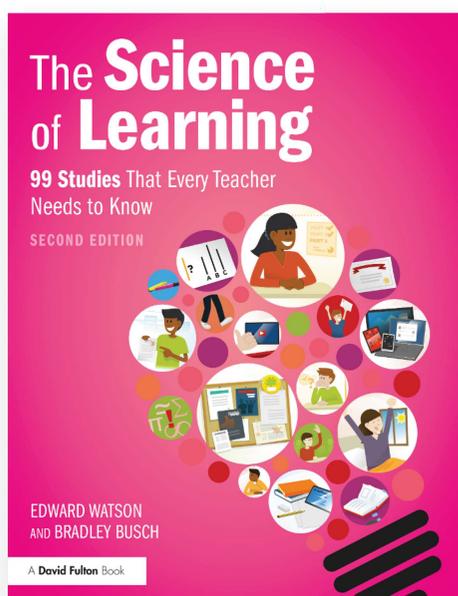


# #1 Retrieval Practice

Also known as the 'Testing Effect'. Learn about the 2006 study that showed how students who had one study period followed by a session of retrieval practice did at least 30% better in their test than those who had done two study periods of reading.

## From the Book



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# THE ONE ABOUT RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

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## THE STUDY

Researchers studied the impact of different study strategies on how much students learn. One such strategy is “Retrieval Practice”, sometimes referred to as “The Testing Effect”, which describes the act of having to come up with an answer to a question.

They tested how effective this strategy was compared to simply reading and re-reading key passages. As well as comparing final test scores, they also measured how effective the students thought these strategies were and how interesting they found their revision sessions whilst doing them.

## THE MAIN FINDINGS

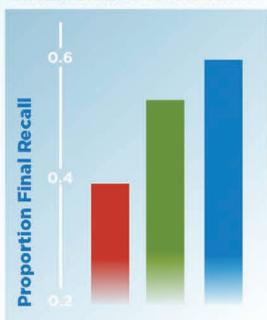
1 If the final test was 2-7 days away, students who had **one study period followed by a session of retrieval practice did at least 30% better** than those who had done two study periods of reading.

2 The longer you need to remember information, the **more powerful** “The Testing Effect” is.

3 The longer you need to remember information for, the **less effective** reading is.

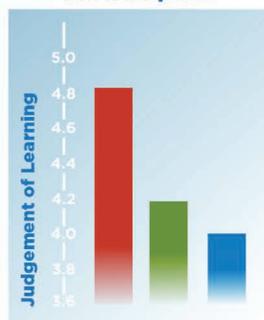


Final Exam Performance



■ Reading, Reading, Reading, Reading ■ Reading, Reading, Reading, Testing ■ Reading, Testing, Testing, Testing

“Did it Help Me?”



4 Students were most likely to rate re-reading as being **more effective** than retrieval practice. However, the students who used mainly retrieval practice **remembered over 50% more** than those who had just read and re-read during revision.

5 Students who had revised using retrieval practice found it **more interesting** than those who had just read the material.

# THE ONE ABOUT RETRIEVAL PRACTICE



## RELATED RESEARCH

The benefits of retrieval practice have been studied for more than 100 years. They have been found to be especially strong during stressful situations, such as taking final exams (#76). Other research confirms that providing immediate feedback after testing can further enhance these benefits, and this also helps students identify any potential gaps in their knowledge.

Other research suggests that replicating exam conditions whilst studying for a test further enhances the ability to recall information in their final exam. Essentially, practicing the ability to recall information improves our ability to do so.

The findings from this study - that students incorrectly believe that re-reading is a better strategy compared with retrieval practice - is both interesting and alarming. However, if students are intent on mainly reading whilst studying, other evidence (#34) suggests they should do so out loud and with no background noise (#80).

## CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS



The results from this study, from Washington University, have some important implications for how we can help our students learn key material in preparation for their exams. It suggests that they may be likely to choose ineffective strategies at the expense of more-effective ones unless we help educate them as to the best learning strategies.

The researchers also touch on another important bonus of using retrieval practice regularly when they state that “frequent testing leads students to space their study effort”. This backs up existing research that shows that spacing out your learning leads to far greater retention and recall than massed learning (i.e. cramming). Therefore, it seems imperative that we clearly teach students not just about the importance of studying, but how to do so more efficiently and effectively.

The results from this study couldn't be clearer. Studying isn't just something that students do in order to do well in a test. Tests are something students should do in order to study more effectively.