7 Little Known Ways To Drastically Improve Your Learning

Note: This guest post was written by personal development [blogger](#) Scott Young. You can check out his website [here](#).

1. Learn Holistically

I wrote a popular article entitled, [How to Ace Your Finals Without Studying](#), where I detailed a process I call holistic learning. Learning holistically is basically the opposite of rote memorization. Although most people usually sit somewhere between the extremes of holistic learning and memorization, I've noticed that particularly smart people who learn effortlessly sit far closer to the holistic learning spectrum.

Holistic learning means relating everything you learn to things you already know. This creates an interrelated web of information. Trying to memorize everything and if your memory fails you, that information is unreachable. But by interlinking your web of knowledge, if one route becomes blocked another is accessible.

2. Visualize It

You need to make the information you learn *visceral*. What this means is that you need to take the ideas you learn and translate them into your senses. As a predominantly visual learner, this means that I translate any complicated ideas into pictures in my head. If you think you are an auditory or kinesthetic (touch) learner, then you can translate ideas into those senses instead.

Earlier I took a course on vector [geometry](#) which involved subspaces. Although a subspace is a clear mathematical concept, I had initially had difficulty grasping what it was. By translating the abstract idea of a subspace into a visualization of a flat grid going through three dimensions I had a model that I could work off for solving problems. Your visualization won't be a perfect representation but a simplified model you use as a basis for solving problems.

3. Diagram It

If you have difficulty translating an idea into your senses, take out a pad of paper and try to draw out how the ideas fit together. Learning [history](#), I made a little picture which linked together all the different concepts I needed to know and drew a diagram for how they all related to each other. Diagrams help immensely in interlinking information and can often spur mental images, sounds or feelings to help describe it.

4. Metaphor It

Another way to interlink ideas holistically and form mental pictures is to use a metaphor. When I read Machiavelli's, The Prince, I used metaphors to link his ideas about statecraft to ideas about social and business settings. A good way to know whether you are using metaphors is if you use the words "like" or "as" when comparing two things (simile's for you literary types). Programming languages are often built with these metaphors with abstract constructs being described as child, orphan, inheriting or pointing to.

5. Test It

You can test your knowledge by using it to solve problems. Information you've learned but haven't used is like disorganized iron filings on table. Putting a magnet will align these filings to a magnetic field and form an interesting pattern of lines. Similarly, information you actually use gets sorted and organized in a way so that solving future problems is easier.

The best way to solve problems isn't to continually solve the same problem, but to solve new challenges in different ways. Each run through of a problem will organize your knowledge a bit more, but running wildly different problems on it improves your creative problem solving skills and gives you the ability to solve complex problems in multiple ways. If you want to really understand computer programming, don't just solve problems, try to solve problems in different ways and tackle problems you've never faced before.

6. Teach It

Teaching your knowledge to someone else is about the best way to learn it yourself. The reason teaching works is it forces you to think holistically. While you may have memorized ideas inside your head, teaching someone forces you to relate the idea with different metaphors and images.

If you really want to learn something, I'd suggest starting a blog and then just writing about the stuff you've learned. Whether you are studying courses or just trying to master a discipline, writing down what you know and trying to teach it to others will dramatically increase your own understanding.

7. When in Doubt, Link or Peg It

There will always be some stuff that you simply have to memorize. When this happens, spending a bit of time to master link and peg systems for storing information can be invaluable. Dates, lists of information and specific rules or arbitrary ideas can all be stored with a link and peg system. Check out more about linking and pegging here.

REF - http://ririanproject.com/2007/04/15/7-little-known-ways-to-drastically-improve-your-learning/