

Study Skills

Name _____

Date _____

Period _____

REMEMBERING VOCABULARY

One of the biggest problems with vocabulary learning is that what's 'learned' today is often forgotten tomorrow! We've all experienced this problem: what can be done about it?

How can I memorize vocabulary?

Here are some strategies:

- Say or write the words you are learning - this can help you remember them.
- Record the words/phrases you are learning on tape, and play them to yourself whenever you have some spare time (e.g. when travelling) - this way you will get used to the spoken form of the word as well as the written form.
- Write the words you are learning on pieces of paper/stick-it notes and put them round your room or home.
- Put the words into sentences (see graphic organizer).
- Connect the new words to words belonging to the same topic or situation that you already know (see graphic organizer).
- Create sentences of your own for the words you are learning, relating them to your own situation.
- Write a story that includes all the words you have learned.
- Have a discussion or conversation with a partner or partners, trying to use the words appropriately.

- Write the words on cards, with the meanings on separate cards. You can then play games such as **'Memory'** or **'Snap'** with a partner (or on your own) by matching words to meanings.

'Memory' works like this. You turn all the cards (words and meanings) face down, so that the blank sides are facing up. You then turn over two of the cards at random. If the cards match, then you have 'a pair' (a score for you) and you remove them. If they do not, you return the cards (face down) to their places. Play goes to the next player. Now you will need to remember which card was where, as in the next play, you may turn over a card which matches one of the 'face-down' cards: The winner is the person with the most 'pairs.'

'Snap' is a similar game. Two players divide the cards between them. Each player holds his/her cards face down in his/her hand. One player puts a card face up onto the table, the other player puts one of his/her cards on top of the first card, the first player puts a card on top of the second card, and so on. As soon as two consecutive cards match, the first player to call out "Snap!" wins the cards that were placed on the table and adds them to her/his pile. Play continues until one player (the loser) has no cards left. It's a very simple game — the fun is in trying to react more quickly than the other player and be the first to shout out "Snap!" when there's a match!

- Use the **Key Word** method. This method has been found to be very effective with small numbers of words (e.g. a few hundred), even over many years. It is especially useful with 'concrete' words that can be easily visualized (e.g. mountain). How does it work? You associate the target word with a keyword that you already know easily. Then you form a picture in your mind that combines the keyword and the meaning of the target word. Every time you see the target word, you remember the picture you have formed, and then remember the meaning of the target word.

For example:

Combine the target word with similar-sounding English words to form a picture —

Target Word:	Key Word:	Picture:
Mourning = being sad because of someone's death'	Morning	Someone being sad about someone who died in the morning
Petite = Small, little	Pet	A very small pet such as a toy poodle
Trifle = something of little value	Rifle	A very old rifle that doesn't work and you can't sell to anyone

Class _____

Name _____

Date _____

Period _____

Graphic Organizer for Vocabulary Words

Term:

Definition:

In your own words:

Picture:

Your own sentence:

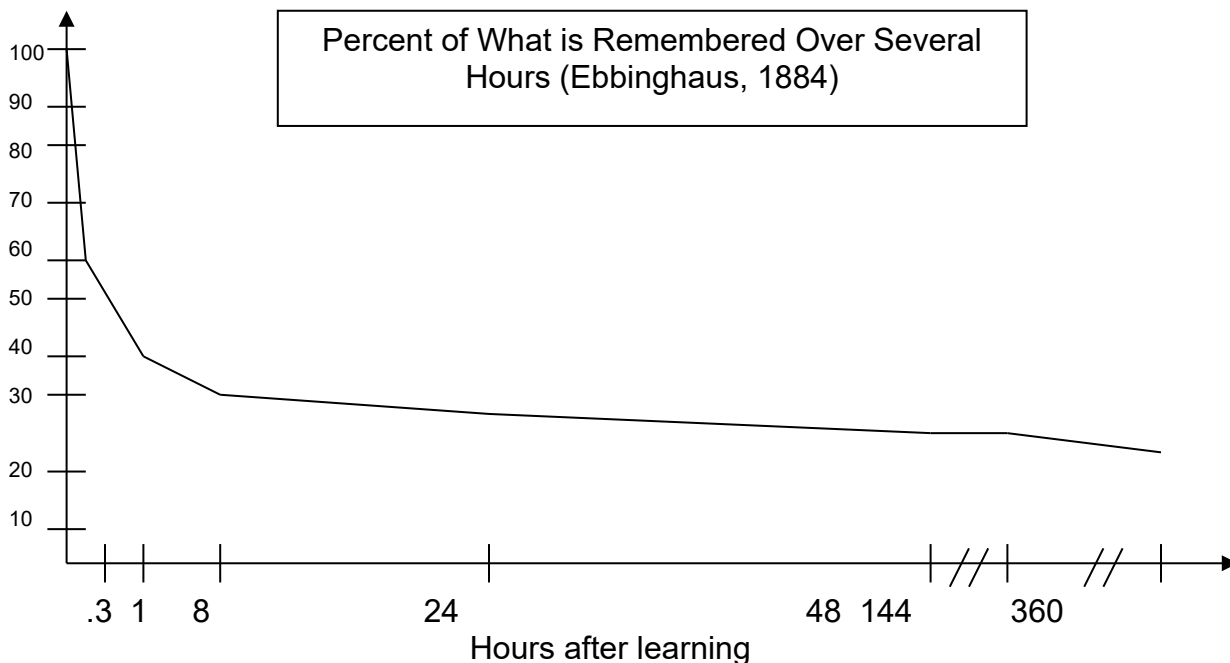
Of course, the problem is to remember words for a long period of time, to learn them so well that they become 'known', fixed in your memory.

For suggestions on how to do this, keep reading...

How can I avoid forgetting what I have 'learned'?

Here are some suggested methods for reducing the 'forgetting problem':

Learn words repeatedly, with increasing intervals between learning sessions. We all know that if learning is not repeated, we will forget the words we have learned. Research in psychology shows that we do not forget things gradually. Instead, as the graph below shows, most of our forgetting occurs within 20 minutes after we have first 'learned' something. More is forgotten within one hour, and still more within 8 hours, but after 8 hours, the rate of forgetting stays surprisingly steady.



This suggests that it is most useful to use or test yourself on vocabulary as soon as possible after you first meet it. After that, you need to keep using the vocabulary/testing yourself, but you can gradually increase the gaps between each learning session. In other words, intensive study is useful within one hour and within 24 hours after the first learning.

Do you make this mistake?

Often, when learning vocabulary, people create a list with the target words on one side and meanings on the other, and go down the list from the first word to the last, trying to memorize each one.

This method has problems:

Firstly, the words at the top of the list tend to be remembered better.

Secondly, time is wasted going over words that the learner has already learned.

Solutions:

Spend more time on the words that you find difficult.

Delete the words you know from the list.

Change the order of the list, so that it's not the same every time.

Post words onto a wall or board, and take them down when you know them.