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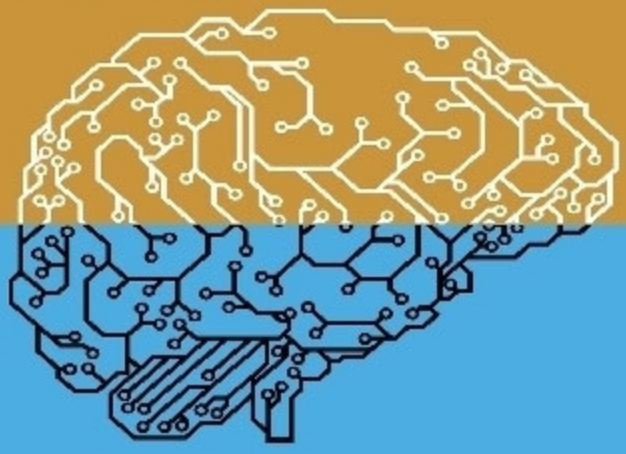

7 Easy Steps to Master Accelerated Learning Techniques, Learning Strategies & Fast Self-learning

TROYE BATES

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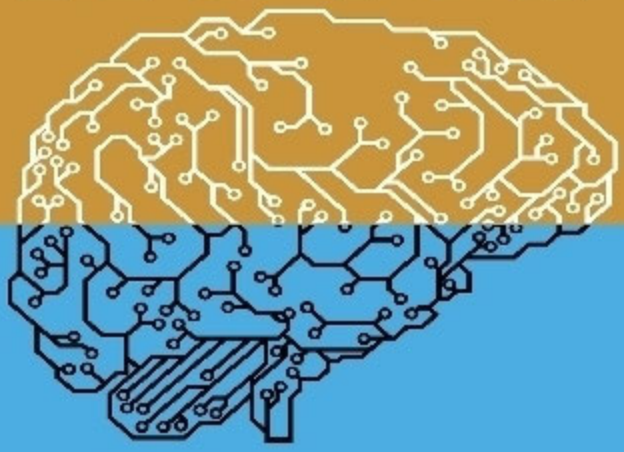

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How to Learn Faster

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Introduction

Learning is an activity that enshrouds every aspect of our lives as human beings. Literally, all the actions that we engage in are the direct result of past learning. Learning is something that we naturally do from the moment we are born, right up until we die. The knowledge, information, and skills that we acquire through learning greatly influence the outcomes we end up within academia, careers, and life in general.

However, the complexities of learning and how it happens are subjects that remain a mystery to the average person. Be that as it may, having an understanding of how learning works is very fundamental if a learner hopes to improve the pace at which they learn.

The rate at which individuals learn greatly differs from one person to another. While some people are naturally gifted at learning and integrating new information, there are those who struggle with absorbing new concepts and skills. Nevertheless, learning is something that anyone can become better at with the right strategies and diligent practice.

This guide is designed to provide timely information on how to become a better and faster learner. Over the course of this guide, we are going to explore the concept of learning in great detail. Some of the ideas that we are going to discuss include the dynamics that are at play in the learning process, factors that influence one's learning ability, and the different styles of learning.

We will also investigate some of the popular approaches to learning, as well as the common misconceptions about learning, which most people subscribe to. In addition to this, we will examine the problems and difficulties encountered by learners and strategies that one can employ to become a fast learner.

By the end of this guide, you should be equipped with all the tools you need to develop your cognitive ability and increase the rate at which you learn. It is my hope that you will find practical wisdom in this guide to make you a more skilful and fast learner.

MODULE ONE: THE ART OF LEARNING

The definition of learning is one that carries different connotations, depending on context. There are many complexities involved in learning, which makes a singular definition simply untenable. So, for the purposes of this guide, we need to carefully examine what comprises learning and how the process works. So, in this module, we are going to attempt to clear all confusion around the idea of learning and how it happens.

Hopefully, by the end of this section, you will have a clear idea of what learning is and what the process entails.

Chapter 1: What is Learning?

The definition of learning is one that is commonly understood in several ways. In common usage, the word ‘learning’ is used to refer to the process of acquiring new or modifying existing knowledge, behaviors, skills, and values. The process of learning involves enriching, building upon, and changing one’s understanding, such that the end result is significantly different from the initial state. A common metaphor that can be used to better understand the learning process is that of a house under construction. You can think of one’s knowledge base as the foundation on which all their future learning is based. We acquire knowledge through observation our interaction with the world and with other people. This usually happens whether or not we are consciously aware of it.

Learning is essentially a transformative process, since the information and experiences that we acquire alter the way we think, what we believe, and consequently how we behave. Many theorists on learning now consider playing to be a primordial form of learning. This is due to the fact that as children play, they interact with the different phenomenon in the world, learn the rules, and make deductions. For instance, a child who falls down and hurts themselves while playing quickly learns the concept of pain and realizes that it is something that should be avoided.

Contrary to what most people may think, learning is not unique to humans only. Studies have shown that animals also learn socially through observation and mimicry. This kind of observational learning does not necessarily require external reinforcement since it happens naturally on its own. By simply watching and interacting with other members of their species, animals can learn new behaviors as individuals or groups.

Learning, therefore, can be considered a very fundamental function in nature.

Although learning is something that we all do naturally as humans, most people are actually oblivious to how the process actually works. This is not very surprising, given the highly complex cognitive functions and external factors that are usually at play during learning. Nevertheless, gaining a proper understanding of the learning process is absolutely fundamental if one is to learn how to enhance their learning abilities and increase the rate at which they learn.

Chapter 2: How the Learning Process Works

Learning, in human beings, is a multifaceted activity that involves the interaction of six cognitive processes: memory, attention, language, processing, higher-order thinking and graphomotor (or writing). Apart from interacting between themselves, these processes also interact with internal and external factors, including emotions, classroom environment, individual behaviors, instructors, and family.

In order for one to become better at learning, they need to have a solid grasp on how these primary elements of learning relate to one another. So, in this section, we are going to discuss how each of these cognitive processes influence learning.

Memory

Memory refers to the cognitive process through which our brains take in and store information or data, such that it can be retrieved when necessary. The faculty of memory defines the temporal dimension of our mental organization. Memory plays a very fundamental role in our lives, as it allows us to recognize the past and be able to use any information from our previous experiences in a practical way in the present. Due to this fact, memory is an essential element of the learning process.

Memory comprises three main processes that interact with each other with or without our conscious awareness. These are encoding, storing, and retrieving. Encoding refers to the process in which our brains transform acquired information such that it can be stored in memory. This is usually the first process that the human memory puts into operation during learning. The storing process involves maintaining encoded information in memory. The information can subsequently be retrieved when needed through the process of remembering.

Although memory and learning are different from each other, they are also highly dependent on each other. The ability to learn is heavily reliant on an individual's memory since the information stored in one's memory forms the basis for linking any new information or knowledge through association.

There are three types of memory, all of which play a very important role in the learning process: working memory, short term memory, and long-term memory . Working memory involves the ability of the brain to retain small amounts of information, which can be accessed or recalled easily. An

example of working memory is when a person remembers a set of instructions on how to repair a broken car engine.

Short term memory refers to the capacity of the brain to hold small amounts of information in a readily available state for brief periods of time. Usually, short term memory is stored in the prefrontal cortex in the brain where after consolidation, it is transferred to the hippocampus.

Long term memory is the capacity to hold and remember large amounts of information over prolonged periods of time. Usually, when we remember an event that happened in the distant past, say a loved one's birthday or a friend's graduation party, it is usually the long-term memory at work. However, long term memory does not only store memories of past events, but also procedural memories such as work skills, which one may have learned at their first job.

The retention-ability of a memory depends, to a large extent, on its usage. After a short-term memory has been encoded, it needs to be activated numerous times in response to various prompts in order to increase the chances of being retained. Apart from frequent usage, another factor that determines the durability of a memory is its connection to other memories based on similarities and differences. The more correlations a memory has with other memories, the easier it is for it to be retained in the long-term memory.

Attention

Attention is undoubtedly one of the most important cognitive processes that drives the process of learning. It involves the ability to select, prioritize, and apply certain concepts and information. The ability to concentrate is a function of attention, which involves focusing entirely on a specific task while ignoring distractions. Concentration is essential to the learning process, as it enhances one's ability to acquire new information and be able to apply it in accomplishing a certain task. Without attention and concentration, learning can scarcely take place. That is why children and adults with attention-deficit learning disabilities often have a difficult time with learning in general.

The ability to pay attention usually comes easy to us when we are interested in the subjects or activities we are involved in. If they don't interest us, we may get easily distracted or bored, which affects how we learn. For this reason, the goal of a good teacher is to create lessons such that they pique the interest of the learner. In doing so, the student is able to concentrate on the subject and therefore learn it.

Language

Language is a highly important tool in learning, as it is the primary way through which we give and receive information during the learning process. Language involves two key processing systems, namely, expressive language and receptive language. Expressive language usually comes to play when we speak and write, whereas receptive language works when we listen and read. Learners with well-developed language abilities tend to perform better than their counterparts with poor language abilities. This is because language problems make it difficult for a learner to communicate effectively, understand and store information and relate with others. It is worth remembering that as human beings we learn mainly through socialization (how we relate with others around us).

Processing

How slow or fast we learn heavily depends on our ability to process information. There are two types of processing speeds that affect an individual's rate of learning, namely: visual processing speed and cognitive processing speed.

Visual processing speed refers to how fast a learner can look at and process information on a task that does not involve a lot of active thinking. Cognitive processing, on the other hand, refers to the speed at which a learner can take in information, critically think about it, and provide a response.

Processing speed is a primary determinant of one’s cognitive ability. A learner with a low processing speed might find it very challenging to perform simple cognitive tasks, especially those who require a lot of focus and concentration. This is due to the fact that they may take more time to recognize simple visual patterns, perform tasks that involve reasoning under the pressure of time, and read by themselves.

Higher-Order Thinking

Higher-order thinking is a concept in education that supports the idea that some types of learning require more cognitive processes than others. Higher order thinking goes beyond the basic learning processes of observation and memorization. This type of thinking involves several key skills, including evaluation, analysis, synthesis, application, knowledge, and comprehension.

Higher order thinking is an important element in the learning process as it not only allows the learner to improve their memorization but also enhances their cognitive abilities. These skills can allow the learner to progress beyond the classroom and use the information and knowledge they acquire in a practical sense in their lives.

Graphomotor

Graphomotor skills refer to the combination of cognitive, perceptual, and motor skills that are required in order to be able to write. While writing might seem like a very simple and natural task, there are a number of skills that work together during the process of writing. If one or more of these skills are underdeveloped or deficient in a learner, they might find it very challenging to write.

The five distinctive skills which are essential in the process of writing include:

i) Visual Perceptual Skills

These involve the ability to see a letter, word, shape, or symbol and assign the correct meaning to it depending on context.

ii) Motor Planning and Execution

This is the ability to carry out the necessary motor movement required for writing. This skill (also known as 'praxis') allows us to remember and perform the necessary steps in order for a movement to happen.

iii) Orthographic Coding

This has to do with the ability to store letters or groups of letters in memory and to retrieve them when the need arises.

iv) Visual-Motor Coordination

This is a cognitive-motor skill that allows one to coordinate motor movement with visual perception. For instance, physically write words on paper.

v) Kinesthetic Feedback

This refers to one's capacity to know where a certain part of the body is in space in order to carry out a motor function, for instance, placing your hand on paper in order to write.

When a learner is deficient in one or more of these primary graphomotor skills, they may experience numerous learning-related problems such as poor or inconsistent handwriting, composition, and reading. They may also find it difficult to spell words correctly or write compositions. This can be very damaging to their academic as well as personal lives.

Based on these fundamental elements of learning, there are seven principles or basic assumptions which accurately encapsulate the process of learning. These are:

- A Student's Prior Knowledge Can Help or Hinder the Learning Process

While prior knowledge is often thought to be the foundation on which all future learning is built, there are certain instances when prior knowledge can hinder the learning process. Sometimes, the knowledge we acquire is demonstrably false, inaccurate, or outdated, as is the case with many

scientific misconceptions. Clinging on inaccurate facts and information can cause us to make false judgments, thereby hindering our ability to learn new ideas, concepts, information, and skills.

- A Learner's Motivations Determines What They Do to Learn

In elementary school, most learning is typically driven by an instructor or teacher. However, as students' progress to more advanced levels of learning, for instance university, they gain a lot more autonomy over their learning. In other words, their learning becomes more self-driven or autodidactic. In light of this, a learner's motivation plays a very crucial role in how they learn. It guides the direction, intensity, quality, and persistence of their learning behaviors, which ultimately determine how fast and how much they learn.

- The Ways in Which a Learner Organizes Knowledge Influences How They Learn and Apply Previously Acquired Knowledge

The learning process usually involves connecting new knowledge with prior knowledge, which is stored in the long-term memory. This process typically happens with or without one's conscious awareness. When those connections create knowledge, which is accurate and properly organized, learners can easily retrieve it and apply it practically. On the other hand, if those connections are flawed, the learner may not be able to make use of the knowledge. It may also hinder them from creating new, logically coherent knowledge.

- In Order to Develop Mastery, a Learner Must Acquire Component Skills, Practice Integrating Them and Know When and How to Apply Them

Before a learner can master any skill, they have to be able to master the composite sub-skills and learn how to integrate them through isolation and synthesis. In addition to this, they need to practice the skills constantly in order to develop fluency. They must also know when to apply a certain skill and how to do so appropriately.

- Goal-Oriented Practice Combined with Targeted Feedback Enhances Quality of Learning

Learning and performance are greatly enhanced if a learner engages in practice with a goal in mind. However, practice alone is not enough to make learning effective since the learner might be practicing the wrong techniques and reinforcing bad habits, which can significantly hamper mastery. In light of this, practice of any given skill must be accompanied by targeted feedback that highlights the weaknesses of the learner. The feedback must also be delivered at the appropriate time in order for it to be of any use to the learner.

- A Learner's Current Level of Development Relates with the Social, Emotional and Intellectual Climate of the Course to Impact Learning

While learners primarily employ their intellect or cognitive abilities in the pursuit of learning, it is important to acknowledge that they are also social and emotional beings. Learning, therefore, is, to a great extent, influenced by a student's emotional state as well as social factors.

In light of the influence that emotions and socialization exert on learning, it is very vital that students learn in a positive climate since this will greatly enhance their capacity to learn and master new skills.

- In Order to Become Effective at Self-Driven Learning, Students Must Learn to Monitor and Modify their Approach to Learning

One of the goals of instruction-based learning is to provide students with the skills required to become more proficient as autodidacts (self-taught learners). In order for this to happen, learners must sufficiently develop their metacognitive abilities so that they can become more strategic about their own learning. They must develop the ability to carefully assess a given task, accurately identify their strengths and weaknesses and develop the right approaches to learning. By developing their metacognition, learners gain the intellectual skills they require to enhance their learning and performance.

The preceding assumptions are highly important to the concept of learning, as they are based on scientific research. They draw from a wide range of disciplines, including developmental and cognitive psychology, education, anthropology, and more. These seven principles on how the learning process works are also validated by the fact that they are domain-independent. This means that they apply in all fields of learning, and virtually all disciplines.

In addition to these, they are also experience-independent, and thus apply to all levels of learning, from elementary levels up to the highest levels of tertiary education. Furthermore, these fundamental principles of the

learning process are cross-cultural, which means they are relevant to learning in virtually all cultures. However, it is important to note that culture determines how these principles are understood and applied in the process of learning. The influence of culture on the learning process will be explored in-depth in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Factors That Influence Learning

Learning is an extremely complex process that can be influenced by a number of factors. These factors can generally be categorized into those that are associated with the learner, and those that are associated with the learning process. Some of the factors that are associated with the learner include:

i) Will Power

The learner is typically the focal point of learning, and therefore, their will power is very central to the entire process of learning. If a learner has the will to learn, he will be motivated to pay attention and learn how to perform a certain task. Will power can also help a learner overcome the numerous learning challenges he might bump into along the way.

ii) Motivation

Motivation is arguably the single most important factor that influences learning. If a student lacks the motivation to learn, no amount of effort will yield any results. A learner who is motivated, on the other hand, will be very enthusiastic and self-driven in his learning process.

iii) Cognitive Ability

The natural cognitive ability of a learner greatly influences how fast they are able to learn and master any discipline or skill. Learners with high

intelligence and creativity will easily be able to understand complex concepts and how they relate to other ideas.

iv) Aspirations

The degree to which a student is able to learn depends, to a great extent, on how high their aspirations are. If they have high aspirations, they will likely be more driven to work hard and accomplish more. This, however, is relative to their intelligence and cognitive ability. On the other hand, a learner with low aspirations will only be content in learning very basic ideas or developing basic skills. As a result, they may end up failing to develop mastery in the skill or discipline they are learning.

v) Health Conditions

The general health of a learner plays a key role in how well they are able to learn. This includes both physical as well as mental health. Students with physical problems such as physical handicaps, vision problems and deafness may experience serious challenges when learning.

The mental health of a learner also influences their ability to learn. Problems such as anxiety, depression, and poor self-esteem can significantly affect the rate at which an individual learns. In the following chapter we are going to discuss the ways in which physical and mental health issues pose challenges to learning.

There are also factors pertaining to the learning process which affect the rate at which students learn. These include:

i) The Methods of Learning Employed

The effectiveness of any learning exercise greatly depends on the methods of learning that are employed. There are certain methods that are more effective since they save the time and effort of the learner. Some of the methods of learning which may be employed include

- Spaced and Unspaced Learning

- Recitation and Repetition

- Part and Whole Learning Methods

ii) Conducive Environment

The rate at which students learn greatly depends on the quality of the learning environment. Students who learn in clean, quiet, and peaceful environments, for instance, are more likely to learn more effectively.

iii) Feedback

The feedback received by a learner during the process of learning also has a bearing on learning. In academic learning contexts, feedback usually comes in the form of test results. Students who score highly on tests are likely to become more motivated to learn more about a given topic or subject. In informal learning contexts, feedback may come in the form of progressively improved performance. For instance, a person who learns how to play a certain game and becomes substantially good at it is likely to continue practicing until they develop mastery of it.

iv) Nutrition

While it might be considered inconsequential by most people, nutrition plays a very vital role in the learning process of individuals. This is due to the fact that nutrition is responsible for one's mental and cognitive processes. A learner who imbibes in a good diet will likely enjoy physical and mental wellbeing, thereby making them more capable of learning. On the other hand, a person with a poor diet is unlikely to have the mental and physical resilience to learn. It is also worth mentioning that drugs and alcohol also influence one's learning abilities. This is because they negatively affect one's neuro-muscular system, and consequently their learning ability.

There are obviously more internal as well as external factors that affect an individual's ability to learn, as well as their rate of learning. These include the amount of time dedicated to learning, age, and organizational factors.

Chapter 4: Styles of Learning

One of the fundamental truths about education and learning is the fact that every student is different. Whereas one student can find it easy to learn and retain information through a particular format, another learner might find the same method very challenging. In light of this, it is important for teachers and instructors to develop an understanding of the different styles of learning that learners use. In doing so, they will be better placed to employ effective methods to enhance the learning process for their students.

There are four main styles of learning, which are now recognized in education. These modalities were discovered in studies by education scholars in the early 90s and are now commonly described using the acronym VARK, which stands for visual, auditory, reading-writing, and kinesthetics.

Visual Learners

Visual learners, essentially, learn best when information or data is presented in the form of graphical representations. These types of learners are more proficient at internalizing and synthesizing information through the use of charts, maps, diagrams, and other visual learning resources. In general, visual learners tend to remember about 75% of the information which they receive visually. If you find that visualization comes easy to you and you tend to have an impeccable recall ability for information which you read or see, then you are very likely a visual learner.

Visual learners tend to be holistic learners. Some of the strengths that they enjoy due to their learning style include:

- They can easily remember what they read or write
- They are able to follow directions instinctively
- They have a great sense of balance and alignment
- They have good organization skills
- They enjoy a strong sense of color
- They have strong visualization abilities

Some of the effective strategies which you can employ in your learning as a visual learner include:

- Employ the use of colored highlights in your notes and textbooks

- Look at the diagrams, graphs, and images that accompany texts in order to remember what you study more easily

- Learn in a quiet and solitary environment so that you do not get distracted by noise

- Take notes during lectures to help you remember easily

- Use flashcards and outlines when studying

Auditory Learners

Whereas visual learners prefer to learn through graphic presentation formats like charts and graphs, auditory learners typically learn best when the information is presented sonically or orally. Some auditory learners may opt to not take notes during lectures in order to maintain their auditory attention. This is often misinterpreted by some teachers as the student failing to pay attention. For this reason, it is important for students (and their instructors as well) to understand the traits that characterize this learning style.

Some of the strengths of auditory learners include:

- They are great at following verbal directions
- They have good recall ability for information they have heard
- They are often very useful in group discussions
- They are good at explaining ideas vocally
- They are very confident speakers in class and therefore likely to contribute by answering questions in class
- They are good at storytelling

Although auditory learners thoroughly enjoy speaking and hearing other speakers, they may have difficulties studying alone or in quiet environments. If you are an auditory learner, here are some of the strategies which you can employ to enhance your learning process:

- Find a study mate to engage in discussions with
- Create audio recordings of class lectures
- Sit near the front when in class in order to hear the teacher properly
- Participate in classroom discussions
- Read assignments aloud to yourself when studying

Reading-Writing Learners

Students who prefer the reading/writing style of learning have a strong affinity for the written word. They typically enjoy reading and are likely to perform very highly on written assignments. Reading-writing learners tend to employ traditional methods of learning by reading books and taking lots of notes. Some of the common traits and characteristics of reading-writing learners include:

- They are able to easily remember information that they have read or written down
- They enjoy reading as a hobby
- They usually write notes which are highly detailed
- They have a preference for written essays over oral presentations
- They can articulate themselves better through writing instead of oratory.
- They are good at grammar and have an expansive vocabulary because they read a lot
- They prefer to read by themselves than have someone read for them

If you are a person who enjoys reading for its own sake, and you easily remember all that you read in great detail, then you are probably a reading-writing learner. Some of the practices that can make you better at learning include:

- Write down a lot of notes when studying and include as many details as you can

- Keep handouts and other written learning materials

- Study in a quiet and isolated environment where you can read without distractions

- Translate diagrams and chart into words and sentences

Kinesthetic Learners

Kinesthetic learners typically integrate and synthesize information better when they can engage their muscles in whatever they are learning. They are essentially hands-on learners who need to physically exert their bodies in the learning activity. Most learning approaches typically employ traditional methods of learning, which involve sitting at a desk in a classroom, listening to an instructor and making notes. These are things that kinesthetic learners may not be very good at. As a result, they often feel like their learning style is deficient and ineffective. However, this is a false notion. Kinesthetic learners can learn just as well as learners who employ the other modalities such as reading-writing, auditory and visual learning.

Some of the strengths that kinesthetic learners enjoy include:

- They usually have excellent hand-eye coordination
- They are great at conducting experiments
- They have excellent motor memory (they can easily remember a task they have done physically)
- They usually perform highly in sports and fitness exercises
- They are good at arts and drama
- They typically have high energy levels

If you happen to be a kinesthetic learner, here are some of the tips that can help you learn more effectively:

- Pace around or walk while reading or reciting notes to enhance memorization

- Study while lying down on your chest or stomach in a relaxing position instead of sitting at a desk

- Incorporate physical exercises in your learning

- Take frequent sessions in between study sessions

- Partner with other kinesthetic learners to share ideas and discuss study material

Having a proper understanding of your learning style can help you devise the best methods to enhance your learning. Whichever learning style you prefer, you can certainly take advantage of your unique strengths to greatly improve your learning ability.

Chapter 5: Approaches to Learning

The Approaches to Learning (AtL), refers to the strategies that teachers use to impart knowledge and the skills and behaviors that students use to engage in learning. Essentially, AtL lays emphasis on what and how students learn.

To improve competency in the different Approaches to Learning, teachers have to develop learning tasks and activities that nurture and encourage students to grow and understand the elements of AtL. In effect, the students will be able to develop relevant skills that will help them learn across the curriculum.

The five Approaches to Learning skills include:

Thinking Skills

Thinking skills include critical thinking, creativity, innovation, and transfer of knowledge. The sub-skills associated with this approach include meta-cognition, dialectical thought, synthesis, evaluation, analysis, application, application, comprehension, and acquisition of knowledge. This Approach to Learning requires students to plan, carefully articulate, and then evaluate their way of thinking and learning. They should be able to demonstrate a clear understanding of how they learn best.

Communication Skills

Communication is vital in any process of teaching and learning. This approach seeks to help students acquire various communication skills that will enable them to navigate learning experiences that might be frustrating or challenging. The sub-skills associated with this Approach to Learning skill include listening, writing, reading, speaking, presenting, viewing, and non-verbal communication.

Social Skills

Approaches to Learning also seek to help students acquire collaborative social skills. Interaction is an essential part of learning, given that it makes it easier for teachers and students to collaborate and work towards achieving set goals faster and easily. Moreover, social skills help students share responsibility for creating cooperative and productive learning environments. The sub-skills that fall under social skills include cooperating, respecting others, accepting responsibility, resolving conflict, adopting a variety of group roles, and group decision making.

Self-Management Skills

This can be divided into organizational skills, effective skills, and reflective skills. These skills can further be subdivided into fine motor skills, gross motor skills, spatial awareness, safety, time management, informed choices, healthy lifestyle, and code of behavior.

Self-management skills seek to help students learn how to manage time and tasks effectively and how to manage their state of mind. They will also learn how to practice focus and concentration, manage self-talk, and take action to achieve personal and academic goals.

Research Skills

Research skills assist students in navigating all the challenges they face during their day-to-day learning. These skills revolve around the following sub-skills: observation, question formulation, planning, data collection, data organization, data interpretation, and presentation of research findings. With these skills, students should be able to demonstrate information and media literacy. Essentially, they should be able to find, collect, organize, interpret, judge and present information. In addition, learners should be able to interact with media to utilize ideas and information effectively.

It cannot go without saying that the essence of the five approaches to learning is to enhance student learning and prepare them for life after school. By acquiring these skills, students should be able to:

Explore new concepts, try out new strategies and discover new contexts of learning

Prepare for higher learning and responsible involvement in global and local communities

Meet subject groups goals and objectives

Assess, evaluate, and provide evidence of the skills and creativity

Share responsibility for developing cooperative and productive learning environments

Comprehend the diversity of human learning needs

Chapter 6: Myths and Misconceptions about Learning

Learning is a continuous process, and we are learning all the time, regardless of our age or experience.

There are too many myths, misconceptions, and unproven theories about learning. No matter how hard we try to dispel them, these misconceptions about learning have stood the test of time. The more we fail to deal with them, the more students fail to gain new knowledge and skills. Notably, these myths can make the process of learning more difficult.

This section identifies and debunks some of the most common myths and misconceptions about learning. Next are a few myths and misconceptions that we should demystify and stop believing in them.

You understand concepts better if you discover them for yourself

Most people assume that if you discover something by yourself, then you automatically qualify to be an expert. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Figuring out a concept on your own does not necessarily mean understanding the fundamental principles of the concept. In essence, discovery does not give students an advantage over their counterparts who are yet to find out about the concept. If the said students were requested to lead the class through his or her discovery, they would not be able to explain the principles of the concept appropriately. Explicit instructions from an expert are still required for the student to understand any concept accordingly.

People who learn and think differently are not smart

Another misconception about learning is that slow learners and people with learning disabilities such as dyslexia and ADHD are not smart. The truth is that these disabilities are just as smart as their peers are. Moreover, they can be gifted as well with various abilities that demonstrate their high intelligence. The only problem is that they might struggle a bit with schoolwork, but this does not mean that they are not smart. With the right kind of assistance from trained teachers, students with learning disabilities can excel beyond expectations, sometimes even better than their counterparts do.

Beginners should emulate the behavior of experts

If you are a novice, you may be tempted to emulate the behavior of experts assuming that you will also become an expert. However, nothing could be as misleading as this misconception. The level of knowledge that experts possess is far much higher, and they are able to learn and perform their tasks differently. Requesting a novice to emulate an expert, therefore, is a big demand than what they can handle comfortably. For instance, asking high school students to solve a math assignment of a Ph.D. mathematics student is inappropriate and not the best way of teaching and learning.

Younger students are digital natives

Technology evolves every day. Considering this, many people, particularly older people, tend to think that younger students under a specific age group have an innate understanding of digital concepts. For this reason, those who believe in this myth will go ahead and introduce technology in the class, assuming that all young students know how to use these devices adeptly. This somehow harms the learning process of students who might not be tech-survey. In fact, research reveals that such a group of digital natives

does not exist. Hence, it is imperative that all students go through the same approach that does not exclude anyone, making the process of learning an all-inclusive experience.

Re-reading material is a good way to learn

Re-reading through content is only a passive way of learning. This is only good when preparing for a presentation or an important meeting, but not a good approach to learning given that you are highly likely to forget what you have just read after the meeting is over. The brain understands content better when we interact with our reading materials rather than going through it passively. An appropriate way to go about it would be to quiz yourself on the material you have just read. Alternatively, you may summarize the author's opinion to have a better understanding of the content.

Students should focus on one subject at a time

Another misconception about learning is that students should focus on one chunk of material at a time to learn better. However, research indicates that it is better and more effective to engage in different subjects across study sessions. Essentially, the practice of mixing different subjects and materials is a better approach to learning as it gives the learner a better sense of the core idea and the entire concept. Moreover, when you shift details during your study sessions, you tend to learn better and faster.

Spending longer hours studying translates to better understanding

This is based on the 10,000-hour theory researched by Anders Ericsson and popularized by Malcolm Gladwell. The theory suggests that deliberate practice that spans a total of 10,000 hours is sufficient to make you an expert in your chosen field of interest. However, further research shows that

this does not necessarily translate to learning. For instance, most drivers have been driving cars for a larger part of their lives, but this does not mean they have become better drivers. This shows that putting plenty of hours into something does not translate to better understanding. Deliberate practice only works well in fields that have stable structures such as sport.

Always stick to your first answer

Many of us were advised that we should not change our first answer when doing an exam or a multiple-choice test. The reason for this is that many students and instructors believe that changing the initial answer could lower the overall score. However, this is nothing more than a myth. Reconsidering your answers to various questions is actually a better way of learning. Research shows that students who take time mulling over a question or an idea before writing an answer tend to score highly in exams. The same applies to instructors. Teachers who pause for a few seconds when explaining an idea tend to convey the message better, and their students learn more.

Intelligence is fixed at birth

Most people misconceive that intelligence is fixed at birth, meaning that you either have or don't have it. Nevertheless, various studies confirm that our level of intelligence can grow over time. In essence, students can improve their intelligence by dedicating more time to learning new concepts and ideas.

MODULE TWO: CHALLENGES OF LEARNING

While learning is something that we are naturally expected to do, many learners often meet challenges along the way, which greatly slows down their learning or make it more difficult than it should be. In most instances, these learners are usually highly intelligent and creative. However, the manner in which they process information is usually different from the way the average learner does. Sometimes, the challenges experienced by learners have more to do with external factors rather than their own innate abilities. In order for them to progress in their learning, students with learning challenges need to be helped to identify and overcome the challenges that they face.

So, in this module, we are going to explore some of the major challenges which learners face and how these problems hinder their learning speed and ability. We will discuss the learning disabilities which negatively affect the rate at which students learn. In addition to this, we will examine how mental health affects learning, as well as the influence of culture on learning. Furthermore, this section will highlight some of the social problems which make learning difficult. By the end of this module, you should have a clear understanding of the challenges of learning as well as strategies that can help you to overcome any learning problems you might be experiencing.

Chapter 7: Common Learning Disabilities

A learning disability refers to a neurological condition that affects one's processing ability, thereby hindering the learning process. Although learning disabilities are often diagnosed when a child is in their school-going years, these challenges affect more than just their academic lives. Learning challenges that are not diagnosed or resolved earlier in life can negatively affect one's career life as well as social life. It is worth noting that learning disabilities are not the same as learning problems such as emotional issues and visual handicaps, which stem from cultural, economic, and social factors.

Most learning disabilities and disorders cannot be cured or solved with medical help. However, with the right approach to learning and a supportive environment, learners who struggle with learning disabilities can become tremendously successful in their academics, careers, and personal lives.

Here are some of the common disabilities affecting learners of all ages and backgrounds.

Visual Perceptual Motor Deficit

This is a disorder that affects one's ability to process and understand information acquired through vision. The sensory information which is received visually may be compromised due to the way in which a learner's eyes move. As a result, they may experience problems in reading and comprehension, and consequently have their learning impaired.

Visual processing involves a number of skills that are essential for strong perception and processing. These include:

i) Visual Discrimination - The ability to be cognizant of distinctive features of forms, for instance, shapes, sizes, and colors.

ii) Visual Sequential Memory - The ability to memorize a series of objects in the order in which they were initially observed.

iii) Visual-Spatial Skills - The capacity to understand spatial concepts, for instance being aware of the direction of objects in relation to one's position in space.

iv) Visual Figure-Ground - The capacity to distinguish an object from its background.

v) Visual Form Consistency - The ability to detect progressive changes in an object, for instance, changes in color, shape, or texture.

vi) Visual Closure - The ability to accurately determine a complete feature from partial information, for instance, telling what an object is by simply looking at one part.

vii) Visual Memory - The capacity to retain and the ability to retrieve information collected through visual means.

An individual who experiences a deficiency in one or more of these fundamental visual skills is likely to have impaired visual perception. Some of the signs and symptoms of visual perceptual motor deficit include:

Reversing mirror letters such as ‘p’ and ‘q’, ‘b’ and ‘d’

Inability to copy information correctly

Inability to recognize a word if only part of it is shown

Frequently closing one eye when reading

Poor organization skills when writing,e.g., irregular sentence spacing and misaligned letters

If you or a loved one experiences any of these visual-perceptual problems when learning, there are several strategies that might help. These include:

Use books which are printed in large formats

Try different paper styles,e.g., pastel, embossed, graph,etc., to find one that works for you

Minimize tasks which involve too much copying

Use a computer or word processor to type whenever possible as an alternative to writing

Use tracking tools such as rulers and compasses when writing or drawing

Dysgraphia

It affects one's ability to write. Although this disorder mainly affects handwriting, it may also cause impairment in orthographic coding and finger sequencing. Dysgraphia typically makes the process of writing extremely laborious, and often the final result is hardly legible. Due to this reason, individuals who suffer from this learning disability often exhibit a strong dislike for writing.

Some of the traits and characteristics of learners who struggle with dysgraphia include:

Frequently complain of finger soreness during or after writing (this is due to a cramped pen/pencil grip)

Inability to space out words evenly when writing on a paper

Extremely low writing speeds

Handwriting is barely legible or completely illegible

Frequently omits words or fails to complete words when writing

Displays a strong aversion towards writing tasks

Difficulty with grammar and syntax

If your child manifests any or all of these symptoms, it is absolutely important that you get them evaluated by a school psychologist or special education expert in order to get a diagnosis. Although there is presently no medical cure for dysgraphia, children who suffer from the condition can be

helped to manage it with proper practice and support from their teachers and caregivers. Adults living with dysgraphia are likely to be less affected by the problem since they can opt to type instead of writing during their day-to-day professional tasks. However, if you work in a profession in which writing is still fundamental, you may want to discuss other options such as the use of speech-to-text technologies, with your boss.

Dyscalculia

Dyscalculia (sometimes referred to as ‘number blindness’) is a learning disability that affects an individual's capacity to understand numerical and process numerical information or data. While the cause of dyscalculia is still a subject of research, this learning disability is thought to result from developmental abnormalities in the part of the brain that is concerned with numerical concepts.

Individuals who suffer from dyscalculia may experience difficulties in:

Reading analog clocks

Recognizing digits

Memorizing prices of items and phone number

Adhering to time tables and schedules

Counting backward

They may also manifest the following traits and characteristics:

Difficulty understanding simple mathematical concepts such as place value and quantity, positive and negative values

Difficulty sequencing orders of objects or events

Difficulty following mathematical formulas to solve problems

Difficulty handling money

Inability to translate word problems into mathematical forms

Difficulty in understanding fractions

Dyscalculia is easily one of the most misunderstood learning disabilities. The inability of dyscalculia sufferers to understand mathematical concepts is often wrongly judged as laziness or a lack of effort on their part. This constant misrepresentation of a real condition often takes a heavy toll on the affected individuals. Learners who struggle with dyscalculia often believe that they are just dumb or stupid. This can lead to self-esteem issues, lack of self-confidence and mental health problems such as depression and anxiety.

Students who suffer from dyscalculia are likely to experience significant challenges in their academic lives. They are also likely to have limited career choices once they are done with school. Adults who suffer from dyscalculia can also be seriously affected by this learning problem. They may find it extremely frustrating or impossible to perform simple day-to-day tasks such as budgeting, cooking, and driving.

Some of the strategies which may help a person struggling with dyscalculia to learn better include:

Use memorization tools such as mnemonics to remember math concepts or formulas

Draw diagrams to help you understand mathematical ideas such as multiplication and division

Use colored pencils to help you differentiate math problems

Use fingers to aid in counting

Auditory Processing Disorder

This is a learning disability that affects one's capacity to process and understand verbally-presented information. Individuals with auditory processing disorder may have difficulty in registering what people are saying even though their hearing is okay.

Although their hearing may be perfect, people with APD experience problems with decoding verbal information due to a deficiency in one or more of the four skills involved in auditory processing. These are:

i) Auditory Discrimination - The ability to notice and differentiate between two or more distinct sounds. This is essential in telling apart different but similar-sounding words such as 'sat' and 'shut'

ii) Auditory Memory - The ability to recall things which are heard, in both short-term memory and long-term memory

iii) Figure -to-Ground Discrimination - The ability to tell pick out important sounds from background noise

iv) Auditory Sequencing - This is the ability to comprehend and remember the order of sounds

APD often manifests in individuals alongside other learning disorders such as dyslexia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Due to this fact, experts are split on whether or not it should be considered a distinct disorder. Some of the common symptoms associated with this learning disability include:

Difficulty in keeping track of conversations

Inability to tell where a particular sound is coming from

Difficulty listening to and enjoying music

Problems with remembering spoken instructions

Difficulty understanding what a person says especially in noisy environments

In order to diagnose APD, an audiologist (a person who specializes in diagnosing and treating hearing problems) will conduct a series of listening tests to determine the cause and severity of the problem. Most children suspected of having this learning disability are usually tested at around the age of 7 when their listening and response abilities are more developed.

While there is no cure for APD, the condition can be managed with a host of treatment methods with a focus on classroom support, speech therapy, and auxiliary skills development.

Language Processing Disorder

Language Processing Disorder (LPD) is a specific type of Auditory Processing Disorder that affects one's ability to process languages. LPD affects both receptive language (how we understand what others say) and expressive language (what we say). Just as is the case with APD, LPD does not necessarily a symptom of hearing problems. Rather, it simply means that there is a deficiency in the way the brain processes what is heard.

Individuals with LPD generally experience difficulty in reading, writing, spelling, and speaking. The condition may also affect other skills which are required for auditory processing, such as memory and attention.

Some of the problems which individuals affected with LPD may experience include:

Difficulty finding meaning in other languages

Poor writing skills

Frustration due to an inability to understand what people are saying

Difficulty following spoken directions

Poor reading and comprehension ability

Difficulty expressing themselves verbally

Difficulty understanding jokes

Poor or very limited vocabulary

Diagnosis for LPD is usually made by a combination of professionals, including an audiologist, a speech-language pathologist, and a neuropsychologist. Treatment for LPD may vary depending on the unique needs of the patient. It is usually focused on improving their listening skills and expanding their vocabulary.

Chapter 8: Social Problems that Make Learning Difficult

The events that happen in the societies around us often have a very great bearing on the

learning process. Most of the social phenomenon which we encounter seep into the education process, both in and out of the classroom, thus affecting the way in which we learn and the rate at which we do so.

Some of the social issues that affect learning include:

Poverty

Poverty is, without a doubt one of the biggest problems affecting learning and education throughout the world. Many students who live in the developing world and poor nations often find it difficult to acquire education due to lack of income. It is not unsurprising that many end up dropping out of school in order to secure jobs to support themselves and their families.

Gender

In most countries around the world, gender is one of the key factors that determine whether one acquires a good education or not. In many countries, particularly those in the developing world, many girls are denied the opportunity to learn and compete favorably with their male counterparts in

careers. Typically, most of these girls end up getting married off prematurely, thus putting an end to any education prospects they may have.

War and Conflict

Students who live in countries ravaged by war usually experience a lot of challenges trying to learn. As their schools and classrooms are bombed to the ground and libraries burnt down, these learners become deprived of the essential resources which they require to learn.

Racism

Racism is a widespread social problem that affects nearly every fabric of society. We all face it in sports, at work, in business, and in places of learning, as well. However, students from minority backgrounds normal bear the brunt for racial attacks whether real or imaginary. This calls for a concerted effort from teachers, parents, and students to work together to reduce the effects of racism in the classroom.

Ethnic issues

As with racism, students from particular ethnic groups are often adjudged as slow or poor learners compared to their counterparts. However, nothing could be further from the truth given than the learning capabilities of an individual depend on other factors, not their ethnicity. The reason for this assumption could be that particular geographical locations lack sufficient access to learning resources.

Cultural issues

Children from migrant families may face several challenges adapting to their new environment and learning a new language. This may impede their ability to access learning resources and their capacity to communicate with their teachers and other students. However, with proper orientation, it would be just a matter of time before such students get an accurate education.

Substance Abuse

Let's face it. Substance abuse is another common problem affecting society. Students have also joined the bandwagon, and they are now abusing drugs and alcohol due to various reasons ranging from depression to peer pressure. The abuse of these drugs has caused many students to lose interest in learning. However, with proper counseling and creating a supportive environment, these students can get back on track and start learning again.

Unequal Opportunity

Unequal education opportunity for students who come from poor backgrounds or smaller communities is another social issue that affects learning. Ideally, all students should have equal opportunities to pursue and access learning resources. Regrettably, this is not often the case. To address this problem, educational institutions and the relevant bodies should allow access to proportionate opportunities without considering their cultural affiliation or background.

Ethical Issues

Certain ethical practices make it difficult for students to learn. For instance, the general conduct of the instructor might affect the learning of the students. Teachers should not have improper relationships with their students. In addition, they should not come to school drunk or under the

influence of alcohol. Other ethical issues revolve around whether uniforms should be compulsory and the types of punishment enforced in the school.

Chapter 9: How Mental Health Problems Affect Learning

The connection between mental health problems and learning outcomes is a subject that is undisputed by education specialists and cognitive psychologists. Many experts agree that mental illness can seriously affect a student's ability to learn and perform well in their studies. In light of the spike in student mental health issues in recent years, it is absolutely important for us to discuss the ways in which psychological disturbances such as depression and anxiety affect learning. So, in this section we are going to go over some of the mental illnesses affecting students and how they impact learning.

Depression

Depression is, without a doubt one of the most common mental disorders affecting students today. This mental illness typically leads to feelings of despondency, hopelessness, and detachment from the world and other people. Depression is a very serious illness that often leads to learners dropping out of school. If left untreated, depression can lead to more serious problems such as drug addiction, crime and in some cases suicide. It is therefore important that the condition is diagnosed early and treatment is sought immediately.

Some of the characteristic symptoms of depression include:

Significant change in sleeping habits,i.e., sleeping too much or getting no sleep at all.

Changes in appetite, for instance, eating too little or eating too much. This often leads to weight problems such as being too underweight or obese

Constant feelings of sadness, helplessness, and powerlessness

Poor concentration

Loss of interest in daily activities,e.g., school, or work

Constant feelings of agitation and restlessness

Feeling fatigued, physically drained, and sluggish. This may make it difficult to perform even the simplest tasks

Feelings of worthlessness, self-loathing, and guilt

Unexplained body aches and pains

Depression can significantly reduce once ability to learn since they lack motivation and mental energy to engage in learning. A depressed student may completely lose interest in learning and fail to attend classes. This can significantly reduce their general performance as well as their well-being. Due to the serious implications of this mental illness on learning, it is very vital that you see a psychiatrist as soon as you can, if you suspect that you are depressed. With the right treatment and therapy, you can completely recover from this problem and resume learning.

Anxiety

Stress and low levels of anxiety are indeed a very normal part of life. However, when the anxiety becomes too persistent that it interferes with one's everyday life, then it becomes a problem. Anxiety disorders are some of the most serious mental health issues which affect students and hamper effective learning. It is estimated that about 300 million people all over the world are affected by one or more anxiety disorders. Most of these people live with undiagnosed anxiety, which further exacerbates the problem. Anxiety disorders often go undiagnosed since most of the symptoms are mistaken for normal everyday stress.

Some of the common symptoms of anxiety include:

Excessive and constant worrying

Feelings of stress, apprehension, and agitation

Difficulty concentrating in school or at work

Feelings of intense fear and paranoia

Sweating and dizziness

Frequent and unexplainable fatigue

Feelings of irritability and restlessness

Frequent stomach aches and diarrhea

Headaches and migraines

Sleep problems

While the cause of anxiety is not fully understood, many neurologists and psychologists believe it is caused by a combination of factors including genetics, chemical imbalances in the brain, stress, and negative life experiences. If you frequently experience these symptoms, it may be wise for you to make an appointment with a health professional in order to get a diagnosis and begin treatment. Anxiety is typically treated using a combination of medications, behavioral therapy, and lifestyle changes.

Drug Abuse and Addiction

Another common mental disorder that affects learning is drug addiction. Drugs and other harmful substances are persistently used by many students around the world. This often leads to poor academic performance, social problems and in some cases death. In light of the prevalence of drug abuse in many learning institutions it is important for teachers and caregivers to be able to recognize the tell-tale signs and symptoms.

Some of the symptoms and behaviors which characterize drug abuse and addiction in students include:

Uncontrollable urge to use the drug every time

Inability to meet obligations such as school or work

Lack of energy and motivation to perform normal daily task

Loss of interest in hobbies and interests

Redness in the eyes

Dilated pupils

Uncontrollable shaking

Lack of interest in grooming or taking care of oneself

Extreme anxiety and unexplainable fear

Decreased coordination

Loss of muscle control

Psychotic behavior which may turn violent

Irritability and abnormal changes in mood

Sleeping problems such as insomnia or hypersomnia

Drug abuse and addiction can be very detrimental not only to learning but to one's general wellbeing. Some drugs, like amphetamines and narcotics, can easily lead to fatality in the event of an overdose. In light of this, it is absolutely necessary that a person who is struggling with drug addiction is diagnosed and treated promptly. This can help avert serious problems such as injury and death.

Here are some of the ways in which mental illnesses may affect learning:

Inability to concentrate

One of the biggest impacts of mental illness is the inability to concentrate. Students with mental problems lack focus and find it difficult to concentrate in class for long hours.

Lack of stamina

Mental health problems may lead to a lack of stamina in the sense that the student may lack sufficient energy to attend classes every day. This will force the student to drop out of school or miss several important classes.

Inability to screen out environmental stimuli

Mental disability may affect a student's ability to respond to stimuli, such as sounds, smells, and sights. This may eventually distract the affected students and make it difficult for them to learn.

Difficulty handling negative feedback

People facing mental challenges normally have difficulty understanding their feelings. This means that they are highly likely to have trouble handling and understanding negative feedback, eventually affecting their ability to learn

Difficulty interacting with others

Mental problems may also affect a student's social skills, making it difficult for them to interact with their teachers and other students. This may also make it difficult for such students to make friends, join discussion groups, chat with other students during breaks and participate in class.

MODULE THREE: 7 EASY STEPS TO IMPROVE LEARNING

Early on in this guide, we discussed the four main learning styles which different students employ according to their cognitive strengths and preferences. We found out that every learner has a style of learning that is appropriate to their abilities. While some learners have an affinity for visual-based learning, others are able to learn better when information is presented verbally or through written texts. Depending on the type of learner that you are, there are various techniques that can help you take advantage of your unique style of learning and develop fast self-learning skills.

So, in this module, we are going to discuss seven advanced learning strategies and their effectiveness incomprehension, some of the best concentration techniques which can help you enhance your attention and understand better. Finally, we will look at some of the tried and tested tips for making learning more enjoyable. Hopefully, by the end of this module you will have found the right accelerated learning techniques to suit your style of learning.

In this section, we are going to look at seven key strategies that learners can use to enhance their learning ability and understand better. We will also evaluate the effectiveness of each strategy and discuss some of the tips for using each strategy. All of the strategies we are going to discuss are backed by years of scientific research and proven to be very beneficial to the learning process of students both young and old.

It is worth remembering that the goal of instructional learning is to help students develop techniques to drive their own learning. In light of these, all the accelerated learning strategies which we are going to discuss in this chapter are devised to be used by learners without external assistance either through technological aids or a teacher. Some of these techniques may require a learner to be sufficiently trained, but in general, these accelerated learning is meant to be used by the student without supervision.

Chapter 10: Step 1 - Note Taking

Note-taking is, without a doubt one of the most fundamental aspects of learning. Studies have shown that information that is contained in notes has 34 percent of chance of being remembered. On the other hand, information which is not contained in notes has only a measly 5 percent chance of being remembered. You will no doubt agree, then, that note-taking is a highly useful strategy for a learner to employ in the pursuit of learning.

While some people consider note-taking to be outdated, the reality on the ground in classrooms is that note-taking is still a very preferred learning strategy. Thanks to technology the art of note-taking has involved from the traditional pen-on-paper approach. Today, most learners prefer to type their notes rather than write them out.

Some of the benefits of note-taking in learning include:

- Improves Focus and Attention

One of the primary reasons why note-taking is beneficial to the learning process is because it helps increase learners' focus and attention. Writing or typing notes when writing engages both the body and mind of a learner, thereby allowing them to take in more details and recall them easily.

- Aids Comprehension and Retention

The art of note-taking during study greatly enhances the comprehension ability of students as well as their ability to remember. This is due to the fact that writing notes allows a student to break down large chunks of information into simple and concise formats that are easier to absorb.

- It Promotes Self-Learning

The process of taking notes fully engages learners in the learning process. They are able to translate the information that they acquire into formats which they can easily understand in their own way.

- It Helps Learners Build Organization Skills

Note-taking can help students become more organized in their learning process. By prioritizing content and information, they can become better at structuring their learning thereby enhancing their comprehension.

- It Enhances Creativity

The practice of effective note-taking during study can greatly improve the creativity of learners. By developing their note-taking skills, learners are able to come up with innovative strategies to help them take in information and understand better.

While note-taking is a very useful strategy for increasing one's rate of learning, its effectiveness depends on how skilled a learner is at it. Here are some of the ways in which you can become more skillful at note-taking while studying.

i) Focus on Important Details

Note-taking is supposed to be focused on the important details of a particular subject. If you transcribe everything that you read or everything that your instructor says, you only end up wasting time and slowing down your learning process. Therefore, in order to become effective at note-taking, you should identify the most important details like names of people and places, key terminologies, and instructions

ii) Minimize Distractions

In order to make the most of your note-taking, you need to study in an environment that is free from distractions. Trying to write notes in a noisy or busy environment is likely to hinder your focus, hence slowing you down.

iii) Relax

It can be very challenging to write notes when your mind is restless, anxious, or overthinking. If you are too stressed out when taking notes, you will likely end up making many mistakes, which significantly reduce the quality of your work. It is, therefore, important for you to relax your mind as much as possible in order to be able to focus your mind on the task.

iv) Employ Digital Aids

Writing notes with your hands can be very exhausting after some time. If you force yourself to copy notes when fatigued, you may end up making a lot of mistakes, which reduce the quality of your notes. Furthermore, fatigue can also slow you down and make your note-taking very ineffective. To remedy this problem, you may want to use technologies such as your computer to copy notes instead of writing them. Typing out your notes can also be very beneficial to your learning if your handwriting is not very good.

Chapter 11: Step 2 - Group Work

Learning in a group can greatly increase the speed at which you learn and dramatically enhance your comprehension. For many years, group learning has been employed by instructors and teachers to foster effective learning in students of all ages. Studies by educational specialists have revealed numerous benefits that learners accrue by learning in groups. Some of these include:

- It Promotes Academic Achievement

Research has shown that working in groups can greatly promote higher academic achievement in students. This is because learners are able to share ideas with each other and cumulatively improve their comprehension through discussion and debate.

- It Promotes Higher Level Reasoning

Cooperative learning can greatly increase the reasoning abilities of individual learners. Students who learn in groups are able to engage in analytical discussions and critical thinking which helps them build their reasoning abilities thus enabling them to enhance their learning process

- It Helps Build Confidence

Studying with your peers in a group setting can significantly boost your confidence level. By contributing your ideas and thoughts in group discussions, you develop better oratory skills, thus become better at expressing yourself.

- Promotes Deeper Understanding of Study Material

Cooperative learning allows learners to develop a deeper understanding of whatever subject or skill they are learning. By learning in groups, students are able to share different perspectives on a given topic or subject. As a result, they develop fresh ideas and better comprehension of the subject material.

- Allows Learners to Practice Cooperative Skills

Group learning is a great way for students to practice, apply, and further develop their cooperative skills. Cooperative learning allows students to share tasks and collaborate in the pursuit of knowledge. As a result, they learn how to relate with people from different backgrounds who have different learning abilities. The skills which they learn by collaborating with other learners can be very useful in subsequent levels of education, careers, and life in general.

Here are some of the tips which you can use to make group work more effective during learning:

i) Determine your Objective

Collaborative learning usually works best when there is a clear objective in mind, which all the members of the group are aware of. Therefore, before you begin any group learning activity, it is vital that you identify the specific goal that you hope to achieve.

ii) Decide the Size of Your Group

While group learning is a very useful strategy for learning, its success often depends on the size of the group and its suitability to the objective. Small groups of around 4 to 5 people are usually ideal for tasks that require intensive research and discussion. It is also important to take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the members of the group since this will allow you to find strategies covering up for any deficiencies.

iii) Determine How You to Divide Tasks

When engaging in group learning, you will very likely need to split tasks among group members. The division of labor allows for greater productivity and faster learning. By splitting tasks like research and report preparation between members of the group, you will greatly increase the speed and efficiency of the learning exercise. It is, however, very important that you divide the tasks according to the unique abilities of the group members. This will allow you to maximize the strengths of each learner in your group.

Chapter 12: Step 3 - Retrieval Practice

Retrieval practice is an accelerated learning technique that is designed to help learners recall information which they previously acquired. In general, the learning strategies which are employed by teachers and educationists tend to focus more on getting information into the mind of the learner. However, the practice of retrieval is just as important as the acquisition of information, as it enhances long-term retention and comprehension.

In traditional models of learning, students are expected to recall and retain information through repeated study. However, studying the same texts over and over does not necessarily improve learners' ability to remember information. Retrieval practice is a far more efficient strategy for enhancing study, comprehension and recall ability.

The process of learning typically involves two processes of human memory, namely, encoding and retrieval. The encoding process involves the storage of information, whereas the retrieval process involves accessing previously acquired information. The process of retrieval is usually instigated by a trigger cue, such as a question, experience, or new knowledge that is related to what the student has learned before. These cues are typically very important, as they allow the learner to unlock information that is stored in their short term or long-term memory.

Retrieval practice, while beneficial to learning, is not very easy to do. This is due to the fact that any previously acquired information is constantly being reconstructed depending on context as well as the retrieval cues that

are available to the learner. Nevertheless, retrieval practice can be learned and mastered by any student, as long as they employ the right strategies.

Some of the techniques which you can employ as a learner to enhance your retrieval practice skills include:

i) Multiple Choice Tests

Multiple-choice tests are very useful for building retrieval practice skills because they help you remember what you have learned. This strategy works very well, as it does not require you to know the answer instinctively. Instead, it relies on familiarity to enable you to pick out the right answer from a set of options. This strategy is particularly effective if you are studying for an exam.

ii) Self- Testing with Flashcards

Conducting self-tests using flashcards is a highly effective technique that can help you enhance your retrieval ability. This is due to the fact that all the quizzes you have created are directly relevant to what you've studied. Since you know the scope of what you have studied and are aware of your comprehension, you can devise questions to help you identify your weak spots and consequently find solutions.

iii) Answering Questions Aloud

Although it might seem like a very trivial thing, answering questions aloud can be very useful when trying to recall what you have learned. This is because it enables you to think about the information carefully and organize

it in your head before you make a response. This practice can help jog your memory easily, particularly in high-pressure situations where a quick response is needed.

iv) Allow Others to Ask You Questions

One of the most brilliant and highly effective strategies of learning retrieval practice is teaching others what you know. By answering someone else's questions pertaining to your subject of study, you can determine your level of comprehension and identify any areas where you may be deficient.

Chapter 13: Step 4 - Summarization

Whether you are a student or a working professional, the art of summarizing is one that you need to deploy if you hope to increase your learning speed and improve your comprehension. Summarization essentially refers to the act of taking in a lot of information and creating a condensed version that covers the main points and details.

If you frequently engage in a lot of reading and note-taking, summarization is probably something you cannot do without. Here are some of the incredible ways in which summarization aids learning:

- It helps learner pick out main ideas, themes, and concepts in a given text as well as the supporting details
- It allows learners to produce new knowledge from the information they acquire through reading/studying
- It enables learners to study large volumes of texts in shorter amounts of time, thereby accelerating their learning process
- It allows students to monitor and evaluate their understanding of what they read or learn
- It is a useful skill which can be applied in numerous contexts, including classroom, workplace, and life in general

Summaries are typically presented in written or typed form, although they can be delivered verbally as well. Some of the important tips and pointers to

keep in mind when writing a summary include:

Always write your summaries in paragraphs

You should write summaries in your own words. Refrain from copying what you read or hear as it is presented word-for-word.

Always begin with an introductory sentence that states the text's title, the author, and the main idea

Ensure that your summary stays true to the ideas of the original text. You should not insert your own opinions, interpretations, and deductions about the information presented

Ensure the final paragraph or sentence of your summary rephrases the main point of the information you are summarizing

Chapter 14: Step 5 - Interleaving

Interleaving refers to a learning strategy that involves mixing different subjects or topics when studying in order to enhance learning. This is different from 'blocked' practice, whereby a learner studies one topic intensively before moving on to a different one. The practice of interleaving has been proven to produce impressive results in a wide range of disciplines and subjects. This highly effective learning strategy has been shown to aid students in developing problem-solving skills, as well as categorization skills. Research has also proved that interleaving can help enhance the retention ability of learners who employ this strategy in their studies.

Many cognitive psychologists today believe that interleaving enhances the brain's ability to make associations between different concepts. This fact makes interleaving a very useful strategy for learning different subjects simultaneously. In light of the numerous benefits that the practice of interleaving offers, it is essential that students develop an understanding of how it works.

The strategy of interleaving lends itself well to learning in a variety of ways. Some of the ways in which you can apply the technique of interleaving in your learning include:

- Learning a New Language

You can apply the interleaving technique when learning a new language by mixing up the type of words you learn during your study. For instance,

instead of learning the different categories of words like names of objects and colors separately, you could mix them up and learn them together.

- Learning History

You can also use the strategy of interleaving when studying history. For example, instead of learning the complete history of one country, you could opt to learn the histories of different countries at specific periods in time based on a common theme.

The technique of interleaving can also be employed effectively outside the classroom in kinesthetic learning. For instance, if a group of learners are engaged in a sporting activity such as tennis, they could practice interleaving by combining different exercises such as hitting the ball from different angles and distances. This kind of learning can greatly enhance the motor skills of learners and improve their overall performance.

Interleaving is, without a doubt, one of the highly effective accelerated learning techniques which can be applied in a wide range of subjects. If you are wondering how to implement this technique in your learning, here are some of the tips which might help you do so:

- Determine the Criteria To Use When Interleaving

The first consideration you need to make when interleaving is the criteria for selecting the concepts of subjects which you intend to interleave. While there is no specific criteria for interleaving, your selection of subjects or

topics to mix will be determined by a number of factors. These include the type of material you are studying, your familiarity with the subjects you are mixing as well as your personal taste. Nevertheless, there are some general pointers that you need to keep in mind when selecting subjects to intermix. First, you should interleave subjects or topics in a way that makes logical sense. Also, you should avoid mixing subjects or topics which are very different from each other. The more things they have in common, the better.

- Determine How Much You Want to Mix Them Up

The other important factor to consider when interleaving is how much you want to mix up the different topics. The ideal level of interleaving may be difficult to determine because it depends on a lot of factors. If you stick on a specific subject too much, you probably won't learn the others, whereas if you switch between subjects too often, you may end up learning very little on each. Therefore, you need to determine the degree of variation that works best for you.

It might take some experimenting in order to figure out what suits you best. However, with a little dedication and patience, you will find the right combination.

Chapter 15: Step 6 - Spaced Practice

Spaced practice (or distributed practice) is an accelerated learning strategy that involves reviewing information that is learned over short or 'spaced out' periods of time, as opposed to cramming information over extended periods of time. Research has shown that many students usually fail to prepare adequately in the weeks or days prior to an exam. Typically, they will wait until a few days before the exam when they start to frantically spend long periods of time trying to cram large amounts of information. This usually leads to poor performance, since most of the important details of the study material get glossed over or missed.

The simple fact of the matter is that it is very difficult to absorb, process, and integrate large amounts of information in a very short period of time. This is why cramming typically doesn't work very well when trying to study for an exam or learn anything for that matter. Instead of cramming your exam few days or hours before you sit it, it is much more beneficial and worthwhile to prepare yourself over multiple sessions through distributed practice.

Spaced practice allows you to go over your study material in multiple short sessions. You can designate each session to learn a specific topic or subject in a calm and relaxed way without the pressure of impending exams. This allows you to absorb and integrate important concepts and details in a specific section of your coursework. As a result, your comprehension of the study material will be much better. In addition to this, each session will provide you with the opportunity to review what you have learned in order to improve your understanding of the study material even further.

Some of the helpful tips for using distributed practice when preparing for an exam include:

- Check your study material or syllabus to determine the topics that you need to cover

- Create a calendar or timetable of the dates when you expect to sit for your exams beforehand

- Spend time studying your course material in short intervals in order to maximize your concentration and absorb more information

- Continually review the information you have covered in previous study sessions to determine your level of understanding of the course

Chapter 16: Step 7 - Practice Testing

Practice testing refers to any kind of test that a student or learner can perform by themselves. Self- testing is a highly effective strategy which can help a student significantly increase their learning pace. Studies have shown that students who score high grades on standard exams are usually very proficient and skilled at self-testing.

While devising self-tests can be time-consuming, it is nonetheless a very worthwhile investment that can help you master your course material very easily. Self-testing has been shown to improve memorization, recall ability and comprehension. In order to begin developing effective self-tests for your own evaluation, it is absolutely important that you familiarize yourself with some of the test formats which are commonly used by examiners. These include:

i) Multiple Choice

These are tests whereby questions are accompanied by three or more possible answers. The student is supposed to select the right answer from the available options

ii) True or False

These tests are usually designed to test the memorization ability of a learner. Essentially, the student is required to respond to a provided statement with an affirmative or negative answer.

iii) Fill-in-the-Blanks

In these kinds of tests, learners must provide a specific word or set of words that make a given statement correct.

iv) Essay Tests

These tests are usually meant to test a student's comprehension of a given subject. The learner will be expected to respond to a given statement with a lengthy answer, which may include specific examples and detailed facts.

Some of the suggestions you may want to keep in mind when devising self-tests include:

Find out ,at the beginning of the course, when tests will be given as well as the format used

Devise your tests using a format similar to the one used by your teacher or examiner

Study any old exams which may be in your school's library in order to familiarize yourself with the format used

Have someone ask you questions related to the course you are studying

Chapter 17: Concentration Techniques to Enhance Your Learning

In chapter one of this guide, we found out that concentration is an essential element of learning. Without concentration and sustained focus, it is literally impossible for one to learn anything. The ability to completely focus one's attention on a certain task and fight off distractions is what drives any kind of learning. However, it can be very tasking to maintain focus over prolonged periods of learning. Nevertheless, there are several tips and strategies that can help you improve your concentration in order to learn faster and understand better. They include:

- Ensure you Get Enough Quality Sleep

To enhance your concentration and focus, you need to make sure that you are getting ample rest and quality sleep. Lack of sleep negatively affects your mood and reduces your motivation. If your concentration has been suffering due to lack of sleep, you need to make sure you are getting at least eight hours of sleep every night. This will help refresh your brain so that you can focus better when learning

- Perform Physical Exercises

Engaging in physical exercises can work wonders for the brain when it comes to improving concentration. This can be attributed to the fact that physical exercises increase blood flow to the brain, thereby enhancing your

focus and improving your ability to recall what you learn. You do not even need to engage in a highly intensive physical work out. Even simply taking a walk or jog can greatly improve your metabolism and circulation, thus making concentration a lot better.

- Play Some Music

It is no secret that music can dramatically improve one's focus and attention during learning. Listening to relaxing music while studying helps your body and mind to calm down, thus allowing you to concentrate better. The choice of music to listen to is entirely a matter of preference, although instrumental classical music usually works best for most people. As a general rule, try to avoid listening to upbeat music with lyrics when studying, since this can be more distracting than helpful to your concentration.

- Find a Conducive Environment for Learning

In order to improve your concentration and maximize your study time, it is absolutely important to find a quiet and peaceful environment to learn in. Noisy and busy environments can lead to frequent distractions, which make you lose focus when trying to study. Studying in a quiet and solitary location can help you concentrate more and understand better. Libraries are typically the best places to engage in learning since they usually enforce rules which minimize noise and movements which may cause distraction. If you elect to study in your room, ensure that the lights are soothing so that you don't end up with sore eyes from reading.

- Take Frequent Study Breaks

It is very normal for the mind to become exhausted after prolonged periods of studying. Mental fatigue can lead to reduced productivity when learning since your ability to focus becomes reduced. In light of this, it is important to give yourself some breaks in order to relax and refresh. Doing this will replenish your mental and physical energy, thus enabling you to focus better once you resume learning.

Conclusion

The ability to learn fast is something that does not come naturally to all human beings. While some people can easily pick up a new skill or learn a complex subject in a very short amount, others have a slow learning process, which requires more time and effort.

Nevertheless, the ability to learn faster is an ability that anyone can and should develop due to the numerous benefits and advantages it offers. The simple truth of the matter is that the faster you are able to learn, the quicker you evolve and adapt to the circumstances of an ever-changing world.

The ability to learn faster allows us to absorb more information faster and more effectively, thus enhancing our decision-making and problem-solving abilities. Moreover, being a fast learner allows you to update your knowledge base more rapidly, thus becoming more in tune with your environment. Without a doubt, becoming a fast learner is a highly useful trait that can help us succeed in virtually all areas of life. Whether you are a student or working professional, there are plenty of ways in which you can apply your learning ability to improve your performance.

Developing one's learning ability is easier said than done. There are many challenges and limitations which you will need to overcome in order to become more proficient at learning and improve your comprehension. However, with the right strategies and techniques, you can certainly accelerate your rate of learning, enhance your cognitive abilities, and improve your understanding.

The accelerated learning techniques which we have discussed in this guide have been tried and tested and proven to work. Therefore, by employing strategies like effective note-taking, interleaving, practice testing, spaced practice and more in your learning, you can significantly enhance your learning ability and improve your general performance.

If you have struggled with a slow learning rate for years, you need not suffer any longer. With the help of these learning strategies, you will be able to develop faster learning skills and become more proficient at learning. Whether you are learning a new language, studying for an exam, or trying to develop a new skill, the techniques outlined in this guide will empower you to attain your objectives in the shortest time possible. Therefore, we urge you to adopt these strategies, practice them diligently and own them. With time and dedication, you will be able to master any skill or subject with minimal effort.

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