

Memory Techniques for Students with Learning Disabilities

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Adapted from "Learning Disabilities" 6th edition, by William N. Bender, Pearson Publishing.

Students with Learning Disabilities do not necessarily have a problem with long-term memory. The problem is in the working memory, and being unable to **code** the information in such a way that it transfers into the long term. Two key factors in this transfer are: **meaning and senses**. The student must clearly receive the information through their senses, and ultimately they must come up with some kind of meaning to the information. That is part of the coding process.

There is also evidence that **the student may be lacking in the required motivation that is necessary for this kind of cognitive effort.**

One way that you can help the student to code the information is to have the student **summarize** the information in their own words. Let them know that you will be discussing their summary after they think about it and share it. After the discussion, combine elaborative rehearsal with multi-sensory techniques to ensure the transfer of the learning into the long term memory. Here is a step-by-step guide:

1. Break down lessons of new information into 20 minute segments.
2. Incorporate visual, auditory, kinesthetic senses when presenting the information.
3. Give them a few minutes to think of a few key points about what they just learned.
4. They share the facts they remember.
5. Then discuss (incorporating visual, auditory, kinesthetic senses).
6. Rehearse the information with various techniques such as reciprocal teaching.
Once again, incorporate visual, auditory, kinesthetic senses during the rehearsal.

One example of how to implement these steps in the classroom:

1. Present the material with audio/ visual stimuli, for example a power-point, or handouts combined with videos (No longer than 20 minutes.)
2. Ask the students to take notes on the key points
3. At the end of the presentation, give the students a few minutes to gather their thoughts on the key points.
4. Have the students use colored magic markers write the key points, and/or to draw figures that represent the keys points. (*This is the first step in creating a mind-map).

5. Have the students share their mind map. Students can hold them up and show them to class, and discuss what is on their mind map.
6. Encourage the students to add to their mind map after they hear their classmates discussions.
7. Once again, summarize the key points to the class, either returning to the Power Point, or holding up their mind maps, or projecting them on screen.

*Mind maps can evolve into showing relationships with key concepts, cause and effect, and more in-depth connections.