Six Strategies for Effective Learning

All of the strategies below have supporting evidence from cognitive psychology and are highly relevant to medical students who need to learn vast amounts of information. For each strategy, we explain how to do it and point to the relevant literature. For more information and resources, visit the The Learning Scientists website.1

1. PLAN OUT YOUR STUDY SESSIONS

**Spaced Practice**

Space out your studying over time. Make a plan and stick to it!

**Interleaving**

Switch between ideas while you study. Don’t study one idea too long!

2. DURING STUDY TIME, MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE MATERIAL

**Elaborative Interrogation**

Ask yourself questions while you study about how and why things work, and then find the answers. Also try this with a partner.

**Concrete Examples**

Collect examples of abstract ideas, and make the link between the idea you are studying and each example.

**Dual Coding**

Combine words and visuals, and compare the two formats.

3. PUT AWAY YOUR CLASS MATERIALS AND WRITE OR SKETCH WHAT YOU KNOW

**Retrieval Practice**

Put away your class materials, and write or sketch everything you know. Be as thorough as possible. Then, check your class materials for accuracy and important points you missed. You can also practice retrieval by taking practice tests. Ask your instructor or make your own and swap with a peer.

References: