

Welcome to Central Learning and Teaching Newsletter 6!

In this edition, we will delve into interleaving practice: what it is, how it links to memory models and how it can be used in conjunction with retrieval.



What is interleaving practice?

- A desirable difficulty: if learning and retrieval are more effortful, it is more likely learning will stick in the long-run.
- Jumbling up ideas and switching between different topics during a lesson: students learn more when they are having to deal with different types of problems.
- This means students will make more mistakes and may not feel like this is working or being effective.
- It improves students' ability to link new and prior knowledge but may feel counter-intuitive.

HOW TO DO IT

Switch between ideas during a study session. Don't study one idea for too long.



Go back over the ideas again in different orders to strengthen your understanding.

TOPICS
A B C



STUDY
SESSION
1

TOPICS
C B A



STUDY
SESSION
2

TOPICS
A C B



STUDY
SESSION
3

Make links between different ideas as you switch between them.



HOLD ON!



While it's good to switch between ideas, don't switch too often, or spend too little time on any one idea; you need to make sure you understand them.



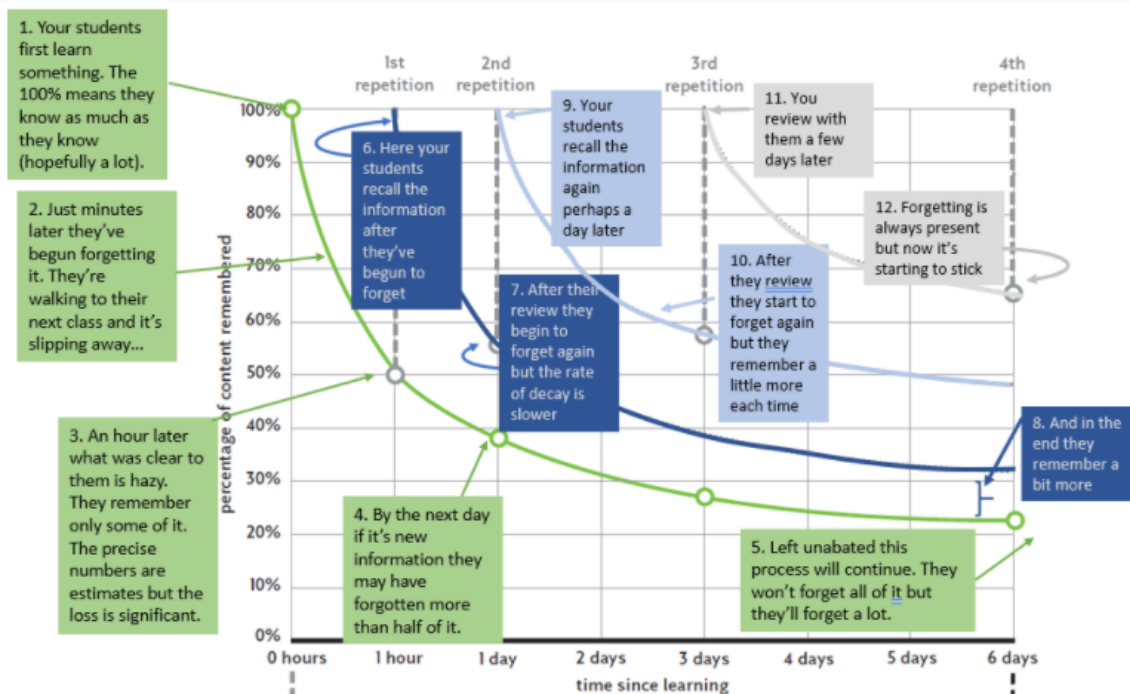
Interleaving will feel harder than studying the same thing for a long time. But don't worry - this is actually helpful to your learning!

RESEARCH

Read more about
interleaving
as a study strategy

Rohrer, D. (2012). Interleaving helps students distinguish among similar concepts. *Educational Psychology Review*, 24, 355-367.

I am a big fan of this first version of Doug Lemov's annotated forgetting curve, based on the original Ebbinghaus forgetting curve. It gives us a guide as to when we may want start the retrieval process. Applying interleaving principles when designing our retrieval activities gives more opportunities over time to retrieve materials and ensure we can show students how the chunks of knowledge link together to create more meaning.



Literacy and retrieval practice



Retrieval Do Now: put the French words in the correct box.

Le soleil	Écosse	la plage	la voiture	le car	beau
Le Pays de Galles	brouillard	une promenade	l'avion	la neige	
Espagne	États-Unis	lire	bronzer	Angleterre	vélo
La pluie	faire du shopping	à pied	la France	froid	le bateau

This French example shows us how categorising/sorting tasks can be used to retrieve vocabulary across a range of topics. In this one, the vocabulary retrieved links to the theme of holidays and 4 sub-themes seen in the course of a term's work. It primed the path to more autonomous language production and more confidence reading lengthier passages in the foreign language.

Classroom Culture and retrieval practice

Threshold, Strong start, Do Now, Signal-pause-insist, Radar and Least Invasive intervention are all part of our arsenal of strategies to manage behaviour positively at Central and instill a culture of high expectations. How does this link to retrieval?

Well, for a start, teachers too need to retrieve continuously to build automaticity, which is essentially practising skills at a granular level and up to the point where habits are thoroughly ingrained in everyday practice.

Because we too are learners, revisiting the routines, watching models, scripting our responses and retrieving through practice every lesson is essential to reflect, build expertise and continue improve.