Metacognitive Learning Strategies

Move from simply studying to actually learning with metacognitive strategies. Metacognition refers to your awareness of your own cognitive processes. Using metacognitive learning strategies will help you to move from simply remembering concepts to applying, analyzing, and evaluating what you have learned.

Active Reading

Previewing
We know the brain is more efficient at learning when it can access related prior knowledge. To prime your brain for the reading ahead, preview the chapter by looking at headings, bolded terms, and any charts or graphs.

Inquire
Next, give yourself a reason to maintain focus while reading. Based on what you observed during your preview, what do you want to learn from the reading? Write these questions down.

Paraphrasing
Now it’s time to start reading. Read only the first section, then put the information in your own words. You can write this in the book or on separate paper. Read the next paragraph, then do the same, only this time fold in the information that was in the first section. Continue to work through the entire reading assignment in this manner.

Engaging in Lecture

Note-taking
Recent studies have shown that taking notes by hand results in more learning than taking notes on a laptop. This metacognitive process forces you to evaluate and paraphrase new information. If you are concerned you will miss important information, consider recording the lecture.

Inquire
Actively engage in class time by writing questions you would like answered during the lecture. If you questions are not answered, you can pose your questions to the professor during class or bring them to his/her office hours.
**Metacognitive Studying**

**Flashcards, Mind-Maps, & Outlines**
Your active reading activities should be supplemented by actively engaging with the concepts you’ve read about. This includes creating flash cards, drawing mind-maps, and drafting outlines. Focus your supplementary studying on **activities that focus on recalling, analyzing and evaluating** the information, not just recognizing it.

**Problems**
The best learning occurs during the investigation process. Use homework and example problems as an opportunity to test yourself. Work problems without referring to the solutions first. If you come to an impasse, search through your resources before looking at the solution. Only check the final answer and continue to reference your resources and rework your approach until you learn how to properly answer the question or solve the problem. Making mistakes here is good! This is where your learning is occurring.

**Practice Testing**
Studies have shown that practice testing is the most powerful method to increase test scores. You can use practice tests in your textbook, write your own, or have each member of a study group create a set number of practice test questions.

**Teach It**
Have you ever been in a situation where you thought you knew something, only when you tried to explain it to someone else, you found out that you didn’t know it as well as you thought? As part of your metacognitive study plan, **practice teaching topics** to others. If you can teach it, then you know it.

**Group Work**
Working in a study group allows you to **accurately judge your own learning**. It is essential that study groups have a structure and that group members stay focused. For more information on managing an effective study group, see the Successful Study Groups handout.

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WSU’s Student Success Center offers academic support and counseling services at no cost to students. For assistance with any of these strategies, or for more information, visit your Learning Specialist by calling 509-358-7757 or make an appointment at wsu.mywconline.net.