

Flashcards as an Aid to Memory

Much of studying involves the remembering of different kinds of information. In courses where there are large amounts of **factual** kinds of information, the use of flashcards may be helpful. Kinds of material that might be considered appropriate for flashcards are vocabulary words, formulas, equations, definitions, dates, names, etc.

The primary advantage of flashcards over other review techniques is that since the cards are more conveniently carried, they will be reviewed probably more often than material in a notebook or a textbook. **Frequent review** of cards is what makes them effective. Short reviews **frequently repeated** will generally be more effective than long sessions of cramming.

Objections about flashcards usually state that “they take too long to make.” One should keep in mind, however, that prepared blank cards can be inexpensively purchased now and the writing down of the material on the cards is an aid to memory in itself. One learns even as he/she prepares the cards. Suggestions for Flashcard Use:

Review cards often Carrying them with you will facilitate frequent review.

Prepare the cards well in advance of the date the material is due to be tested or learned. Avoid copying information on to the cards. Instead, look at the information in text or notes, look away, say it out loud, and then write the information on the card without looking back at the source. This active recall and writing will improve your long term memory for the information.

Study most the cards you don't know or are not sure of. Reviewing cards you know well is a temptation but an inefficient use of time.

Recite out loud the information from the back of the card which you are learning.

When learning cards for the first time break them up into small groups. Learn one group of cards, then move to another group reviewing all the cards from time to time.

Shuffle the cards frequently and flip through them rapidly. This avoids learning the cards in a certain order. Remember: it is not the cards that improve memory; it is rather **how often they are reviewed!**