



## Using Retrieval to Help Students Learn Course Material

Are you frustrated with the lack of learning in your classes?

Do you feel that you cannot spend any extra time trying to help students learn material?

A low-stakes activity that may reduce the time you spend helping students learn is **Retrieval**.

“**Retrieval** boosts learning by pulling information *out* of students’ heads . . . rather than cramming information into students’ heads (e.g., lectures)”

(Agarwal, P. K. & Bain, P. M. 2019, *Powerful Teaching: Unleash the Science of Learning*, Jossey-Bass) (p. 44).

### What is Retrieval? How Does It Work?

Introduce the information you want students to learn (lecture, research, texts, . . .)

Require students to retrieve the knowledge (see suggestions in the table below )

Spread the retrieval over time:

Instead of teaching a unit, testing students, moving on to the next unit, testing students, etc., teach a unit & test students; teach a second unit & test students on both units; . . .

Retrieval is a learning strategy, not an assessment strategy and should be low-stakes (p. 48)

What are Some Activities that Help Students Retrieve What They Learned?	
<b>Quizzes</b>	<p>Frequent low-stakes quizzes that cover all material up to that point (not just the most recent material)</p> <p>In addition to daily quizzes, “Quizzes that are spaced a few days after initial learning are the most powerful for long-term learning” (p. 103).</p> <p>Create multiple quizzes so that you can tell students that there will be no “make-up” quizzes, but they can drop the lowest 2-3 scores.</p>
<b>Brain Dump</b>  (these do not need to be collected or graded)	Stop in the middle of a lecture & give students a few minutes to write down everything they have learned from the lecture
	Or have students Brain Dump then exchange with a peer who adds 1 thing not found in the Brain Dump & returns the paper
	Or Brain Dump, then Pair & Share for 2-3 minutes
<b>Two Things</b>  (these do not need to be collected or graded)	Two Things can be used to begin a class, pause in the middle of a class, or end the last 5 minutes of a class: Give students a few minutes to write:
	What are Two Things you learned today?
	What are Two Things you learned from the assigned reading?
	What are Two Things you learned from our last class that are relevant to our discussion today?
	What are Two Examples from your own life that illustrates what we are learning about? (adapted from p. 62)
<b>Flashcards</b>	Assign students to create flashcards for the most important ideas from the lecture, text, etc. These can be used with a partner for 2 minutes in class.

If you would like additional help, please reach out to Joyce or the Writing Lab! **We have hired additional Writing Lab advisors to accommodate more online student requests!**

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