

Some Revision Ideas 1.

The 'Forgetting Curve'

When you set yourself a learning task you need to know how to transfer knowledge from your short-term to your long-term memory.

Most students would agree that if they revise something and then don't look at it again for several weeks, then they will only remember about 20% of what they learnt.

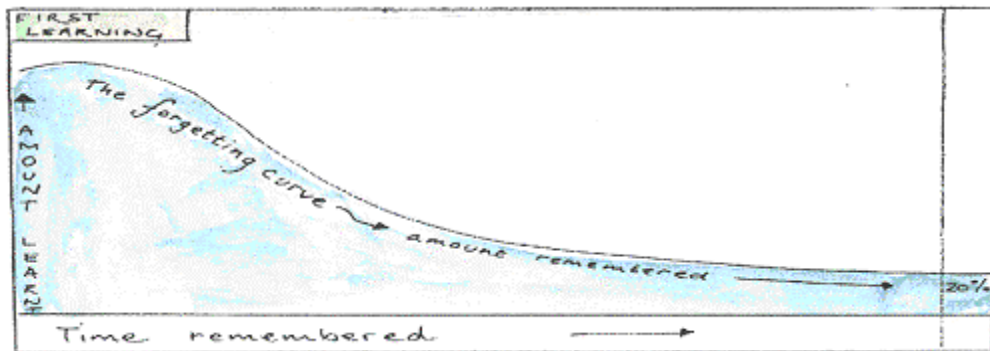


Figure 1 shows how much and how soon learning work can be forgotten if it is given only one session.

Faced with this evidence, some students are tempted to do as much of their revision as they can just before the test or exam so they can use what they have learnt before the memory trace fails. They are relying on last-minute cramming and there is just not time to learn everything in this way.

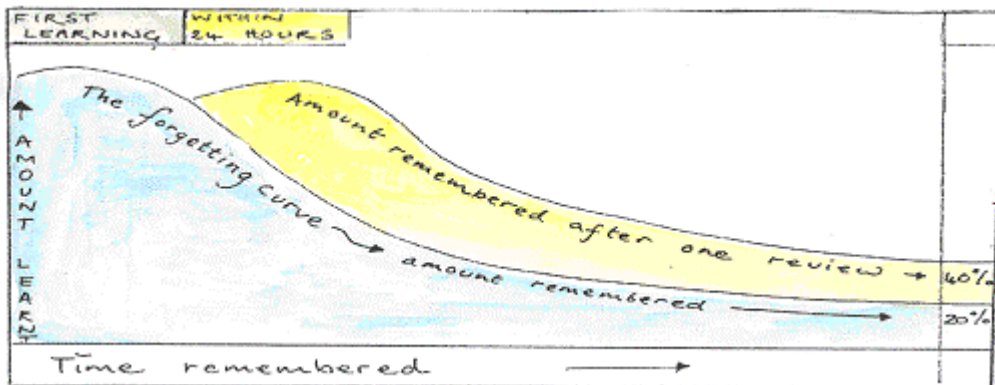


Figure 2 A second revision strengthens the trace enough to allow a longer gap before the next revision.

The optimum moment to reinforce any learning is when the memory trace is still strong (later in the day, or the next morning). Because the information is still fresh, very little work is necessary to reinforce the learning already done. A quick test is all that is needed. See Figure 2.

Allowing a great deal of time to elapse after an early revision session puts the revised knowledge at risk and means that proportionately more time has to be spent on retrieving what has been learnt than if it is reviewed soon afterwards. Capitalising on work already done in this way, the revision sessions become shorter, but the retention time longer.

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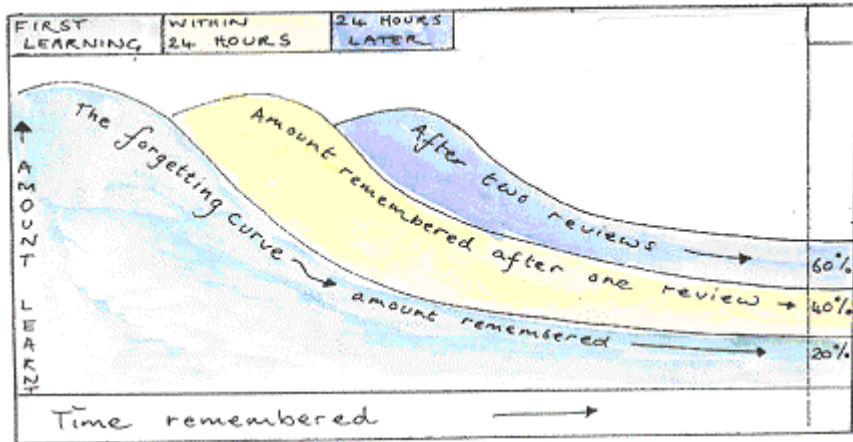


Figure 3 60% remembered after three revision sessions.

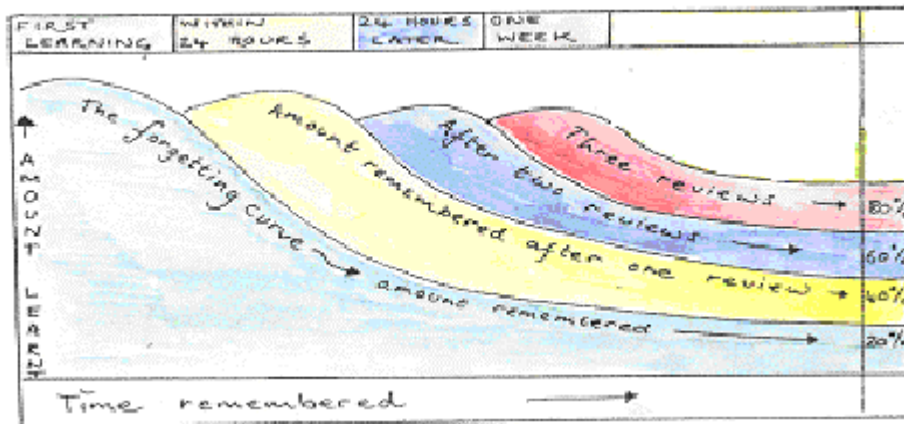


Figure 4 80% remembered after four revision sessions.

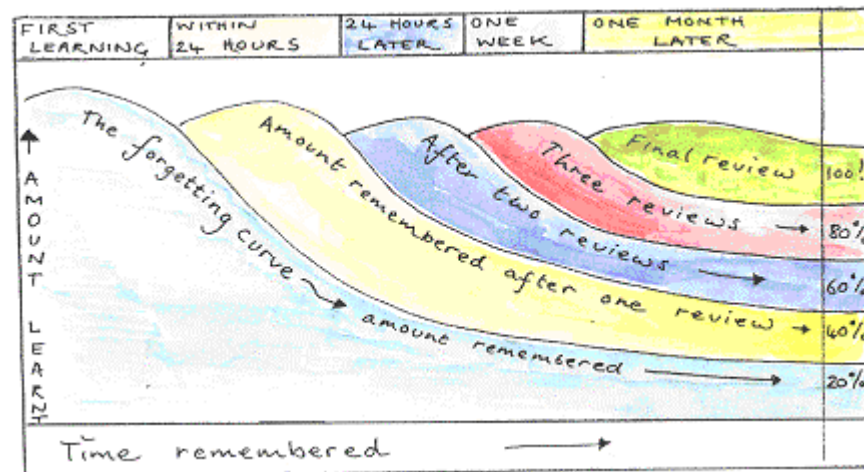


Figure 5 One good learning session and four quick reviews should put what you've revised into long term memory.

This is from:

<http://homepages.westminster.org.uk/studyskills/The%20Forgetting%20Curve.doc>