

Study Notecards

Study notecards are an effective study tool to learn terms and their definitions, theories, stages, processes, equations, and other information that is frequently asked for on exams. Making notecards is particularly useful when studying for multiple choice tests.

Making Notecards

- Purchase some notecards.
- Write out possible test questions on one side.
- On the other side of the notecard, write out the answer neatly and accurately. Use visual images such as pictures and drawings because they can help store info into long term memory if the images have a strong personal association to the question. The brain seeks meaning, so creating a personal example of a concept and activating some emotional engagement will help you learn the material.
- Finally, include the text page number or date in class notes on the backside so you can easily refer to it if you need additional information.

Using Notecards

- A key feature of the notecard system is its ease of use. Notecards can be reviewed even in those small chunks of time, such as when waiting in line for coffee, sitting on the bus, doing laundry at the Laundromat or waiting in the doctor's office. Using daily repetition, or rote learning, helps to store the info into your long term memory. Conversely, last minute cramming only stores info into short term memory.
- Chunking (or categorizing) into groups of 5-7 notecards per topic is an excellent strategy for maximizing memory. Be sure the groups are meaningfully organized into topics. Once you have learned the group, it can be stored in your memory as one item.
- It is important to shuffle the cards. Mixing the cards ensures that the order does not become a cue for memory. Otherwise, if the test questions do not follow the order you memorized the information, you may not remember it.
- Once you know the information on the card, you can put that card into the "learned" pile. Note: It is still important to periodically refresh your memory by reviewing the "learned" pile.
- Mnemonic devices such as acronyms, acrostics, and word games are excellent memory tools that can be used on note cards.
- Finally, using notecards allows you to learn smaller chunks of information in short bursts (10-20 minutes) over a longer period of time (weeks or months), which is ideal for storing information in your long term memory. Once information is stored in your long term memory, pulling it out for exams becomes much easier.

Paul, K. (1996). *Study smarter, not harder*. North Vancouver: Self-Counsel Press.