

As teachers we are not only responsible for teaching the content but also the skills, strategies and tools that will support learners in retaining and using what you teach them.

Here, MLTAWA 2019 committee member Nicky Griffin-Appaddo draws on a range of sources to highlight some traps to avoid, and to provide some tips to help, student recall.

## 6 Easy tips to improve students' recall

There are some easy steps that can be made to improve memory, using your sense of smell, timing, sound and other simple tricks.

### Tip 1 - Don't let students take photos of notes

Did you know that according to psychologist, Linda Henkel, taking photos of notes on a projector/board may in fact hinder, rather than benefit, your recall of the information? It was discovered that students visiting an art museum had poorer memories of those objects that they had photographed than those which they had not photographed. Henkel conjectures that "As soon as you hit 'click' on the camera, it's as if you've outsourced your memory".

### Tip 2 - Write notes by hand

If your students are taking photos, insist that they write the notes up afterwards, preferably by hand. It seems that there is a greater chance that you will remember what you write with your hand than what you type. See this YouTube clip on note taking. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pu0PSZ\\_EwII](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pu0PSZ_EwII)

### Tip 3 - Turn off devices early for improved sleep

Make sure that if students are checking the photos on their phone that they do it at least one hour before bed time as the light from a device can inhibit the production of melatonin which you need to be able to fall asleep. Better still, make sure that they switch the phone to 'do not disturb' as the sound of new notifications coming through impacts your ability to focus on the task in hand. Make sure that students get adequate sleep though as not enough sleep impairs brain function. Note that teenagers need 9 hours of sleep or more a night, more than primary students.

See the report from John Hopkins. <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/healthy-sleep/sleep-better/teenagers-and-sleep-how-much-sleep-is-enough>

### Tip 4 - Time revising for last thing at night

University students in a study on improving memory found that they significantly improved their recall, if they revised in the evening, then went straight to bed. The researchers noted that sleep helps to "stabilise newly learned memories". Given that devices interfere with sleep, it is better to revise from written/printed notes.

### Tip 5 - Use your sense of smell to help embed memories

Students can give their memory a further boost by diffusing scent whilst revising, then diffuse the same scent whilst sleeping. It appears that activating the olfactory system in this way activates memories and makes new information easier to embed.

### Tip 6 - Listen to "pink" noise

It is not just your sense of smell that heightens memory, according to a small study at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago, listening to "pink" noise whilst you sleep also improves memory, up to three times more than those who do not listen to pink noise. Pink noise is low frequency sound, like a waterfall or rain. You can download an app called Pink Noise if you need it.

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