PRACTICAL AND FINANCIAL LITERACY

Active Recall

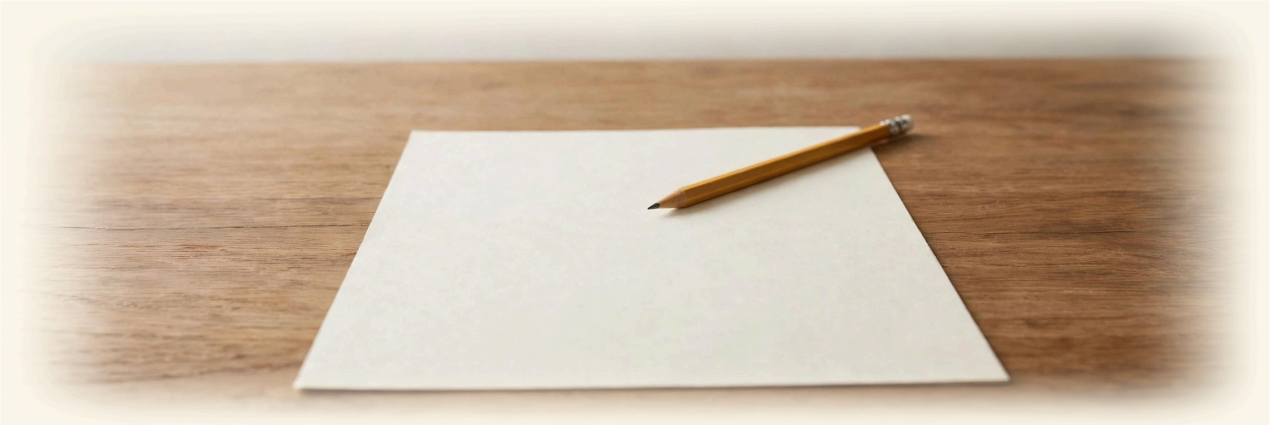
Difficulty level: Easy

Practical and Financial Literacy

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Overview of the concept

This is how you actually remember what you studied for a test. Covering up your notes and trying to recall the answer yourself works far better than rereading them the night before an exam. It feels harder in the moment, and that effort is exactly what makes the memory stick when you need it in the test.



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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q You studied the water cycle: evaporation, condensation, precipitation, collection. How do you test yourself with active recall?

SOLUTION

This is a retrieval question: the test is whether you can pull the stages out of your head, not whether you can recognise them on the page.

Close your notes and write the four stages from memory, in order.

Open your notes and check. You wrote evaporation, precipitation, collection, and missed condensation.

That miss is the point: condensation is what you study next, not the three you already knew.

EXAMPLE 2

Q Your flashcard says "What is 7 × 8?" How do you use it properly?

SOLUTION

Read the front and say the answer before you touch the card: 56

Turn it over and check. Right? Set it aside and test it again later, so it comes back after a gap.

Wrong? It goes back in the pile to try again sooner.

Flipping the card straight over without answering first is just re-reading, and re-reading does not test anything.

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Practice questions

1

Your flashcard front says “What is the capital of France?” What do you do before you turn it over?

- A Turn the card over straight away.
- B Say Paris from memory first.
- C Read the back of the card first.
- D Skip the card and come back tomorrow.

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2

After reading a page about the water cycle, you close the book. What do you write down?

A Copy the page word for word from the book.

B Only the parts you already know well.

C Everything you remember, without peeking.

D Nothing until you have read the page again.

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3

You wrote down three of the four water cycle stages and missed condensation. What do you do next?

A. Open your notes, fill in condensation, and study that part next.

B. Ignore condensation and move on to the next topic.

C. Rewrite all four stages from the book.

D. Test yourself on the three stages you already know.

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4

Why is answering practice questions better than re-reading your notes?

A Because it is easier than re-reading.

B Because you read the notes more times.

C Because it works even without notes.

D Because it tests whether you can retrieve it.

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5 You explain the water cycle to a friend from memory and get stuck on condensation. What does that show you?

- **A** You have learned the whole water cycle.
- **B** Condensation is the gap in what you know.
- **C** Condensation is the easiest stage.
- **D** You should stop studying the water cycle.

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6 You got a flashcard right. What do you do with it?

- **A** Throw the card away.
- **B** Keep it at the front of the pile.
- **C** Set it aside and test it again later.
- **D** Keep testing it again and again right now.

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7 **You got a flashcard wrong three times in a row. What should you do with it?**

- **A** Keep it in the pile and review it again sooner.
- **B** Set it aside and test it again later.
- **C** Throw the card away.
- **D** Skip it and never test it again.

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8 **You draw the water cycle from memory, then check it against the book. What kind of recall is that?**

- **A** Copying a diagram from the book.
- **B** Reading the diagram in the book.
- **C** Tracing a diagram from the book.
- **D** Drawing a diagram from memory.

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9

What is active recall?

A Re-reading your notes the night before a test.

B Trying to remember an answer from memory before checking it.

C Copying answers from the back of the book.

D Flipping a flashcard over without trying to answer.

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10

True or false: flipping a flashcard straight over without trying to answer counts as active recall.

A True

B False

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ANSWER KEY

1. Say Paris from memory first.
2. Everything you remember, without peeking.
3. Open your notes, fill in condensation, and study that part next.
4. Because it tests whether you can retrieve it.
5. Condensation is the gap in what you know.
6. Set it aside and test it again later.
7. Keep it in the pile and review it again sooner.
8. Drawing a diagram from memory.
9. Trying to remember an answer from memory before checking it.
10. False

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