

How to Make New Information Stick

Like a Pro

By [Darina](#) / January 19, 2020

As an educator, this is a question I get asked a lot. I myself have been struggling at times to remember information and make it stick.

I have read countless books and tried many techniques. There is also an abundance of info online on the matter. But, how do you filter what works and what doesn't? Do not panic, I did the work for you 😊

In this post, I will share with you some insights about retaining new information.

While I was researching the topic I came across a fascinating book called “Make it stick” by Peter Brown, Henry Roediger & Mark McDaniel.

Needless to say that I ordered it and dove into reading it. I badly wanted to know what these three experienced and educated people had discovered.

“When it comes to learning, what we choose to do is guided by our judgments of what works and what doesn’t, and we are easily misled.”

— Peter C. Brown, Make it Stick

Make it stick

Peter Brown, Henry Roediger & Mark McDaniel argue that

“The hours immersed in rereading can seem like due diligence, but the amount of study time is no measure of mastery.”

From a personal perspective, I know that rereading is not a productive learning strategy because it is too easy. Having come to the same conclusion I just couldn't leave the book down. They continue on the subject by mentioning:

“The more you repeat in a single session, the more familiar it is and the less you struggle to remember

*it, therefore the less you learn.
Learning that's easy is like writing
in sand, here today and gone
tomorrow."*

Looking at some successful people we notice that it doesn't matter what brain you have; it matters how you use it. In fact, world-class performers and prodigies like Mozart and Elon Musk had the correct mindset and used learning methods, and practicing strategies.

They weren't born with it.

In their book, the three writers explain in detail three learning techniques that develop information retention, skill acquisition, and lead to mastery. Those techniques are backed by peer-reviewed science.

I have done a small summary of each.

*"Incompetent people lack the skills to improve because they are unable to distinguish between incompetence and competence."
— Peter C. Brown, Make it Stick*

Disclosure: Before I go into it I would like to say that there are affiliate links involved and if you make a purchase I receive a small commission that is included in the price. Nevertheless, in this post, I express my personal opinion. Daramiblog offers information that is designed for educational purposes only. [Here](#) you can read my full disclosure.

1. Quiz yourself

Either you read a book, listen to an audio-book, or learn grammar rules, stop every once in a while, and ask yourself the following:

What were the main ideas?

How can I use them?

Which are new to me?

It will be hard to remember the information you read or heard. Let's not forget that 70% of what we learn we forget shortly after.

By asking yourself these three questions you are forcing your brain to retrace the information you just absorbed. The little information you remember will help you regain the forgotten one.

The authors claim that:

“The harder it is for you to recall new learning from memory, the greater the benefit of doing so...the effort of retrieving knowledge or skills strengthens its staying power.”

2. Interleaving to make it stick

Shifting from one skill to another. This mixing of different topics and skills together while learning forces the brain to apply knowledge to a variety of problems and thus it builds stronger neural connections.

By using interleaving, you immensely improve the long-term retention of information.

In general, interleaving has been proven to be an effective strategy with problem-solving subjects like math and mechanical skills like sports and music.

“Effortful retrieval makes for stronger learning and retention.”

— **Peter C. Brown**, *Make it Stick*

3. Spacing

Spacing practice material over a long period of time gives the mind time to form connections between the ideas and concepts so knowledge can be built upon and easily recalled later. As written, in the book

“The increased effort required to retrieve the learning after a little forgetting has the effect of retriggering consolidation (brain’s method of encoding information), further strengthening memory.”

Spread out your learning schedule. If you only have 3 hours to practice a new skill do not do it in one chunk. Do an hour on Monday, then again one on Wednesday, Friday for example.

The bottom line:

Self-quizzing, interleaving, and spacing are powerful and effective strategies because they are hard.

The harder it is to recall information the more likely that the information will stick.

If you are a life-long learner or simply looking for professional development then check my detailed review of the top 5 online platforms [here](#).

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What kind of techniques do you use to retain new information? Have you tried any of the authors' suggestions?