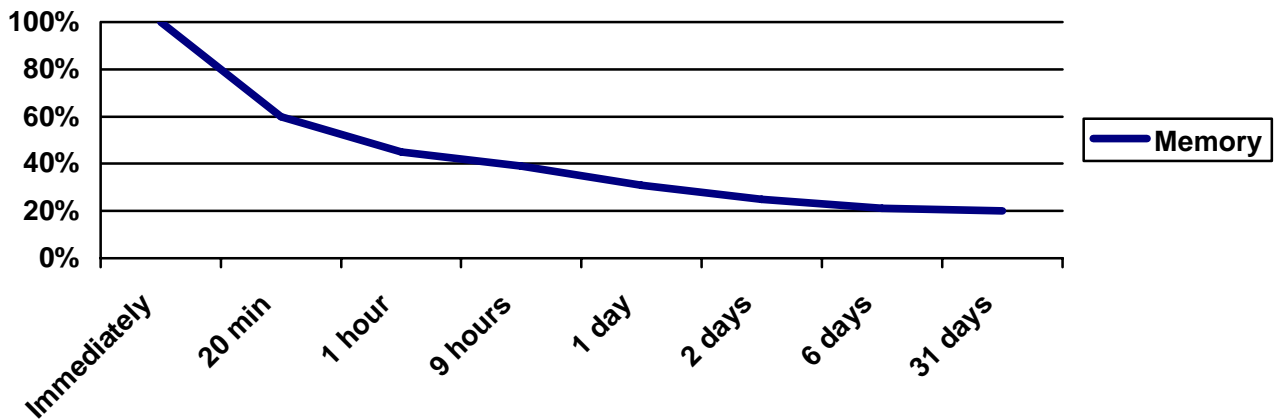




Improving My Memory

When you take a test, does your mind go blank?
Is it difficult for you to remember details?
If you have to remember the order of information, can you do it?

If you have trouble retaining information, you are not alone. Hermann Ebbinghaus, one of the pioneers in memory research, developed the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve (EFC) based on findings from his and subsequent research. The EFC portrays how much new information you retain over a period of time, *if information is unrehearsed*. Note that, for instance, in an hour you will forget almost 60% of new information you have learned and, by the end of a day, almost 70% of the new information may be gone!



The good news is that there are several ways to improve your memory! Below are a few.

Active Listening

Active listening requires an attitude toward listening. This means sitting where you won't be distracted by others, turning off your cell phone, and asking questions about the lecture points that aren't clear to you. If you develop a positive attitude about learning in class, it will make your ability to remember much better than it currently is. To learn more about being a better listener, see "Improving My Listening Skills."

Note Taking

Taking notes is one of the best ways to remember things later, but good note taking requires that you organize your notes. When taking notes, keep these points in mind:

- Highlight the most important parts of your notes.
- Record the date of your notes and try to organize your notes by the topics discussed in class.
- Use a tape recorder to supplement your notes. Listen to the tape after the lecture to fill in missing details.
- Use the margin to add thoughts, questions, or additional comments about a main point that the professor makes.

To learn more about note taking to help improve your memory, see the module “Note Taking Skills.”

Mnemonic Techniques

A mnemonic technique is a term for a device or trick intended to assist memory.

A few mnemonic techniques are listed below:

When to Use It:	Technique:	Example:
For information involving key words	<i>Acronym</i> —a combination of letters you make up with each letter acting as a cue to an idea you need to remember.	<i>Roy G. Biv</i> is an acronym for the colors in the rainbow—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.
For information involving key words	<i>Acrostic</i> —a made-up sentence where the first letter of each word is a cue to an idea you want to remember.	<i>Every Good Bunny Deserves Food</i> is an acrostic used to remember the order of the G-clef notes on sheet music—E,G,B,D,F.
For many items	<i>Location Method</i> —Imagine placing the items you want to remember in specific locations in a place you are familiar with.	To remember U.S. wars: imagine a redcoat answering your front door, Andrew Jackson watching your TV, Robert E. Lee and U. S. Grant in the kitchen, the battleship <i>Maine</i> in your bathtub, etc.
For ordered or unordered lists	<i>Chaining</i> —Make up a story where each word or idea you have to remember will cue the next idea you need to recall.	<i>Van Gogh, ear, starry night, Italy</i> Story: <i>Van Gogh</i> cut off his <i>ear</i> on a <i>starry night</i> in <i>Italy</i> .

The 4 R's: Read, Recite, (W)rite, Repeat = Remember

Another great memory technique you can employ requires you to follow these steps:

1. Read each key point.
2. Stop and repeat the key point 3 times to yourself either out loud or silently.
3. Write it down as you remember it.
4. Compare what you have written down with the text, and if you missed something, do it again.