9 Principles Of Faster, Better Learning

Good learners, or "ultra learners" learn faster and are more retentive than most of the population, not because they are necessarily smarter, but because they apply a number of helpful principles to their learning process.

1. Meta learning (learning about learning)
When you set out to learn a particular skill or area of knowledge, it's important to first figure out, what is the map? What territory will you be exploring in learning the skill? Part of this is breaking down the resources you can use for learning it. Consider books, guides, courses. Determine as well, what is the thing you'll have to do to get really good at your target skill?

The expert interview method

A seemingly obvious but often overlooked method of meta learning is to seek out and interview an expert in the skill you want to learn. Ask them how they learned it, and what they would focus on to get to where they are.

2. Focus

One of the key success criteria for learning and mastering a new skill fast is actually creating a project, setting aside time for it and sticking to your plan. If it doesn't touch your calendar, it will likely never get done. So put it in your schedule, where it just has to get your attention.

Plan as well how you will prevent procrastination. A good part of this is focusing on motivation. It's easier to adhere to something if you actually want to do it. Imagine, wouldn't it be cool if you could do X? Wouldn't it be amazing if you could get really good at (insert skill)? Visualize the process and come up with ways to make it enjoyable and exciting. Turn it into a challenge that you will obsess about and look forward to tackling.

3. Directness

Most learning programs work on the assumption that learning something in the context of a classroom or a book or a seminar will let you then use it in a real-life situation. Research has shown, however, that humans are fairly bad at this kind of transfer. The best learners get around this by asking themselves at the outset, In what situations do I want to use this? Where do I actually want to be good at this and apply it? They then practice early on, either in that actual situation, or in a situation that is very similar to it. If you're learning a language, for example, with the aim to be able to speak to people, you ought to be having speaking interactions fairly early, instead of working solely on app or book exer-

speaking interactions fairly early, instead of working solely on app or book exercises. Likewise, if your goal in learning programming is to build a website, you should try building a site early on.

4. Drilling

The things we want to become good at in life are generally not simple things. They can, however, be broken down into a lot of little things. Public speaking, for instance, is made up of various different skills. Injecting humor, for example, or getting your audience's attention, or emphasizing important points. If you can target and drill down on the spots at which you're weakest, you'll get much better results than looking at the thing as a whole.

5. Retrieval

In a study done by Jeffrey Karpicke and Janelle Blunt, students were divided into two groups. One group was asked to study a piece of text by reading it over and over again. The other was told to read the text once, then close the book and try to recall as much of the content as they could remember. Both groups were then tested. Surprisingly, the students who read the material once scored better than those who read it multiple times. If you can train your brain to retrieve information when you need it, you'll learn more effectively.

6. Feedback

Not all feedback is useful. If, for example, your tenth-grade English teacher told you you sucked at writing, you might not be motivated to try very hard on your next essay. It's important, therefore, to process feedback. Focus on what matters, on what you can adjust to, and ignore what isn't about what you can improve on.

Recognize as well what kind of feedback you're getting. Some feedback is a holistic kind of judgement that doesn't tell you what specifically needs adjusting. Sometimes people who give feedback can't tell you themselves what improvements to make. Ultra learners therefore have a finely-tuned sense of how to get feedback and how to filter out the information that has nothing to do with helping them improve.

7. Don't fill a leaky bucket

With the passage of time and with the multiplicity of inputs we absorb, we can

forget things. There are a number of practices we can do to improve retention of what's important.

Retrieval practice

As discussed before, we can retain information better not by multiple back-to-back exposures to it, but by taking it in, then trying to remember it and seeing what we recall and what we don't.

Spacing

If you have 10 hours to learn something, you'll actually remember more if you space those 10 hours over 10 days than if you learn it in one single day. You can, for example, instead of reading a book in two days, have multiple books going so that you get spaced exposure to the same book. You can also set it up in your calendar so that a month or so after finishing a book you liked, you might do some free recall and refer to notes in order to refresh the information you got from it.

8. Intuition

There are people who seem to perform miracles with their minds, pulling answers out of thin air. A lot of this looks to be a matter of chunking, or pattern recognition. If someone asked you to recall, for instance, the letters FMCBBIIAA, you're likely to struggle. If grouped, however, as FBI, MBA, CIA, you'll have no difficulty remembering these previously memorized chunks. Experts in various fields have numerous stored patterns gained from experience to draw on, letting them make amazing intuitive leaps.

If you don't have such intuition, you might overcome your deficit with what Ultralearning author Scott Young calls the Feynman technique, named after physicist Richard Feynman. It is basically taking a piece of paper on which you write a concept/idea/method/process that you don't really understand. You then:

a. Write an explanation as if you were teaching it to someone else, but it is actually for yourself.

b. Notice where you become confused or unsure, and compose specific questions that you could ask a peer, an expert, or even Google to clear up the matter.

9. Experimentation

People generally want a formula, a recipe, a step-by-step process they can

follow to get a result. If you want to be truly successful in business or life, though, you have to work with the principles, the deeper ideas of things. This means trying stuff out. There is no one formula that works for everyone, and sometimes you will fail. If you can approach things, however, with the spirit of experimentation, you will understand and be able to use ideas the way they were intended. You will learn to adapt and adjust and come up with results that may amaze you.

Find out more about Scott Young and his book, Ultralearning
- https://www.scotthyoung.com/

For more with your business join the SuperFastBusiness membership