

# Learning to Learn: Psychology, Memory and Motivation - Level 3

## Section 2: Optimising Your Learning Environment and Habits

In the previous section, we explored the psychological underpinnings of memory and motivation, as well as various techniques to enhance learning. Now, we turn our attention to the role of the learning environment and habits in the learning process. We will discuss how to create an optimal space for study, manage time effectively, and develop positive study habits that complement the strategies mentioned earlier.

Obviously, in prison, there are limits to how much control you have over your environment; but we have given you as much information as we can here, so that you are as well-informed as possible.

### 2.1 Creating an Optimal Learning Environment

#### Comfort and Ergonomics

Comfort is crucial for sustained periods of study. Choose a chair with adequate support and a desk at an appropriate height. Ensure that your posture is upright, with your feet flat on the floor and your back supported.

#### Lighting

Good lighting is essential to reduce eye strain. Natural light is ideal, but if that's not possible, use a desk lamp that illuminates your study materials without causing glare.

#### Minimising Distractions

Identify elements that distract you, such as noise or clutter, and take steps to eliminate or minimise them. This might mean decluttering your desk, using earplugs, or setting specific times for study when you're least likely to be disturbed.

#### Personalising Your Space

While keeping distractions to a minimum, personalising your space with a plant or a motivational quote can make it more inviting and help you feel more relaxed and focused.

## 2.2 Psychological Environment and Time Management

### Establishing Routines

Humans are creatures of habit. Establish a routine for your study times and stick to it. Consistency helps to signal to your brain that it's time to focus.

### Setting the Right Mood

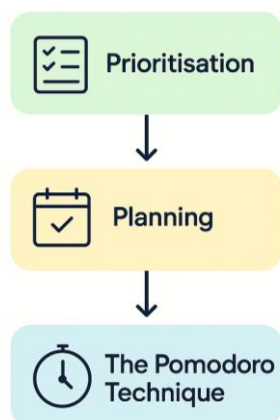
Create a mental association between your study space and learning. Avoid using the same space for leisure activities if possible.

### Positive Reinforcement

Design a reward system for completing study sessions or achieving goals. This can reinforce a positive association with your learning environment.

### Effective Time Management

#### Optimising Time Management for Study



### Planning and Prioritisation

At the start of each study session, outline your goals and tasks. Prioritise them based on importance and deadlines. Use a planner or a to-do list to keep track.

### The Pomodoro Technique

Use the Pomodoro Technique to manage your study time. Work for 25 minutes, then take a 5-minute break. This can help maintain focus and prevent burnout.

### Dealing with Procrastination

Identify why you are procrastinating—whether it's a lack of interest, a feeling of being overwhelmed, or fear of failure. Address the root cause by breaking tasks into smaller, manageable steps or by reevaluating the relevance of the task to your goals.

## 2.3 Developing Positive Study Habits

### **Active Learning**

Engage actively with the material. Instead of passively reading, ask questions, summarise in your own words, and apply the concepts to real-life situations.

### **Regular Review**

Incorporate regular review sessions into your routine. This helps transfer information from short-term to long-term memory and identifies areas that need further study.

### **Collaborative Learning**

While studying in a group might not always be possible, you can still engage with the material as if you were explaining it to others. This can clarify your understanding and highlight any gaps in your knowledge.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

Don't neglect your physical health. Regular exercise, adequate sleep, and proper nutrition can significantly impact cognitive function and concentration.

### **Mindfulness and Stress Management**

Learning can be stressful. Practice mindfulness or other stress management techniques to maintain mental clarity and resilience. Even a few minutes of deep breathing or meditation can be beneficial.

## 2.4 Reflective Practice and Integrating New Strategies

### Self-Monitoring

Keep track of your understanding and progress. Use self-quizzing to test your knowledge and to identify areas for improvement.

### Learning Journals

Continue to use a learning journal to reflect on your study sessions. Note what works well for you and what doesn't, and adjust your strategies accordingly.

### Feedback Loops

Create opportunities for feedback, even if you're studying alone. This can be done by comparing your understanding with the study material or by testing yourself in different ways.

### Integrating New Strategies with Existing Knowledge

#### Compatibility with Memory Techniques

Integrate the new strategies discussed in this section with the memory techniques from Section 1. For example, use the Method of Loci to remember your study schedule or the steps in the Pomodoro Technique.

#### Enhancing Motivation

Use your understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to create a study environment that supports both. Personal interests can guide the organisation of your study space, while rewards can provide extrinsic motivation.

#### Goal Setting

Set specific, achievable goals for each study session. Use SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) to guide your goal setting.

In this section, we've covered the importance of the learning environment, effective time management, and the development of positive study habits. By integrating these into your learning routine, you can further enhance your memory retention and motivation. Remember, the key to successful learning is not just in the techniques used but also in the context in which they are applied. By creating an optimal study environment, managing your time wisely, and cultivating healthy study habits, you can maximise the effectiveness of the strategies you've learned and continue to progress towards your learning goals.

In the next section, we will delve into the role of creativity and critical thinking in learning, exploring how to apply these skills within the context of the strategies you have already mastered.

**1. Which of the following is NOT a recommended strategy for creating an optimal physical learning environment?**

- A. Using a comfortable chair with adequate support
- B. Studying in a dimly lit room to reduce distractions
- C. Decluttering your desk to minimise distractions
- D. Personalising your space with a motivational quote

**2. What is the purpose of establishing a study routine according to the course material?**

- A. To have flexible study times that change daily
- B. To signal to your brain that it is time to relax
- C. To signal to your brain that it's time to focus
- D. To create a mental association with leisure activities

**3. Which technique is recommended in the course material to help manage study time and maintain focus?**

- A. Multitasking on several subjects to increase productivity
- B. Studying continuously for hours without breaks
- C. Taking breaks only when feeling fatigued
- D. The Pomodoro Technique

**4. What is the primary benefit of engaging in active learning as discussed in the course material?**

- A. It allows you to avoid difficult material by focusing on easier content
- B. It can help transfer information from short-term to long-term memory
- C. It enables you to study without having to review the material ever again
- D. It prevents you from having to engage with the material at all

**5. In the context of reflective practice, what is the purpose of using a learning journal as described in the course material?**

- A. To keep a record of friends and social activities
- B. To track your physical exercise routines
- C. To note what works well for you in your study sessions and what doesn't
- D. To plan your leisure time and relaxation activities

**Answers:**

**1. Which of the following is NOT a recommended strategy for creating an optimal physical learning environment?**

B. Studying in a dimly lit room to reduce distractions

**2. What is the purpose of establishing a study routine according to the course material?**

C. To signal to your brain that it's time to focus

**3. Which technique is recommended in the course material to help manage study time and maintain focus?**

D. The Pomodoro Technique

**4. What is the primary benefit of engaging in active learning as discussed in the course material?**

B. It can help transfer information from short-term to long-term memory

**5. In the context of reflective practice, what is the purpose of using a learning journal as described in the course material?**

C. To note what works well for you in your study sessions and what doesn't