

Self-testing is effective study strategy but students seldom choose to do it

You don't want your exam to be the first time you accurately assess how well you know the material. Self-testing should be an integral part of your study sessions so that have a clear understanding of what you do and don't know.

Think aloud

Talk through your material. You can talk to your classmates, your friends, a tutor, or even a pet. Just verbalizing your thoughts can help you make more sense of the material and internalize it more deeply. Talking aloud is a great way to test yourself on how well you really know the material. In courses that require problem solving, explaining the steps aloud will ensure you really understand them and expose any gaps in knowledge that you might have. Ask yourself questions about what you are doing and why.

Ask yourself questions

Asking self-reflective questions is key to metacognition. Take the time to be introspective and honest with yourself about your comprehension. Below are some suggestions for metacognitive questions you can ask yourself.

- Does this answer make sense given the information provided?
- What strategy did I use to solve this problem that was helpful?
- How does this information conflict with my prior understanding?
- How does this information relate to what we learned last week?

- What questions will I ask myself next time I'm working these types of problems?
- What is confusing about this topic?
- What are the relationships between these two concepts?
- What conclusions can I make?

Try brainstorming some of your own questions as well.

Use writing

Writing can help you organize your thoughts and assess what you know. Just like thinking aloud, writing can help you identify what you do and don't know, and how you are thinking about the concepts that you're learning. Write out what you know and what questions you have about the learning objectives for each topic you are learning.

Many of the methods described are about self-testing (e.g., thinking aloud, using writing, taking notes from memory) because they help you discern what you do and don't actually know. **Other common methods include practice tests and flash cards—anything that asks you to summon your knowledge and check if it's correct.**