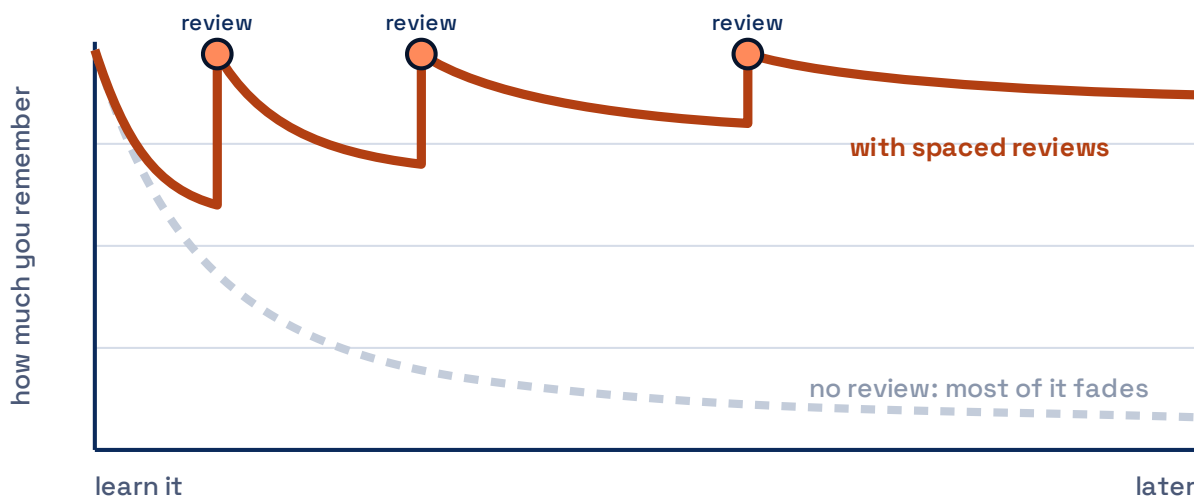
You read something, you understand it, and a week later it's gone. That isn't a flaw in your brain. It's how memory is designed, and once you understand it, you can work with it instead of against it.

The man who memorized nonsense

In the 1880s, a German psychologist called Hermann Ebbinghaus ran one of the strangest experiments in the history of science, on himself. He invented thousands of meaningless syllables like *WID*, *ZOF* and *KAJ*, memorized lists of them, and then measured how much he'd forgotten after twenty minutes, an hour, a day, a week and a month.

He chose nonsense on purpose, so that nothing he already knew could help him. What he found has been confirmed again and again since (a team in Amsterdam repeated his experiment in 2015 and got almost the same result):

- **Forgetting is fastest at the start.** Most of what you lose, you lose in the first day or so.
- **Then it slows down.** What survives the first few days fades much more gently.
- **Every review flattens the curve.** Relearning something takes less time than learning it the first time, and each time you relearn it, you forget it more slowly.



An illustration of the typical shape. The exact amounts depend on what you learn and how well you knew it.

Forgetting is a feature

It's tempting to see forgetting as the enemy. But imagine remembering every license plate you've ever seen, every song lyric you've half-heard, every advert. Your brain forgets so it can keep what matters. And it decides what matters with a simple rule: **things you need again and again are worth keeping.**

So the trick isn't to stop forgetting. It's to send your brain the signal: *I need this again.* You do that by coming back to it, at the right moments, in the right way. That's what Part 2 is about.

Three things this means for you

- 1 Cramming works for tomorrow, not for next month.** It fills the top of the curve, which drops away fast.
- 2 Reviewing soon matters most.** A short review a day after learning saves a lot of relearning later.
- 3 Each review can wait longer than the last.** Day 1, then a few days later, then a week, then a few weeks. You'll get a schedule in Chapter 6.

TRY IT: WATCH YOUR OWN CURVE

Learn ten words in a language you don't know, or ten facts from an article. Test yourself tomorrow, without looking. How many survived? Then test again in a week. You've just repeated Ebbinghaus's experiment.

Check yourself

Answer from memory, then check at the back

- 1 What did Ebbinghaus memorize in his famous experiments?**
 - ☐ (A) Poems
 - ☐ (B) Nonsense syllables
 - ☐ (C) Phone numbers
 - ☐ (D) Shopping lists
- 2 When is forgetting usually fastest?**
 - ☐ (A) In the first day or so after learning
 - ☐ (B) After about a month
 - ☐ (C) After about a year
 - ☐ (D) The rate is the same all the time
- 3 What does each review do to the forgetting curve?**
 - ☐ (A) Nothing at all
 - ☐ (B) Makes it steeper
 - ☐ (C) Makes it flatter, so you forget more slowly
 - ☐ (D) Resets your memory to zero

CHAPTER 5

Retrieve: test yourself

The testing effect, and six ways to use it.

If you only take one idea from this book, take this one: **the act of pulling information out of your memory is what makes it stick.** Not putting it in. Pulling it out.

The experiment that changed study advice

In a well-known 2006 study, Henry Roediger and Jeffrey Karpicke at Washington University in St. Louis gave students short passages of prose to learn. Some students studied a passage and then studied it again. Others studied it once and then took a test, writing down everything they could remember, with no feedback.

Five minutes later, the restudy group did slightly better. But two days later, and again one week later, the tables had turned: **the students who had tested themselves remembered more.** And here's the twist: the restudy group had been *more confident* that they'd remember. Rereading felt better and worked worse.

This is called the **testing effect**, or **retrieval practice**, and it's one of the two techniques rated "high utility" in the Dunlosky review. It works for facts, concepts, vocabulary, procedures, for children and adults, and on all kinds of tests.

Why it works

Every time you retrieve a memory, you strengthen the path to it, like a trail through a field that gets clearer the more you walk it. Rereading just looks at the trail from a distance. Retrieval walks it.

Retrieval also shows you, honestly, what you don't know yet. Rereading hides your gaps; testing finds them.

Six ways to practice retrieval

- 1 **The blank page (or "brain dump").** Close the book. On a blank page, write everything you can remember about the topic. Then open the book and check what you missed, in a different color.
- 2 **Flashcards.** Question on one side, answer on the other. Say or write the answer *before* you flip. Your toolkit has printable flashcards.
- 3 **Practice questions.** Use the questions at the end of chapters, old exams, or write your own. Turn headings into questions: "The testing effect" becomes "What is the testing effect, and what did Roediger and Karpicke find?"
- 4 **Teach it.** Explain it out loud to a friend, a child, a pet or an empty chair, without notes.
- 5 **Free recall on a walk.** Pick a topic and talk yourself through it as you walk.
- 6 **Ask AI to quiz you.** Paste your notes and ask it to ask you questions one at a time (Chapter 14 has the prompts).

The rules that make it work

- **Retrieve before you check.** Really try to remember. Struggling for a few seconds is the point.
- **Always check.** Retrieval works best with feedback. Find out the right answer, especially when you were wrong.
- **Make it a habit, not an event.** A few minutes of quizzing every study session beats one big test at the end.
- **Mix it with spacing.** Retrieval is powerful; retrieval spread out over days is even better (next chapter).

TRY IT RIGHT NOW

Without looking back, write down: Who ran the 2006 study? What did students do in the two groups? Which group did better after one week? Then check.

Check yourself

Answer from memory, then check at the back

1 In Roediger and Karpicke's 2006 study, which group remembered more after one week?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ (A) The group that restudied | ☐ (B) The group that took a recall test |
| ☐ (C) Both groups remembered the same | ☐ (D) Neither group remembered anything |

2 Which group felt more confident that they would remember?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ (A) The restudy group | ☐ (B) The test group |
| ☐ (C) Both equally | ☐ (D) Neither group |

3 Which of these is NOT retrieval practice?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ (A) Writing everything you remember on a blank page | ☐ (B) Answering a flashcard before flipping it |
| ☐ (C) Rereading your highlighted notes | ☐ (D) Explaining a topic to a friend without notes |