

Making it Stick: How to Improve Your Recall of Course Material

By Matt Sopko

Psychologists tell us that there are three things that help us remember information. Despite its textbook-ish name, you are probably already familiar with the first one — it is called “elaborative rehearsal.” It simply means being mentally active with the material. In other words, thinking about how the subject matter relates to things that you already know and understand. Building associations is the key to learning new material, just like making new friends. It’s always easier to get to know a friend of a friend than it is to meet a stranger and it’s easier to remember things that you can associate with something you already know.

The second key is called *retrieval practice*. The more experience you have with pulling specific things out of memory, the easier it will be to

See “Making it Stick” on page 5

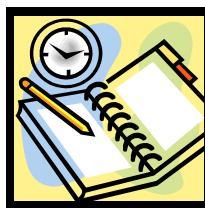
TIME TO APPLY!!

It’s time to apply for the host of scholarships that are available each year to graduating high school seniors, continuing MAC students, and HiSET/GED students. These include institutional, endowed, foundation, and outside scholarships. The MAC scholarship application can be found at:

<https://mineralarea.edu/media/1014/macscholarshiprevised2015-2.pdf>

The deadline for submitting the completed application is February 1, 2020. Please note that a student essay and a faculty reference are required. The Scholarship Subcommittee reads and scores the applications each March. Among the factors considered are the quality of the

See “Time to Apply” on page 5



Coming Events



- Dec. 9 Final Exams for day and evening classes begin
- Dec. 9 Textbook Buy-Back in bookstore
- Dec. 18 Grades available online
- Dec. 23 Holiday Break - Offices are closed



- Jan. 2 Offices re-open
- Jan. 6 Spring textbook sales begin in bookstore
- Jan. 20 Martin Luther King Jr. Day - Campus closed
- Jan. 13 Spring Term Begins
EXCEL Open House
9:00 AM to 1:00 PM
- Jan. 24 Graduation Applications Due in Registrar’s Office

Christmas Break, Coming Up Fast!

By Rachel Neumeier

It may seem like this semester just started, but with only two weeks of classes left before Finals, we're certainly winding down. You're probably looking forward to Christmas Break – I know I am! But how about these next couple of weeks? Is this semester under control? Do you have a clear plan for tackling next semester?

First, have you withdrawn from any of your classes this semester? I know that there are all kinds of reasons to withdraw, from a personal life that suddenly got complicated to a tactical decision to put off a difficult class till next semester. But if you did withdraw from a class you're going to need, then this may be the right time to think about how you're going to handle that class more effectively next time. Drop by and talk to a tutor about that! The class will be *so much less stressful* if you walk into it with a plan instead of just a despairing hope that it will magically be better the second time you take it.

Second, what do you plan to take next semester? Are there any classes you expect to be especially challenging – anything you know you might need help with – anything you dread? Math, science, social studies, whatever it is, think about talking to a tutor about that class *this* semester, quick before the break starts. Find out what the class covers and think about what you can do to make sure you successfully get through it in the spring.

Rodney is the person to talk to if you need to get a history class or any related class such as American Political Systems. If this kind of topic is tough for you, then make time to discuss the best way to handle it and some methods you can use to make sure you're prepared for the class the minute you walk through the door. Dane or Erik can tell you all about Chemistry and Physics, Trig and Calculus and Differential Equations – don't let yourself be surprised by the demands of those classes; talk to one of our math specialists and make sure you're prepared. Rachel would be happy to show you exactly what you'll be covering in Biology or Botany or any of the new math classes – Quantitative

Reasoning, Applications, Fundamental, whatever you're required to take. There's no reason to walk into these classes cold and just cross your fingers that you'll be okay.

Third, have you registered for the Spring 2020 semester yet? Too many students register for classes without talking to an advisor, and when in doubt, you should talk not just to your own advisor, but to an EXCEL advisor. Matt and Rodney will be glad to take time to go over everything and make sure you're taking the right classes for you. If in the past you've had a tendency to optimistically register for a whole bunch of classes, but then you have to withdraw from half of them, or you earn poor grades in half of them, you should **definitely talk to one of our advisors**. They will help you make practical decisions about what classes to take, so that your spring semester is under control from the beginning and stays that way all semester.

Fourth, rather than waiting for the semester to officially start, buy your books as soon as possible and you can give yourself a boost in more ways than one. Books for the spring semester will be available at the bookstore January 6th, while the semester doesn't begin till the 13th. If you order your books online, you'll have to allow shipping time, which is why you should do it before the semester begins. Not only that, but no matter what classes you're planning to take, it's a good idea to at least skim the books for those classes ahead of time. Read the table of contents – get a general idea of the overall shape of the course. This can give you a head start when it comes to understanding the course material later. But why stop there? Why not go further?

Fifth, read the first three chapters of each book. That way when you walk into that first class of the semester, you'll be in fine shape to understand the subject. There's probably no better way to set yourself up for success in the coming year.

Does the class sound tough? Does the book look boring? Does the course content seem as though

See "Break" on page 4



The Tutor's Corner

By Rachel Neumeier

ONE WEEK TILL FINALS!

And how are you doing in your classes?

If you don't actually know, then this is your last chance to find out! Ask your teachers what your current grade is in each class, ask a tutor to help you figure this out, or calculate your grades yourself. If you add up all the points you've gotten for all assignments and all tests and then divide by the total number of all points possible, you will find out how you are really doing.

Sometimes we have students come to EXCEL with a general impression that they're doing fine in a class even when it isn't true. What if you have As on all the homework, As and Bs on the quizzes, and perfect attendance – but an F on your first test and a low C on the second? You probably are not “doing fine” in this class, even if there have been a lot of quizzes. Quizzes and homework rarely count for that much, and attendance by itself will almost never allow you to pass a course. Given the above scenario, you are quite possibly earning a D.

If you're in a math class, then your homework counts for 20% of your grade. That means the tests count for 80% – so test grades are much more important than homework grades. If you are earning Fs and Ds on the tests, probably your overall grade is a D even if you are getting 100s on all the MML homework.

If you're in ANY doubt at all whether you're doing okay, this is the time to figure out where you stand. It's much better to find out for sure how you're doing right now than to wait and see.

Maybe you'll find out, or maybe you already know, that you're not doing as well in your classes as you'd hoped. At this point in the semester, this is probably the last chance you'll have to effectively help yourself do better. Waiting until finals week probably won't do. Instead, you might want to think about trying some intensive tutoring between now and the end of the semester.

An EXCEL tutor can't wave a magic wand and create a better grade for you. But a tutor may be able to

See “Finals” on page 5



Holly Linnenbringer, Caitlyn Holmes,
Jayla Wilson, Savannah Anderson



Kaitlin Weeks, Kyle Walls, Shay Starz,
Caitlin Keith, William Vazques-Calderon,
William Carr, Amber Wilkinson,
Melissa Wheat, Justin Barton,
Dana Keen, Katherine Hillis



Zhandre`a Acon, Amy Courtney,
Kayla Heifner, Brandy McDaniel,
Carol Blackwell, Oliva Bauer,
Matthew Reeve

*We learned about gratitude and humility
- that so many people had a hand in
our success, from the teachers who
inspired us to the janitors who kept our
school clean...and we were taught to
value everyone's contribution and treat
everyone with respect.*

Michelle Obama

Source: <https://www.brainyquote.com/>

Break

Continued from 4

it might be particularly difficult? Rather than setting yourself up for a really stressful first week of classes, why not go ahead and put a little work into at least the hardest-looking class ahead of time? Don't just *read* the first few chapters – take notes! Answer the questions at the end of the chapter – why not? It will only take a few minutes. Think how it would feel to be on top of your game from the first day – to be the one student in the class who already knows the material. The instructor will ask a question and you'll know the answer. If you've never tried this, then trust me, it is very satisfying to begin a class as the best and most knowledgeable student in the room.

Is it a math class? Or chemistry? Then actually do the problems at the end of each chapter! That way you **KNOW** you understand it. Again, this doesn't actually take that long, especially if you're not juggling all your other classes at the same time. Our tutors would be glad to show you a syllabus for whatever class you're taking and will most likely know which chapters you'll start with, so there's no need to worry that you'll be working on the wrong material. If you're nervous about a class, then believe me, you'll be *so much more comfortable* if you know you can do it before you even walk into the room for the first lecture.

I know the Fall semester is winding down – I know you're looking forward to the break – but believe me, giving some thought to next semester, making sure you're taking the right classes and that you're prepared for those classes, will put you so far ahead of the game. You can really relax and coast when the semester starts, while everyone around you is fighting not to fall instantly behind. Keeping up isn't such a challenge when you start out just a little ahead! Consider giving that a try, and see how your whole semester runs more smoothly.



Celebrate what you want to see more of.

Tom Peters

Source: <https://www.brainyquote.com/>

Blackwell & Hagen win the Fall 2019 Bernadine “Bernie” Ratliff EXCEL/SSS Scholarships



Carol Blackwell and Melinda Hagen were each awarded a \$500 “Bernie” Scholarship this fall.

These scholarships are funded by

Mineral Area College (MAC)

specifically to recognize EXCEL students who are in their second year of college, persisting toward a degree, and actively participate in EXCEL activities and services.



The award is named for our late Tutoring Coordinator, Bernie Ratliff. MAC awards four \$500 scholarships to EXCEL students annually, two each fall and two each spring. The application and information for the

Spring 2020 scholarship will be

posted on EXCEL's web page

and disseminated via e-mail in

January. Be on the lookout for this

information and be sure to apply provided you meet the requirements.



EXCEL/SSS MISSION

To provide the support necessary for each EXCEL/SSS student to reach his/her own level of academic excellence and succeed in achieving a postsecondary education.

Time to Apply

Continued from page 1

essay, the reference letter, students' involvement in extracurricular and/or community activities, and indication of special circumstances/need. If you are not involved in any extracurricular or community activities because of other responsibilities, state that. For example, you may say that your time is limited because you are a single parent who works 20 hours / week; or your parents can't help with expenses so you work 50 hours per week in addition to taking 15 credit hours, etc.

Also, be sure to mention special family circumstances that may be an obstacle to the continuation of your education. For instance, perhaps you or your father, mother, or spouse lost a job, making it difficult to continue college. Or perhaps your car is in dire need of a major repair that you keep delaying because you can't afford it. Be sure to give any information that would help the scholarship readers evaluate your financial need, your academic successes, and the priority you place on your education.

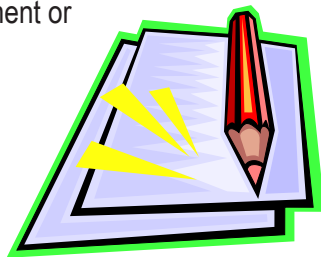
If you would like to discuss this application with Matt or Rodney, just call the EXCEL office at (573) 518-2131 and schedule an appointment or drop by the EXCEL office in the Learning Center of the Arts & Sciences Building.

Finals

Continued from 3

review your study habits and suggest different methods if what you're doing now isn't working, or clear up points of confusion if you don't understand some of the material, or help you with the rough drafts of your papers or speeches.

But to take full advantage of EXCEL services, it's important to come in while there's still time for tutoring to make a difference! So find out this week exactly where you stand in all your classes, and then if you aren't comfortable with how you're doing in one or more of them – make an appointment promptly. Then you'll be giving yourself the best possible chance to succeed!



Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering, 'It will be happier'.

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Be loyal to those who are loyal to you. And respect everyone, even your enemies and competition.

John Cena

I was not naturally talented. I didn't sing, dance, or act, though working around that minor detail made me inventive.

Steve Martin

It's almost impossible to be funnier than the people in Washington.

Carol Burnett

Source: <https://www.brainyquote.com/>

Making it Stick

Continued from 1

recall those things in the future. This is where study guides and practice problems come into play. The more you practice anything, the better you will be at it. Sound familiar?

The third one has the worst name of all.

Psychologists call it *over-learning*, which sounds like over-kill, meaning a waste of time. It really isn't. This concept relates to the question: "How long do I need to study for the test?" If you are like most people, when you began to understand something you get a certain feeling. Psychologists call this the "feeling of knowing" (FOK). To illustrate, think of the last time you had something "on the tip of your tongue" but couldn't quite say it. That is the FOK. The key to applying the concept of over-learning to your studies is *don't stop studying when you start getting the feeling of knowing and continue to study the material a little longer*. It isn't that difficult, and if you are able to do so, you will reach a point of mastery of the material that will pay off on the test.

EXCEL/SSS
Mineral Area College
PO Box 1000
Park Hills, MO 63601

Published By:
EXCEL/SSS
Mineral Area College
PO Box 1000
Park Hills, MO 63601
(573)518-2131

Editor: Matt Sopko

Layout and Design:
Robbin Stegall

Contributors:
Matt Sopko
Rodney Wilson
Rachel Neumeier

EXCEL/Student Support Services at Mineral Area College is a federally funded TRiO program. It is funded at \$1,407,550 for five years. Mineral Area College's total contribution is approximately 2.6% of the total budget. EXCEL/SSS serves 200 students.

Mineral Area College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, disability, age, religion, creed or marital or parental status. For more information, call the Title VI, Title IX, Section 504 and ADA Coordinator at (573) 431-4593 or U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.

If you have special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act and need this publication in an alternative format, notify us at the address or telephone number below. Reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate your special needs.