

FLASH CARDS

Have you ever wondered how you were going to learn all the terms in a psychology class, all the vocabulary for a foreign language, or all the terminology in science or nursing course? Has anyone ever suggested you try flash cards? Have you ever seen someone with a stack of 500 flash cards and wondered how they ever found the time to make the cards and then more time to learn them?

PURPOSE

The most efficient way to learn new information is to actively challenge your mind. By putting a term or concept on the front of a flash card and challenging yourself to remember what is on the back, you will learn faster. Just reading the front and back of a flash card does not really help; you must challenge yourself to remember what is on the back.

CARDS

A flash card is usually a 3-by-5 note card that you can buy at most bookstores. Other sizes work depending on the size of your handwriting and the type and amount of information you want to put on the card.

PREPARING THE CARDS

- Review your lecture notes and study guides and other class handouts for important terms and concepts you are having trouble remembering. While you are doing the review, make list of these items.
- For each term or concept on your list create a **separate card**. The term or concept is written on the front of the card and the definition or explanation is written on the back.
- The definition or explanation should be complete and accurate. Usually the information is in the lecture notes, but sometimes you will have to look it up in the textbook, handouts, supplemental readings, or reference materials. Sometimes you can study with someone else in the class who will have the information. If you are not sure the information is right, check it with another source.

HOW MANY CARDS TO MAKE?

Making flash cards takes time, so make cards for the concepts or terms you are having the most trouble learning. A goal of learning 25 to 50 cards per week is reasonable. Some classes may require many more; some will require less.

HOW TO START USING THE CARDS

It can be very discouraging to start with 20 new flash cards.

- Start with 5 new flash cards.
- Read the term or concept and the definition or explanation for each card.
- This time read the term or concept and try to remember the definition or explanation. If you get it right, place it in one stack. If you miss it, place it in another stack.
- When you finish all five cards, mix the stacks together and start again.
- When you get all the flash cards right three times, add five new cards.
- Repeat the learning process using separate stacks for the ones you get right and the ones you get wrong.
- When you get all ten flash cards right three times, add five new cards and repeat the learning process.
- Repeat this procedure until you have 20 cards.

WORKING WITH 20 CARDS

- Go through the cards as before, placing the ones you get right in one stack and the ones you get wrong in another. Mix the stacks and repeat.
- After you have gone through this group of cards three times, remove up to five of the cards you got right all three times and add enough new cards to keep your stack at 20.
- Keep the cards you removed in a new stack to review later.
- Repeat this process until you have learned all the new cards for the week.
- Carry three stacks of cards with you:
 - The 20 cards you are learning;
 - The new cards to add during the day;
 - The review cards you learned during the day.

WORKING WITH THE REVIEW CARDS

At least once per week go through the review stack placing the ones you get right in one stack and the ones you get wrong in another stack. Start a new stack with the cards you missed and go through them until you get all of them right three times.

PREPARING FOR MULTIPLE CHOICE TESTS

Many multiple choice questions have the definition or the explanation of a concept in the first part of the question and a list of possible terms or concept names as choices in the second part of the question. To prepare for a multiple choice test go through the review cards looking at the definition or explanation side first. Try to remember the term or concept on the other side. Once again place the ones you get right in one stack and the ones you get wrong in another stack. Go through the ones you missed until you get all of them right three times.

WHEN AND WHERE

You can learn best when you schedule a regular time each day to prepare new cards and to study them. Flash cards can also come in handy when you have to wait for a bus or you have some other extra time.

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

Working with a study partner once a week can be very helpful. Give your review cards to your study partner and have them read the term or concept and check your answer with the definition or explanation on the back of the card. Then place the ones you get right in one stack and the ones you get wrong in another stack. Then your partner goes through the ones you missed until you get all of them right three times.

You can do this process as if you were preparing for a multiple choice test. Your partner can read the definition or concept explanation and check your answer against the term or concept on the other side of the card.

EFFECTIVE USE OF FLASH CARDS

This process is most effective when you can give a full and complete explanation of each term or concept without looking at the back of the card. The more thorough and complete your explanation the better you will do.

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