

Study Skills

Interleaving

Traditionally, we study topic A from a class until we think we know it, then study topic B from the same class, and then C. This is called “blocking.”¹ Over 3 days, you might study like this: Day 1: A, Day 2: B, Day 3: C.²

Interleaving:

Instead of studying one topic from a class and then the next from the same class, interleaving is studying several related topics intermixed.³ Over 3 days, you might study like this: Day 1: ABC, Day 2: CAB, Day 3: BCA.⁴

- Switching between topics helps your brain find similarities, differences, and connections.
- You avoid rote memorization of topics in a specific order because you study them out of order.
- It helps if you are at least a little familiar with the topics⁵ - ex) attending a lecture and taking notes.

Give it a Try:

1. Pick 3 topics from **one** of your courses

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

2. Fill in the 3 blank boxes each day with your topics, different orders, no repeats (this is for a 60 minute, focused study session⁶).

Day 1		Day 2		Day 3	
Topic/To Do	Time	Topic/To Do	Time	Topic/To Do	Time
Set Realistic Goal(s)	2-5 Minutes	Set Realistic Goal(s)	2-5 Minutes	Set Realistic Goal(s)	2-5 Minutes
	10-15 Minutes		10-15 Minutes		10-15 Minutes
	10-15 Minutes		10-15 Minutes		10-15 Minutes
	10-15 Minutes		10-15 Minutes		10-15 Minutes
Break: move around	10 Minutes	Break: move around	10 Minutes	Break: move around	10 Minutes
Quick review (see Retrieval Practice handout)	10 Minutes	Quick review (see Retrieval Practice handout)	10 Minutes	Quick review (see Retrieval Practice handout)	10 Minutes

¹ Pan, Steven C. 2015. “The Interleaving Effect: Mixing It up Boosts Learning.” Scientific American. August 4, 2015.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-interleaving-effect-mixing-it-up-boosts-learning/>.

² “Interleaving.” n.d. The Learning Scientists. <https://www.learningscientists.org/interleaving>.

³ Pan, Steven C. 2015. “The Interleaving Effect: Mixing It up Boosts Learning.” Scientific American. August 4, 2015.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-interleaving-effect-mixing-it-up-boosts-learning/>.

⁴ “Interleaving.” n.d. The Learning Scientists. <https://www.learningscientists.org/interleaving>.

⁵ Ferlazzo, Larry. 2021. “The What, Why, and How of ‘Interleaving’ (Opinion).” Education Week. May 30, 2021.

<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-the-what-why-how-of-interleaving/2021/05>.

⁶ “The Study Cycle & Focused Study Sessions | Rhodes Sites.” n.d. Sites.rhodes.edu. Accessed May 30, 2023.

<https://sites.rhodes.edu/academic-and-learning-resources/learning-tips/study-cycle-focused-study-sessions#:~:text=With%20all%20of%20today>.