Promoting students' study skills in the context of blended learning (external)

Introduction

With the extent of learning we are expecting our students to do at home, now, more than ever, is the time we need to foster the independent study skills of our students. Sometimes there is a gap between students' (good) intentions and the learning they actually do (or do not). This, in part, explains why some students struggle to work independently. With a reduction of time spent in class, how do we ensure levels of learning are comparable with those of previous students taught in classrooms by teachers and tutors, bouncing their ideas off the fertile minds of their classmates; you know, like the good ol' days?

This guide is designed to support you and your students in developing high quality study skills. It includes tips and ideas on how we can help our students take more ownership, responsibility and independence in their learning, as well as looking at metacognition and its role in helping our students to learn.

Let's begin by exploring what we mean by study skills...

"Study skills refer to those things that individuals do when they have to locate, organise and remember information."

(Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1983; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991).

How can study skills help our students?

Below are some examples of the skills we can support our students to develop:

Click on the pack to see other examples

Team-working

Studying involves working as a member of a group

Studying independently

Students making their own decisions about how and what they will study and when. A good article to read on how parents and carers can encourage their children to be more independent learners can be found here.

Critical thinking

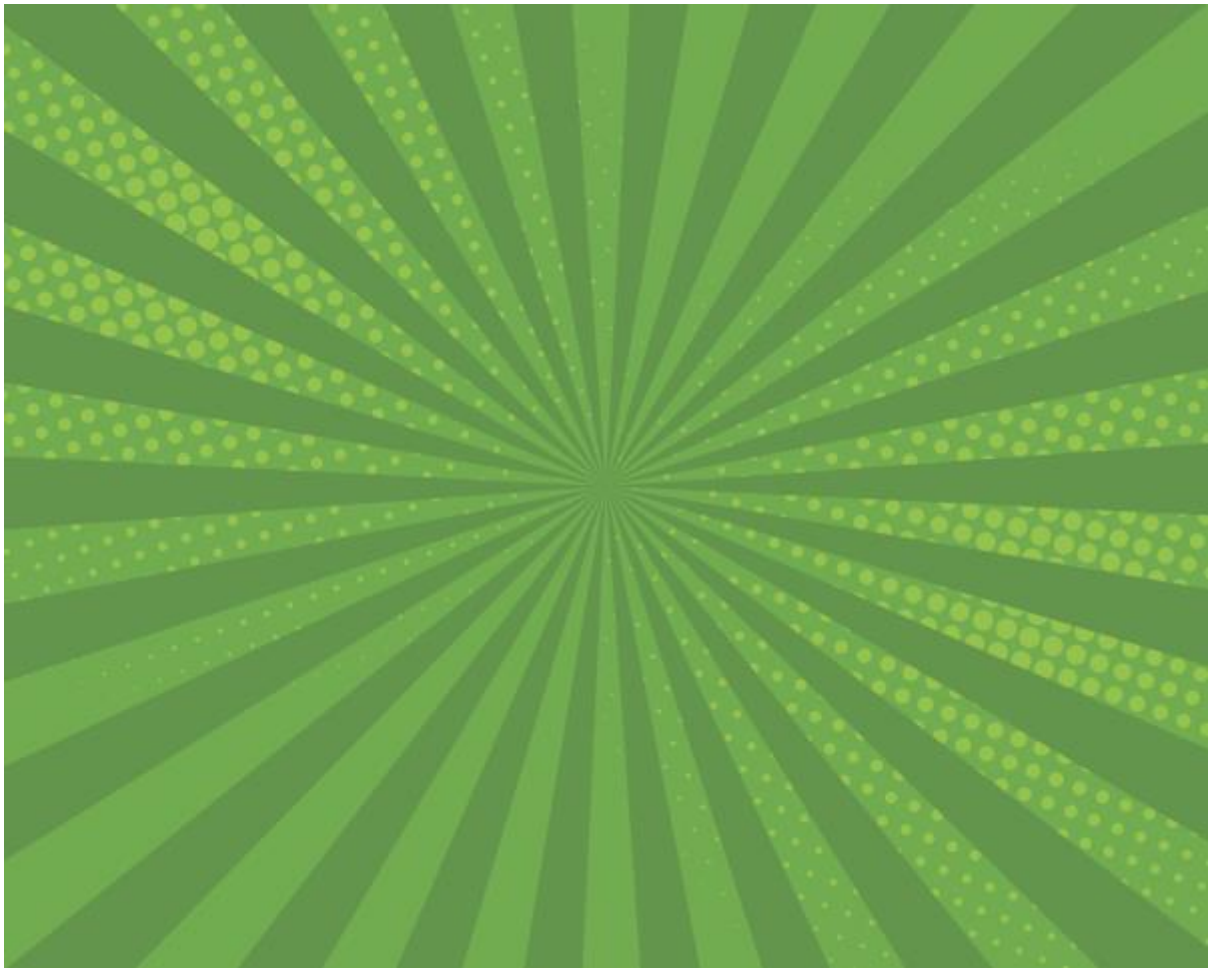
Supporting students' abilities to reflect on what they are learning, to analyse and synthesise ideas and to be creative.

Time management

Helping students to organise the time they spend studying in order to meet deadlines/make progress and revise thoroughly for examinations

Some top tips for study skills can be found **here**

What are study skills?



We can break study skills down into the following areas:

Exam technique and revision

For a guide to effective revision strategies and study habits see **here**.

And for further tips, see here.

Research skills

An example of how to help students with research skills can be found here

Assignment/essay writing and proofreading

Tips on helping students with essay writing can be found here.

For ideas to encourage your students to proofread click **here.**

There is also a free app called Grammarly that you should make your students aware of. It allows users to upload documents and proofreads them and checks for clarity and ease of reading.

Note taking

There are numerous ways for students to take notes.

A good activity for you and your students to check how reliable their note taking is would be to get them to produce a handout, based on the notes they will take by the end of the session, stipulating that they cannot do any other research. It's useful to invest time to explore which style of note taking works best for them, rather than carrying on as is. They may be taking notes, but do they understand what they have written, and have they noted the relevant information? For further information, see links **here** and here.

Planning and organisation

Tips on helping students with their planning and organisation can be found **here**. Knowledge organisers set out the important, useful and powerful knowledge on a topic on a single page.

A video explaining them can be found **here**. Although it is aimed at new year 7 students, its key messages are also relevant to older students.

There are many templates/complete knowledge organisers available online and on Twitter (#knowledgeorganiser), but there are also some templates and examples **here**.

Reading skills

To help your students with their reading skills look here.

Evaluation and target setting

Tips on helping your students with target setting can be found here.

The Forgetting Curve

This chart shows Ebbinghaus' Forgetting Curve, or simply 'The Forgetting Curve', which shows how information is lost over time when you don't try to retain it. The level of retention depends on a couple of things:

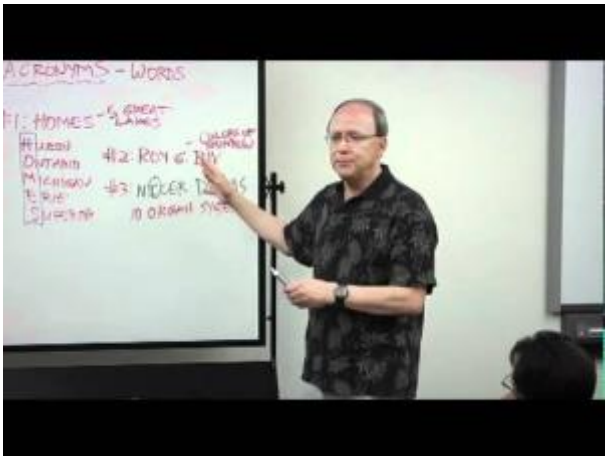
- **The strength of the memory**

People can recall stronger memories for a longer period than weaker ones. The learning content should be highly relevant to each student and it should have meaning.

- **The time that has passed since the information was learned**

The downward slope of the forgetting curve can be softened by repeating the learned information at particular intervals. This principle is the foundation of the learning method known as "spaced repetition," where material is learned then reviewed after increasingly large time gaps.

To try and help students with their memory, have a look at the video below. It includes a few maths tricks and tips on acronyms and creating acrostics to aid memory. For a diagram that could be shared with students to explain memory, see here.



Metacognition

In its simplest form, metacognition includes making our students be better students. Take a look here for a poster produced by the Education Endowment Foundation that provides a summary of recommendations based on metacognition. Although written for schools, the principles still apply to FE and to HE. For an explanation on metacognition, including resources and CPD, click here.

Metacognitive strategies that students can implement themselves include delaying judgements of learning, spacing out study (often referred to as 'spaced practice'), using self-testing appropriately, varying contexts of learning and setting specific goals. Strategies teachers and tutors can implement include the use of retrieval practice (see below for more on this), recommending and explaining specific strategies to our students, modelling these strategies, providing feedback and encouraging reflection. These strategies are taken from a paper by Carole L. Yue. See the full chapter **here**.

'Retrieval practice refers to the act of recalling learned information from memory (with no or little support) and every time that information is retrieved, or an answer is generated, it changes that original memory to make it stronger.'

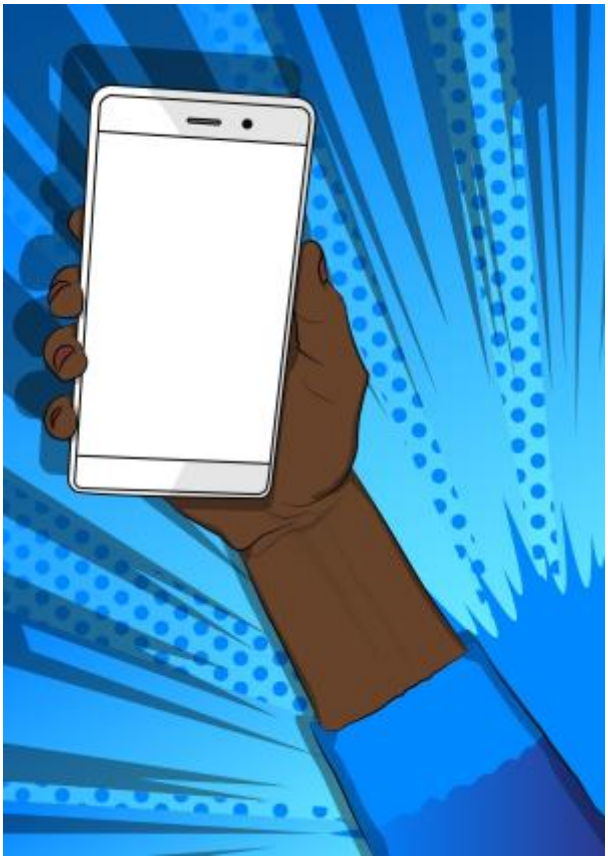
(Kate Jones, Retrieval Practice, 2019)

Retrieval practice: the low effort, high impact strategy that is therefore worthwhile us all knowing more about.

For a short video that looks into aspects of retrieval practice, look **here**.

For best effect, it should be combined with spaced practice among other factors. For Tom Sherrington's 'Ten techniques for retrieval practice', see here.

For a selection of blogs and podcasts about retrieval practice, compiled by Joanne Miles, see here.



Did you know…?

One study found that simply having your phone out, even if you are not using it, can worsen your performance by up to 20% in cognitive tests.

The Mere Presence of a Cell Phone May be Distracting: Implications for Attention and Task Performance, Article in Social Psychology 45(6):479-488 · November 2014

DOI: 10.1027/1864-9335/a000216

A recent study found that students who worked in silence during their study sessions performed 20% better than those who studied whilst listening to songs with lyrics.

Does listening to preferred music improve reading comprehension performance? Nick Perham and Harriet Currie

First published: 06 January 2014 https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.2994

Sense of Purpose

We need to encourage a sense of purpose in our students; if they care about what they are doing, they are more invested in it and so are more likely to apply themselves. This sense of purpose can be stimulated in a number of ways. If our students can identify how the material will help them, or what skills they will develop as a result of completing a certain task, their engagement level will be increased. A useful starting point is to ask students to complete the sentence 'Doing well at this will help me because …' .

Procrastination

Left to their own devices, people often procrastinate. Research suggests that most students are poor predictors at estimating how long a task will take to complete, as they become distracted (phones, music, putting books in height order). This is known as the 'planning fallacy'. One way of overcoming this is for us to set small, regular deadlines or goals for our students, helping them to manage their time better.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Don't let your amateur crastination turn pro.
5:20 PM · Aug 9, 2018 · Tweetbot for Mac
29 Retweets 5 Quote Tweets 147 Likes