



Memorization Techniques

Memorizing plant names will be a part of the horticulture technician course. Many students feel like they simply do not have strong memory skills. Fortunately, though, anyone can train and develop their memorizing abilities.

Research shows that students who use memory tricks perform better than those who do not. Memory tricks help you expand your working memory and access your long-term memory. These techniques can also enable you to remember some concepts for years or even for life. Finally, memory tricks like these lead to increased understanding and higher order thinking. Keep reading for an introduction to effective memorization techniques that will help you learn the plant names.

There are many other tricks you can use to help your brain remember information. Here are some simple tips to try:

Try to understand the information first. Information that is organized and makes sense to you is easier to memorize. If you find that you don't understand the material, spend some time on understanding it before trying to memorize it.

Link it. Connect the information you are trying to memorize to something that you already know. Material in isolation is more difficult to remember than material that is connected to other concepts. If you cannot think of a way to connect the information to something you already know, make up a connection. For example, say you are trying to memorize the fact that water at sea level boils at 212 degrees Fahrenheit, and 212 happens to be the first three digits of your best friend's phone number. Link these two by imagining throwing your phone into a boiling ocean. It's an odd link, but it can help that fact to stick.

Sleep on it. Studies show that your brain processes and stores information while you sleep. Try to review information just before you go to sleep—even if it's only for a few minutes—and see if it helps embed the information in your memory.

Self-test. Quiz yourself every so often by actively recalling the information you are trying to study. Make sure to actively quiz yourself—do not simply reread notes or a textbook. Often, students think they remember material just because it is familiar to them when they reread it. Instead, ask yourself questions and force yourself to remember it without looking at the answer or material. This will enable you to identify areas that you are struggling with; you can then go back to one of the memory tricks to help yourself memorize it. Also, avoid quizzing yourself immediately after trying to memorize something. Wait a few hours, or even a day or two, to see if it has really stuck in your memory.

Use repetition. For a concept to move from your temporary working memory to your long-term memory, two things need to happen: the concept should be memorable and it should be repeated. Use repetition to firmly lodge information in your memory. Repetition techniques can involve things like flash cards, using the simple tips in this section, and self-testing. Space out your studying and repetition over several days, and start to increase the time in between each study session. Spacing it out and gradually extending the times in between can help us become more certain of mastery and lock the concepts into place.

Write it out. Writing appears to help us more deeply encode information that we're trying to learn because there is a direct connection between our hand and our brain. Try writing your notes by hand during a lecture or rewriting and reorganizing notes or information by hand after a lecture. While you are writing out a concept you want to remember, try to say the information out loud and visualize the concept as well.

Create meaningful groups. A good strategy for memorizing is to create meaningful groups that simplify the material. For example, let's say you wanted to remember the names of four plants—garlic, rose, hawthorn, and mustard. The first letters abbreviate to GRHM, so you can connect that with the image of a GRAHAM cracker. Now all you need to do is remember to picture a graham cracker, and the names of the plants will be easier to recall.

Use mnemonics. Mnemonics are systems and tricks that make information more memorable. One common type is when the first letter of each word in a sentence is also the first letter of each word in a list that needs to be memorized. For example, many children learned the order of operations in math by using the sentence Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally (parentheses, exponents, multiply, divide, add, subtract). Check out Wikipedia for a good list of examples and ideas.

Talk to yourself. It may seem strange at first, but talking to yourself about the material you are trying to memorize can be an effective memory tool. Try speaking aloud instead of simply highlighting or rereading information.



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Exercise! Seriously! Studies show that exercise can improve our memory and learning capabilities because it helps create neurons in areas that relate to memory. Cardio and resistance training (weights) both have powerful effects, so do what works best for you.

Practice interleaving. Interleaving is the idea of mixing or alternating skills or concepts that you want to memorize. For example, spend some time memorizing vocabulary words for your science class and then immediately switch to studying historical dates and names for your history class. Follow that up with practicing a few math problems, and then jump back to the science definitions. This method may seem confusing at first, but yields better results in the end than simply spending long periods of time on the same concept or subject.

Check out this video for examples of memory tricks.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnz7HpOFe9o>



Material in this section was sourced from:

The Learning Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

<https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/enhancing-your-memory/>