

Three Ways of Supporting Student Retention

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My goal is to reach as many students as possible. Some prefer to learn from reading material, some by listening, and some through engagement (e.g., video). The following three strategies encourage students to learn and retain the material in multiple modalities, in accordance with Universal Design principles.

Retention of Material by Problem Solving

In order to make the material “stick,” I create worksheets for each chapter. I use a variety of options to help students retain the information they have to read for class. They are also useful as study guides for the exams. I try to mix them up from chapter to chapter to challenge students in different ways and not make the learning environment stale. I have created numerous printable worksheets with crosswords, word scramble, fill in the missing letter, and find the pattern so that students must engage with the reading material to fill them out. They then enter that information into a “quiz” in Blackboard so I can grade their efforts.

Retention of Material through Listening

Another way in which I can present the material and have them listen to it is through lectures. I use PowerPoints and a voiceover. This way they can pause, listen to it a 1.5 speed, and revisit it as needed when studying for an exam. I attach articles or create a list of information that supplements and highlights the information provided in the lectures.

Retention through Engagement

This is one of the most fun ways to enhance learning because there are so many different avenues that teachers can use.

1. Doodly: I love using Doodly.com. You can create presentations with animated figures, still figures, music, and/or voiceovers. This allows the students to engage with something fun while learning the concepts. I use this to highlight a specific concept that might be nominally mentioned in the textbook.
2. YouTube: I use this, as do many people, to find videos that explain a small concept from the chapter. Sometimes, hearing someone else explain it can be exactly what the student needs.
3. Interactive games: I frequently use online apps like Kahoot.com (for in-person) or WordWall.com (for online). The interactive quizzes or puzzles are always popular because they make learning material into a game. Many of us are familiar with Kahoot and students love the friendly competition. WordWall is a site where one can create interactive games to challenge and encourage students while reinforcing the concepts you would like students to remember.

There are numerous ways of learning. I attempt to offer course material in as many supplemental formats as is reasonably possible so all my students can engage, retain, and use the information with which they are presented in my class(es).