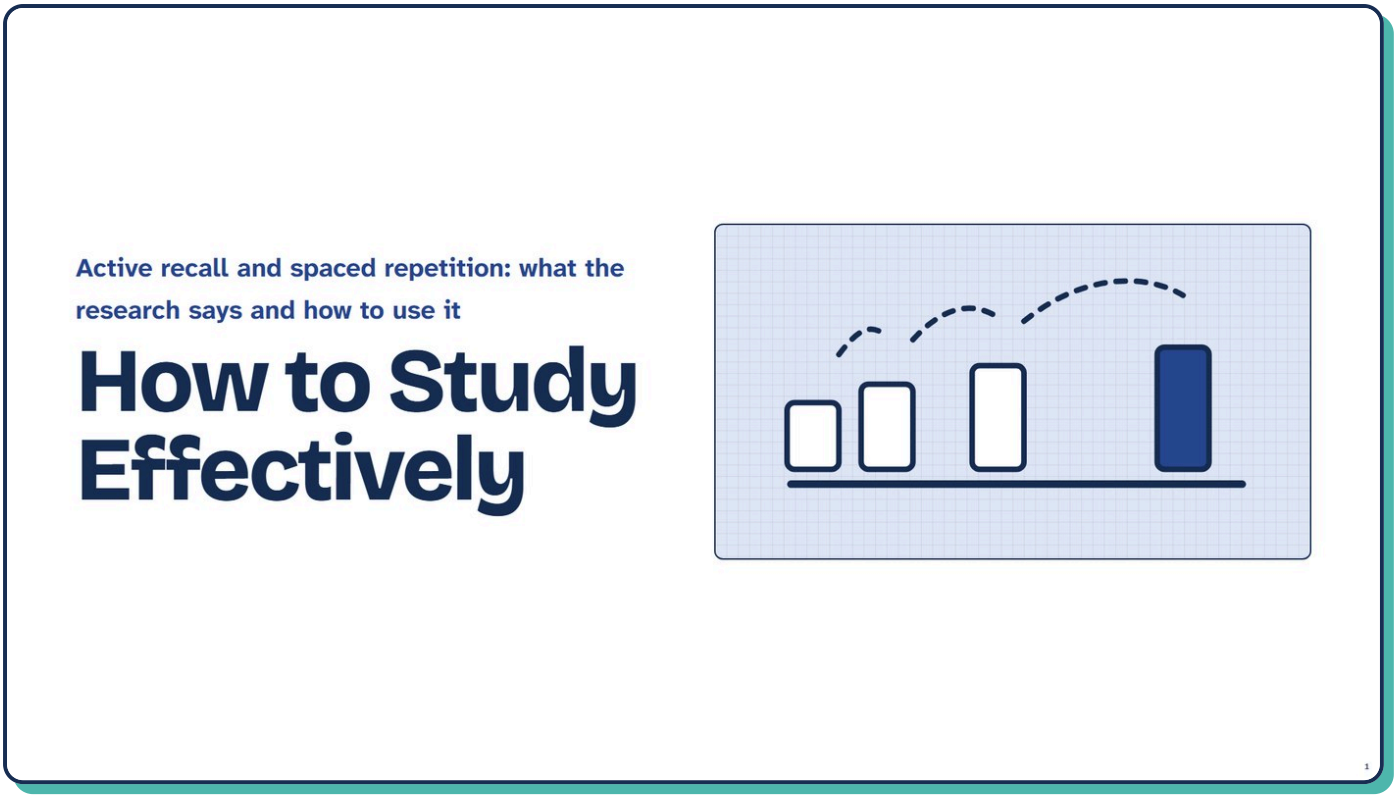


How to Study Effectively

Teacher notes

Ask the room: how many of you reread a chapter and felt sure you knew it, then went blank in the exam? Tell them today's session explains why that happens and what research says works better.

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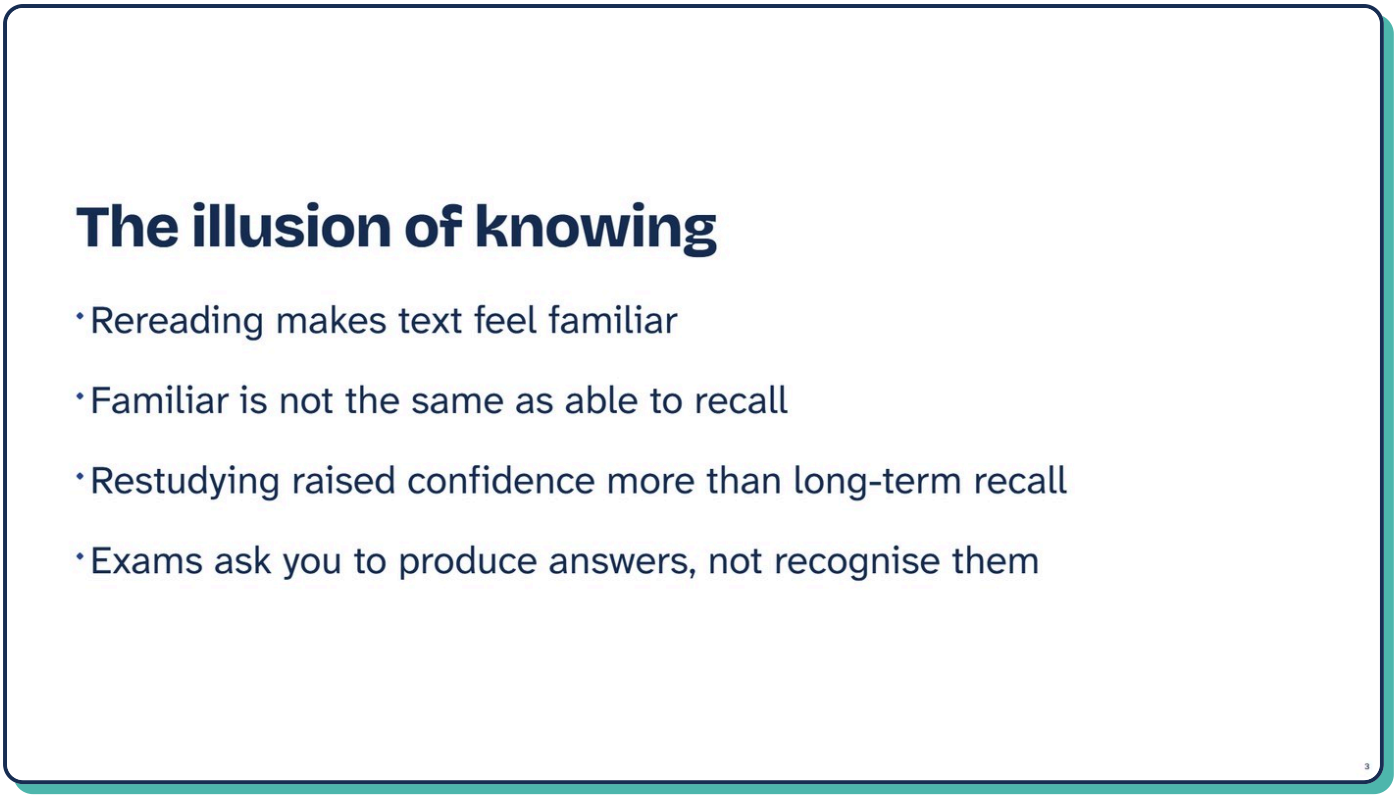


By the end of this session you can

Teacher notes

Read the objectives aloud. Point out that these methods apply to any subject, from school maths to history or a new language, because they are about how memory works.

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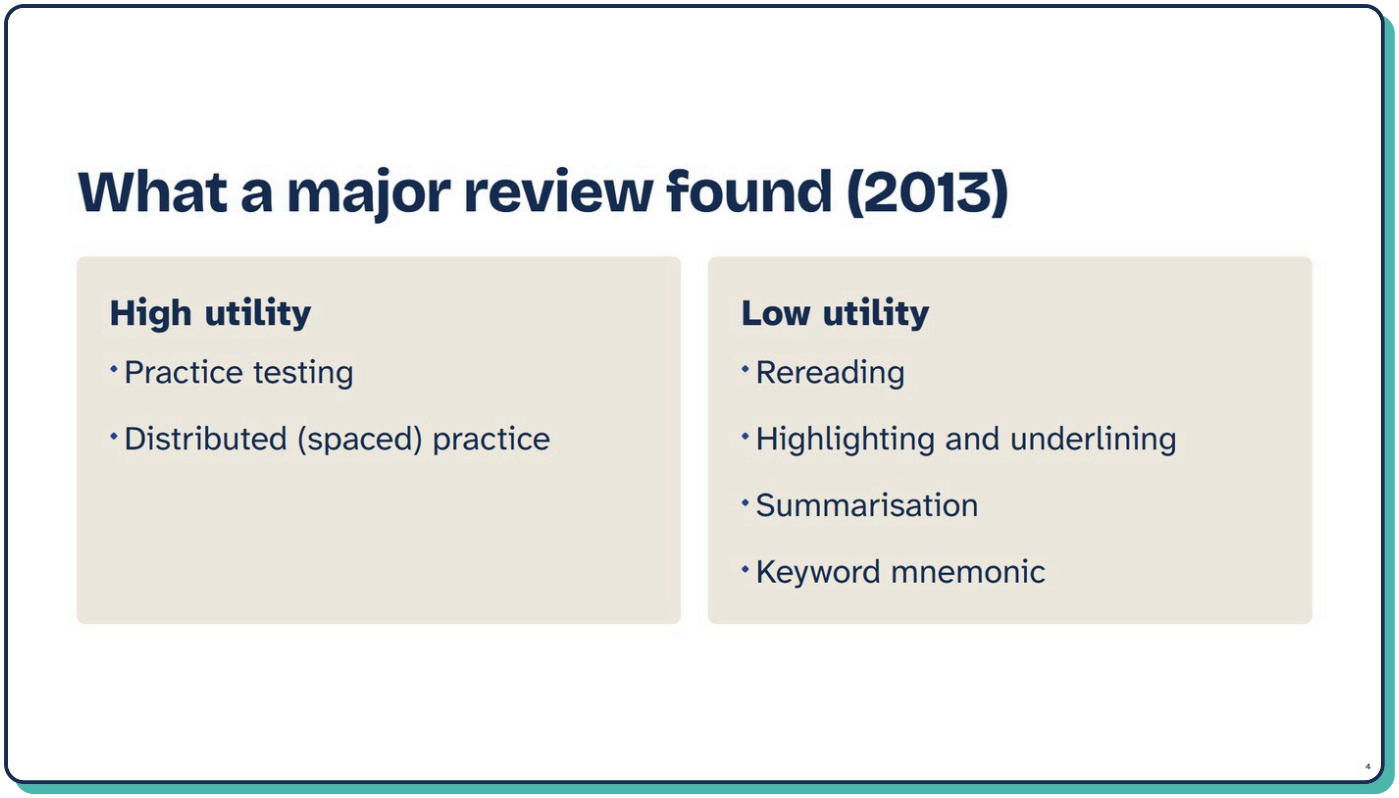


The illusion of knowing

Teacher notes

Ask: can you recognise a friend's phone number when you see it? Can you write it down from memory? That gap is the illusion of knowing. A common misconception is that a lesson that feels easy has been learned well.

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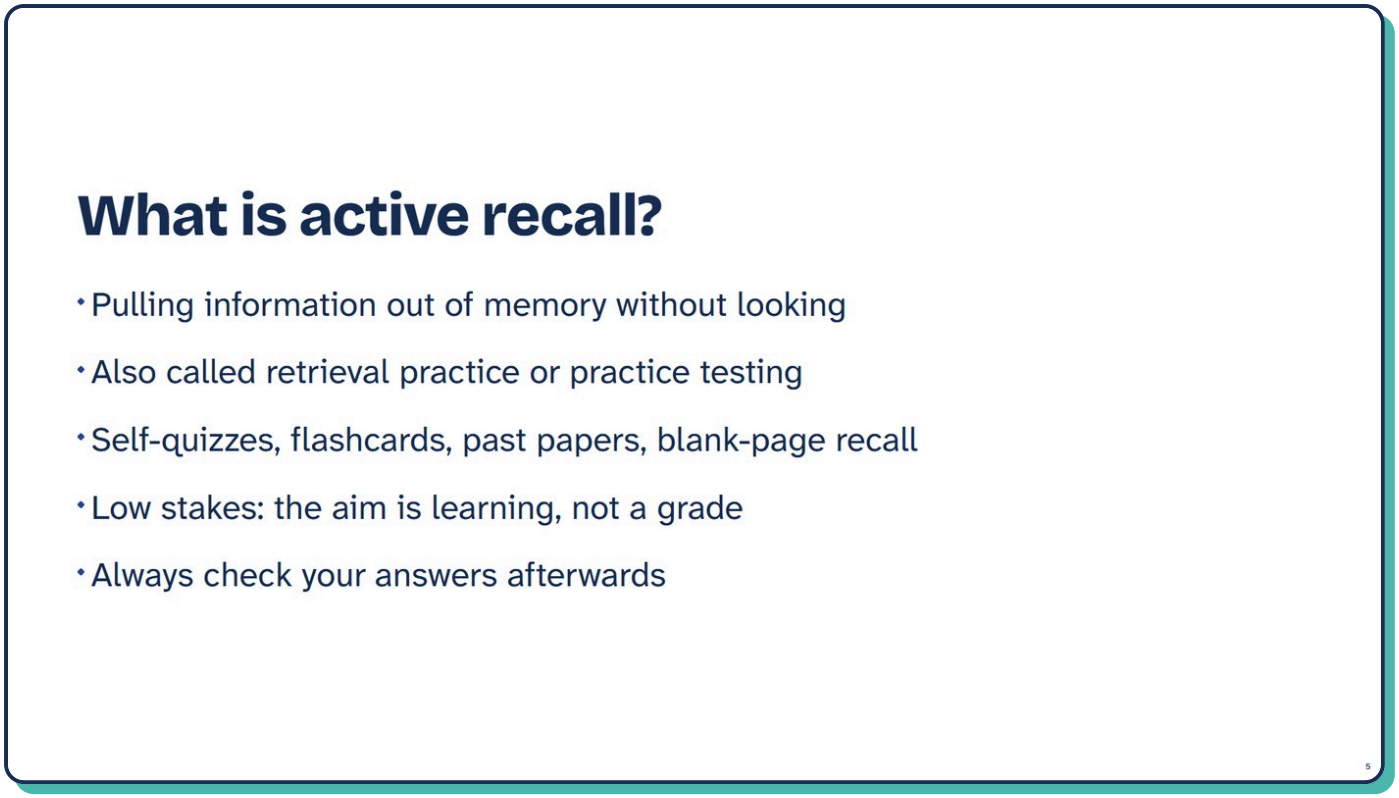


What a major review found (2013)

Teacher notes

This comes from Dunlosky and colleagues' review of ten techniques in Psychological Science in the Public Interest. Elaborative interrogation, self-explanation and interleaving were rated moderate. Ask: which of these do you use most often?

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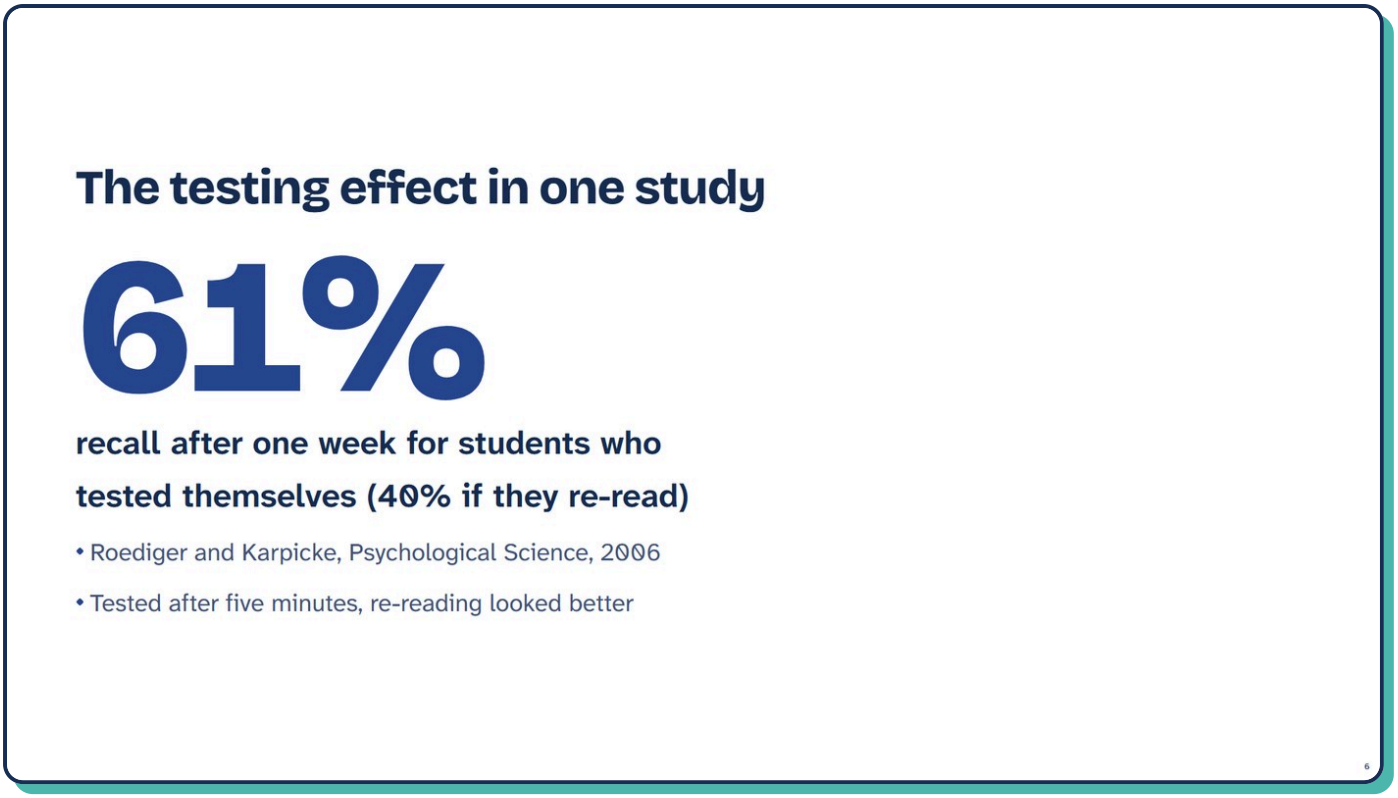


What is active recall?

Teacher notes

Demonstrate blank-page recall: give everyone two minutes to write what they remember from the last slide. Ask: did that feel harder than rereading? That effort is the point.

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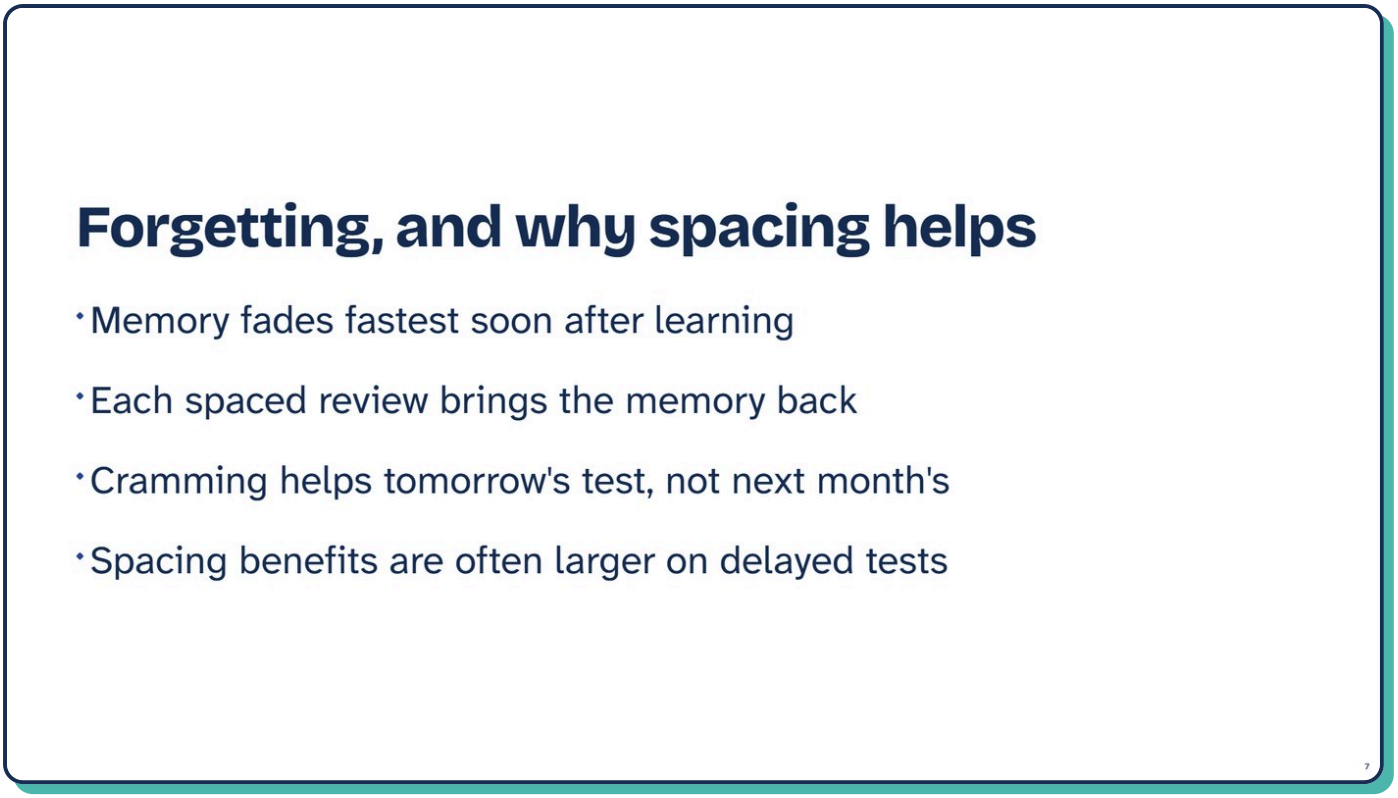


The testing effect in one study

Teacher notes

In the experiment, the self-testing group read the passage about 3.4 times and the re-reading group about 14.2 times, yet the testers remembered more a week later. Ask: why might cramming feel effective the night before a test?

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Forgetting, and why spacing helps

Teacher notes

Sketch a forgetting curve that drops steeply and then levels off, the pattern first described by Hermann Ebbinghaus. Ask: when would a review be most useful, just after class or a few days later? A few days later, when recall takes effort.

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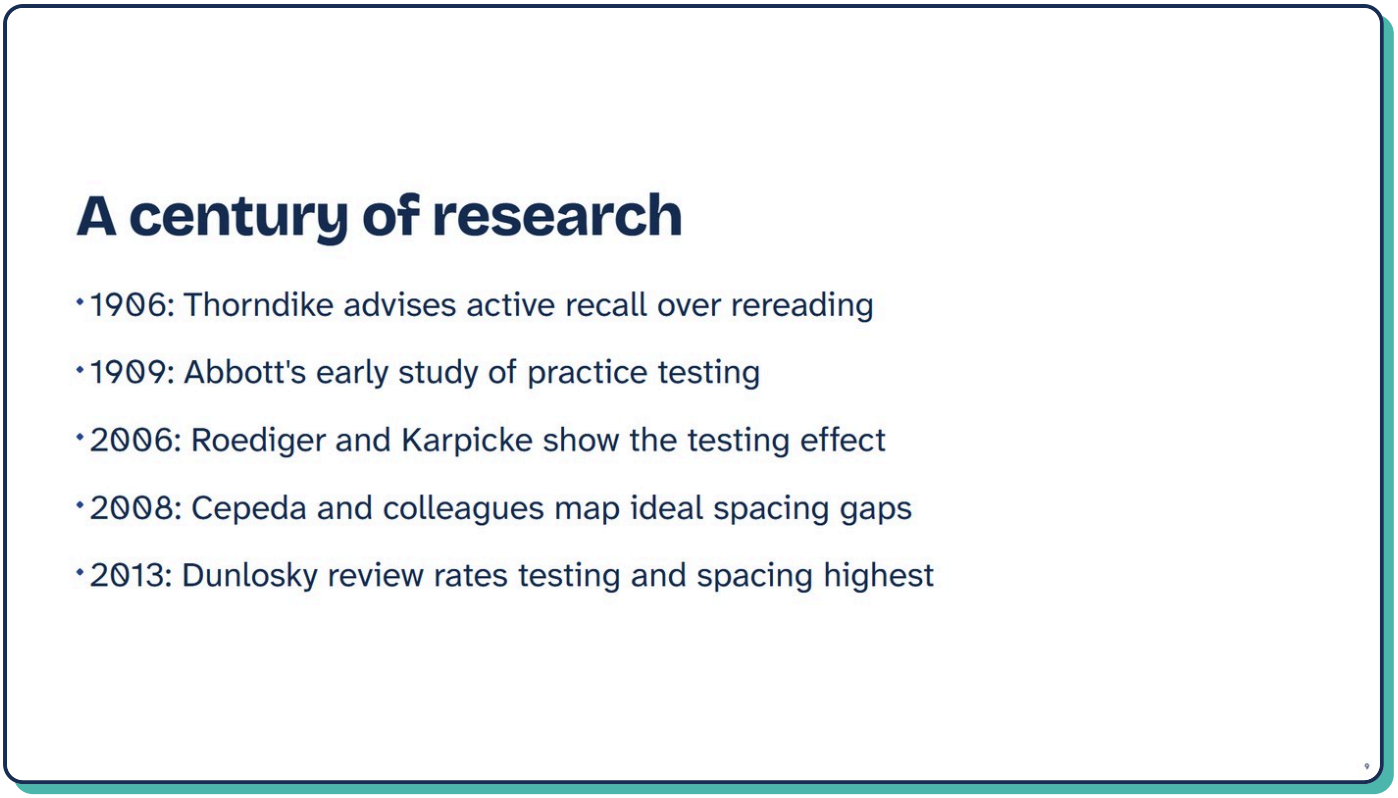


How far apart should reviews be?

Teacher notes

These figures come from a study of more than 1,350 learners by Cepeda and colleagues (Psychological Science, 2008). As the goal gets longer, the best gap gets longer too, but becomes a smaller share of the goal. For a test 35 days away, the best gap they tested was 11 days. Ask students: for an exam 60 days away, would you review daily, every week or two, or once after a month? Every week or two is the sensible choice.

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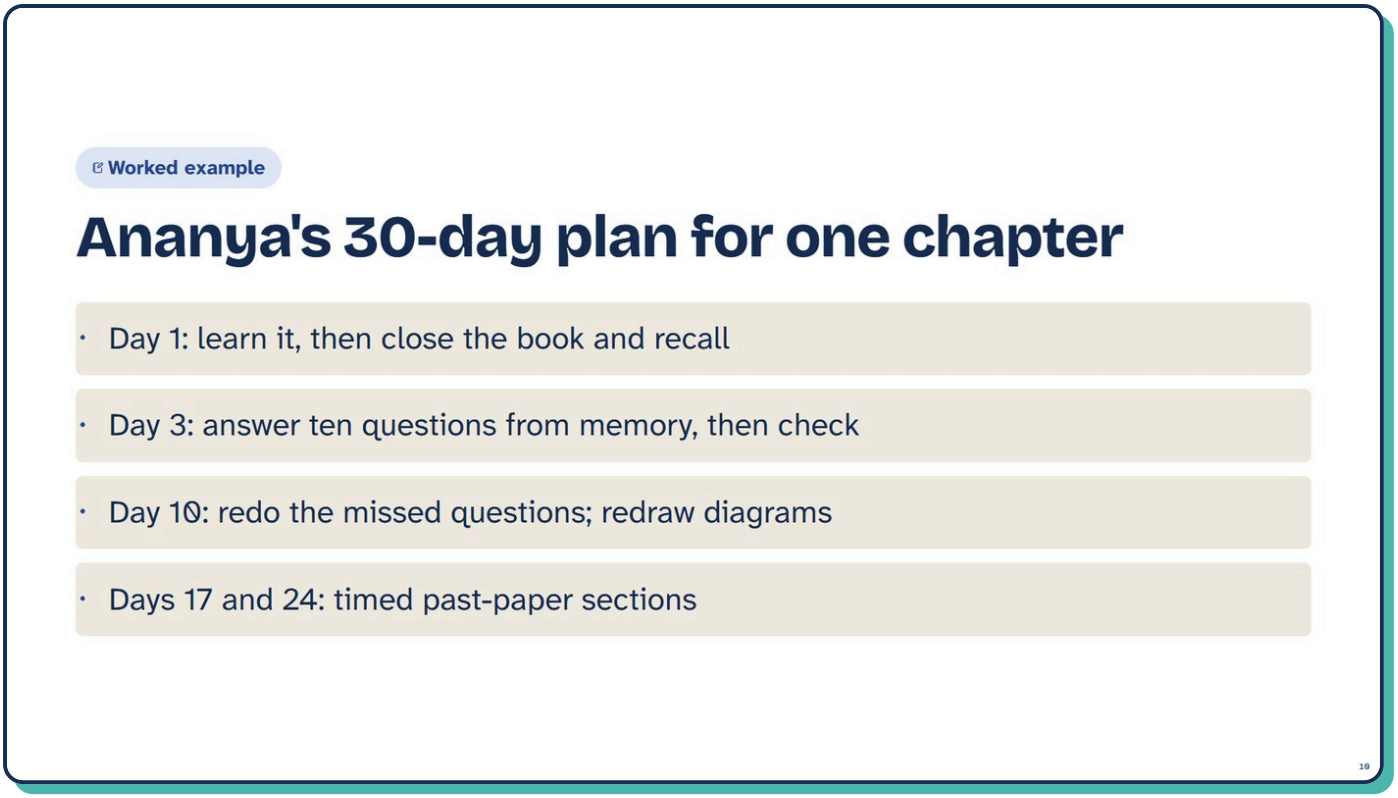


A century of research

Teacher notes

Stress that these ideas are not a new trend: the Dunlosky review describes more than 100 years of research on practice testing. Ask: why might schools still rely mostly on rereading and notes?

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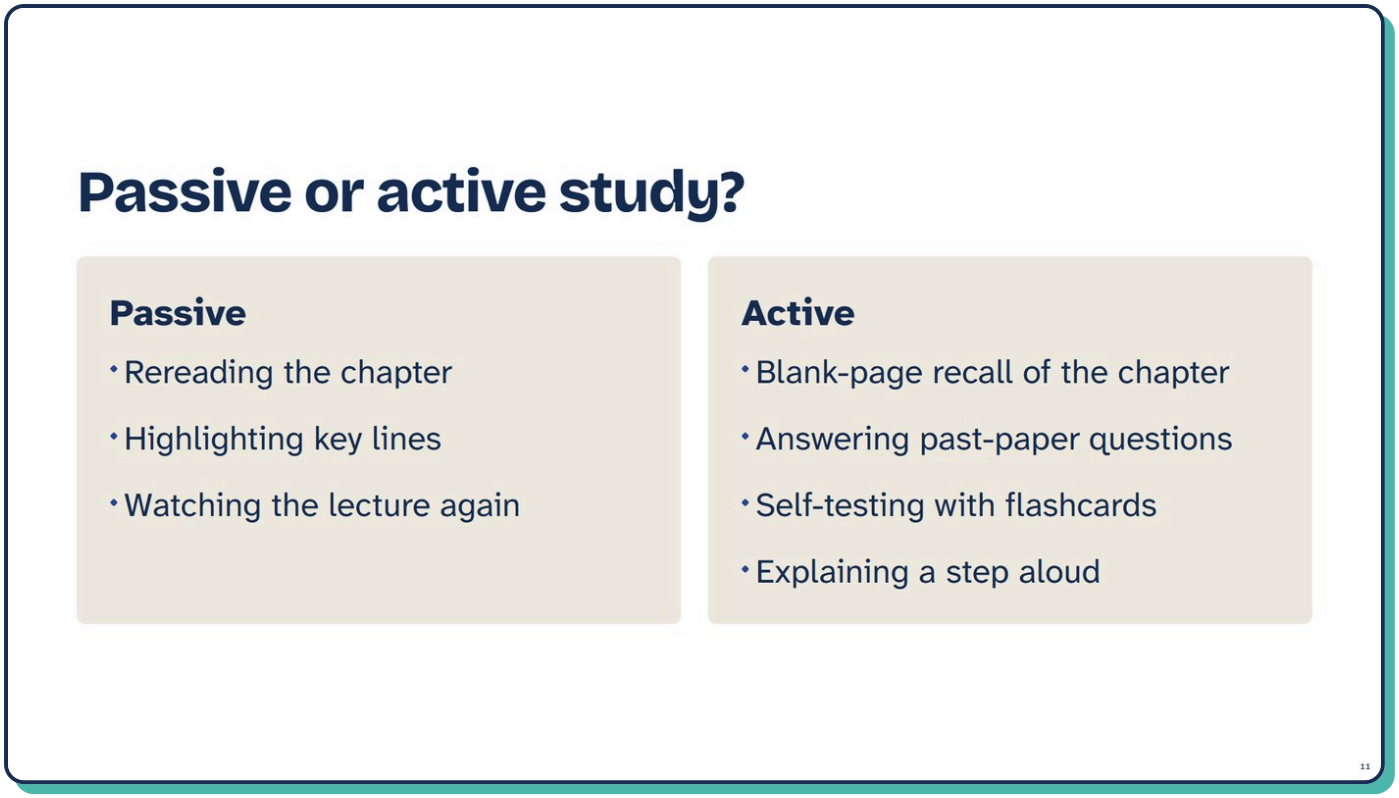


Ananya's 30-day plan for one chapter

Teacher notes

After a quick first check on Day 3, the gaps settle at about a week, which fits the research for an exam a month away. Ask students to draft the same plan for one chapter of their own. A common mistake is to reread on review days instead of testing.

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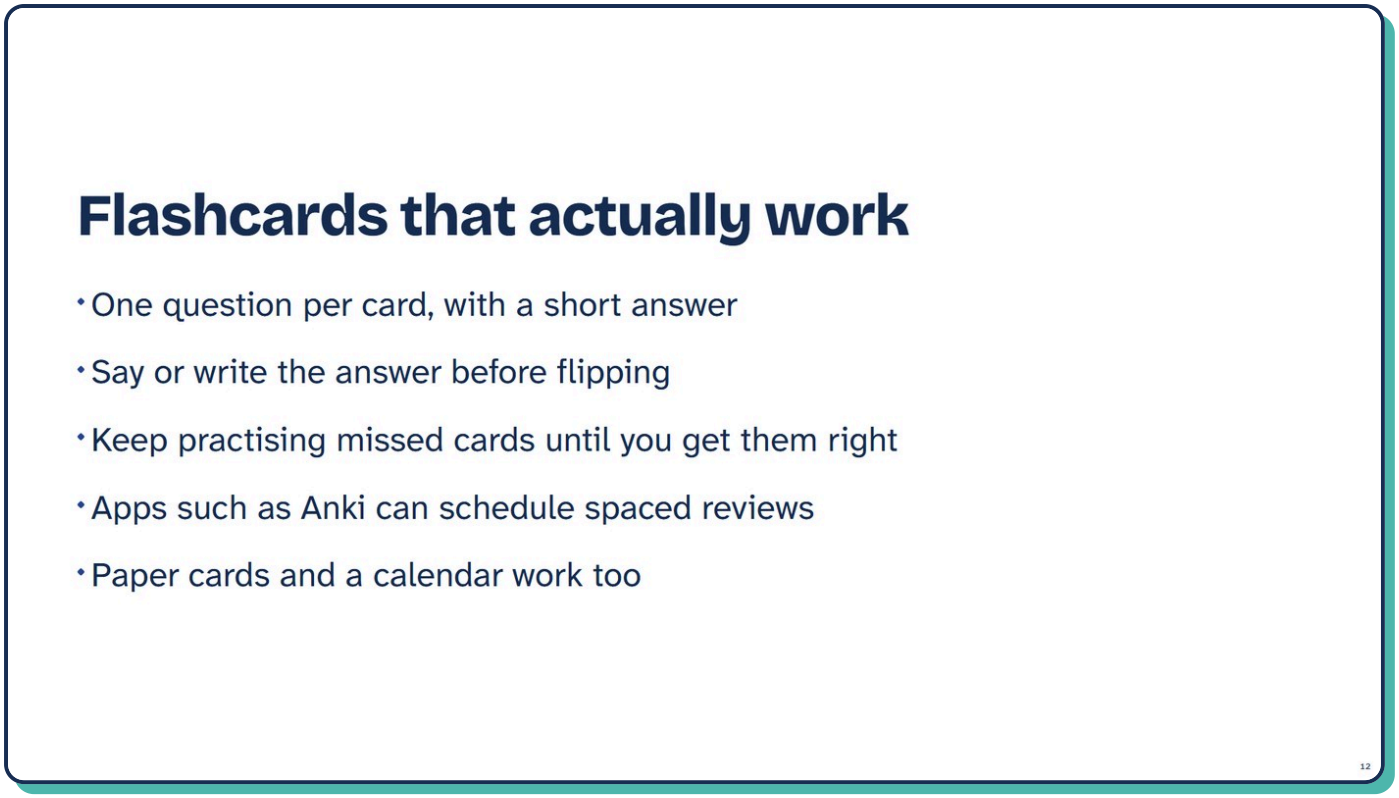


Passive or active study?

Teacher notes

Ask students to convert one passive habit into an active one, for example turning highlights into questions. Passive methods feel smoother, which is why they are so popular.

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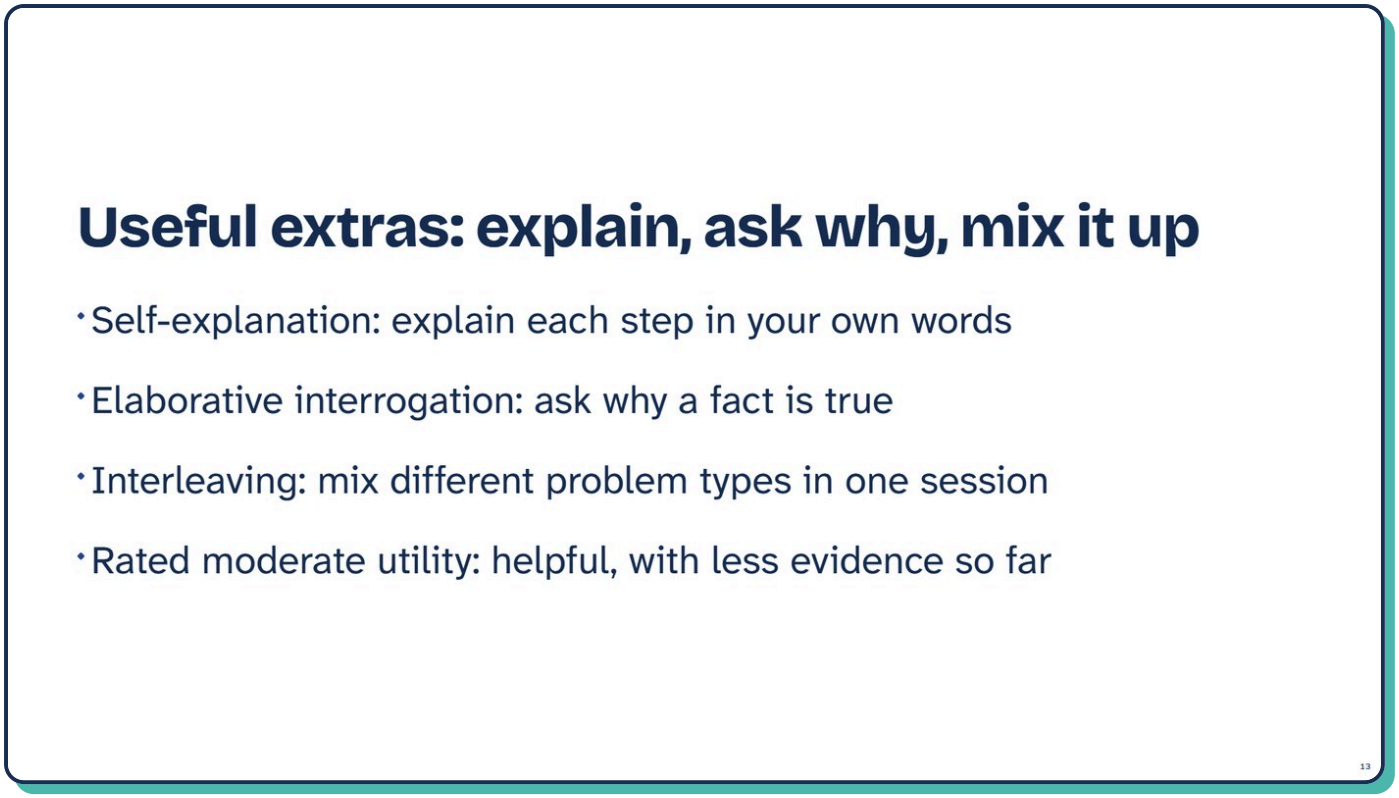


Flashcards that actually work

Teacher notes

Show one bad card (a whole paragraph) and one good card (a single question). Ask: why does answering before flipping matter? Flipping first turns recall back into rereading.

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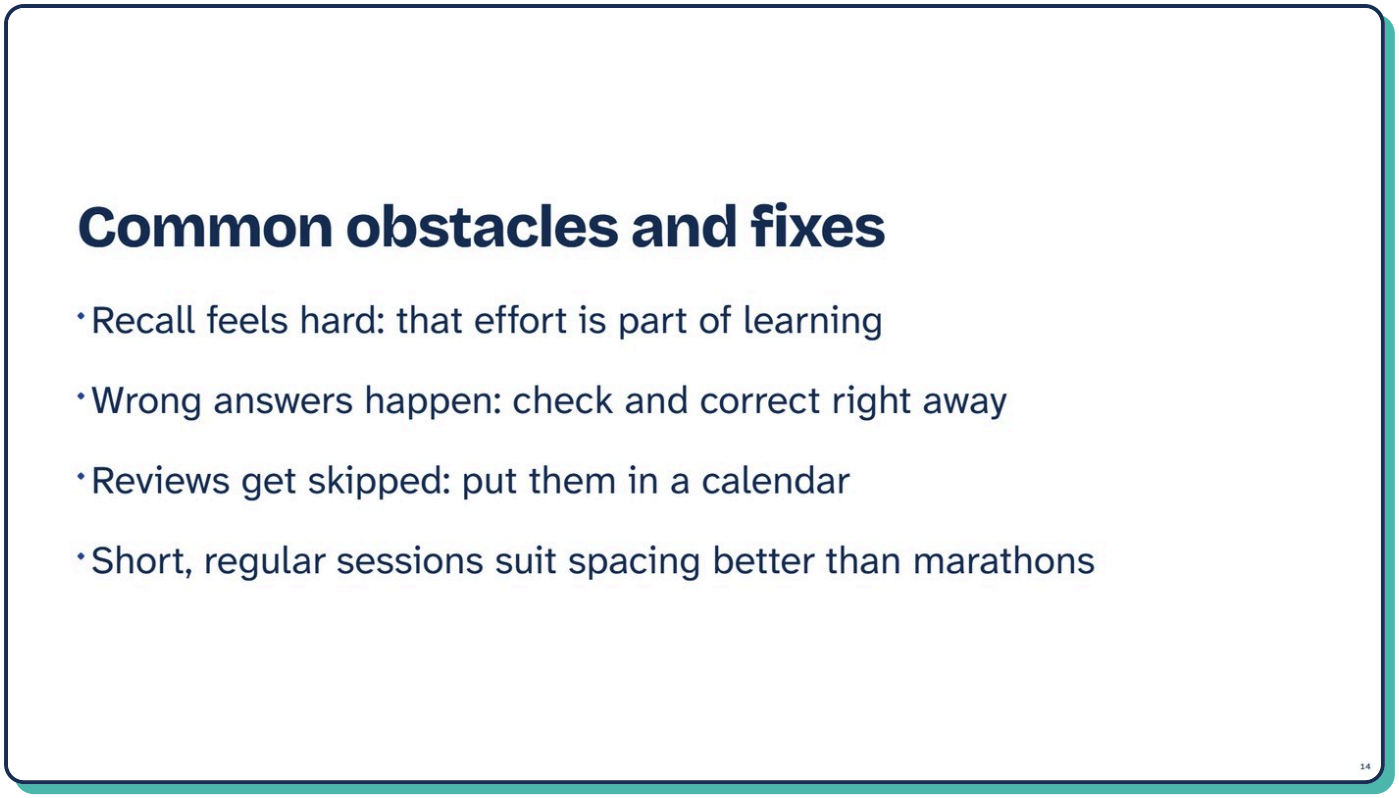


Useful extras: explain, ask why, mix it up

Teacher notes

In maths, interleaving means mixing questions from several chapters instead of doing twenty of one kind. Ask: why might mixed practice feel harder but help in an exam? You must first decide which method a question needs.

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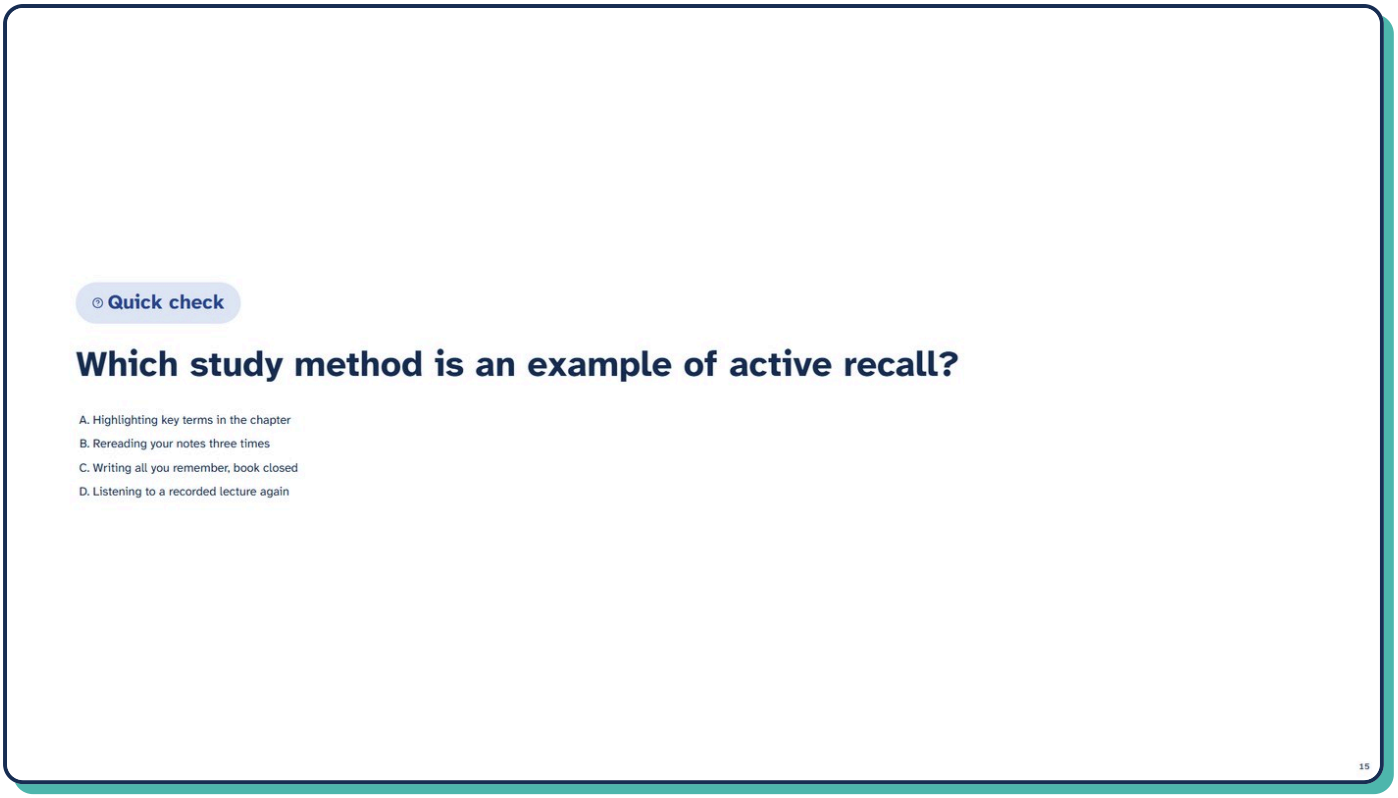


Common obstacles and fixes

Teacher notes

Reassure students that forgetting a card is normal and useful feedback. Ask each student to name one obstacle they expect and one fix they will try this week.

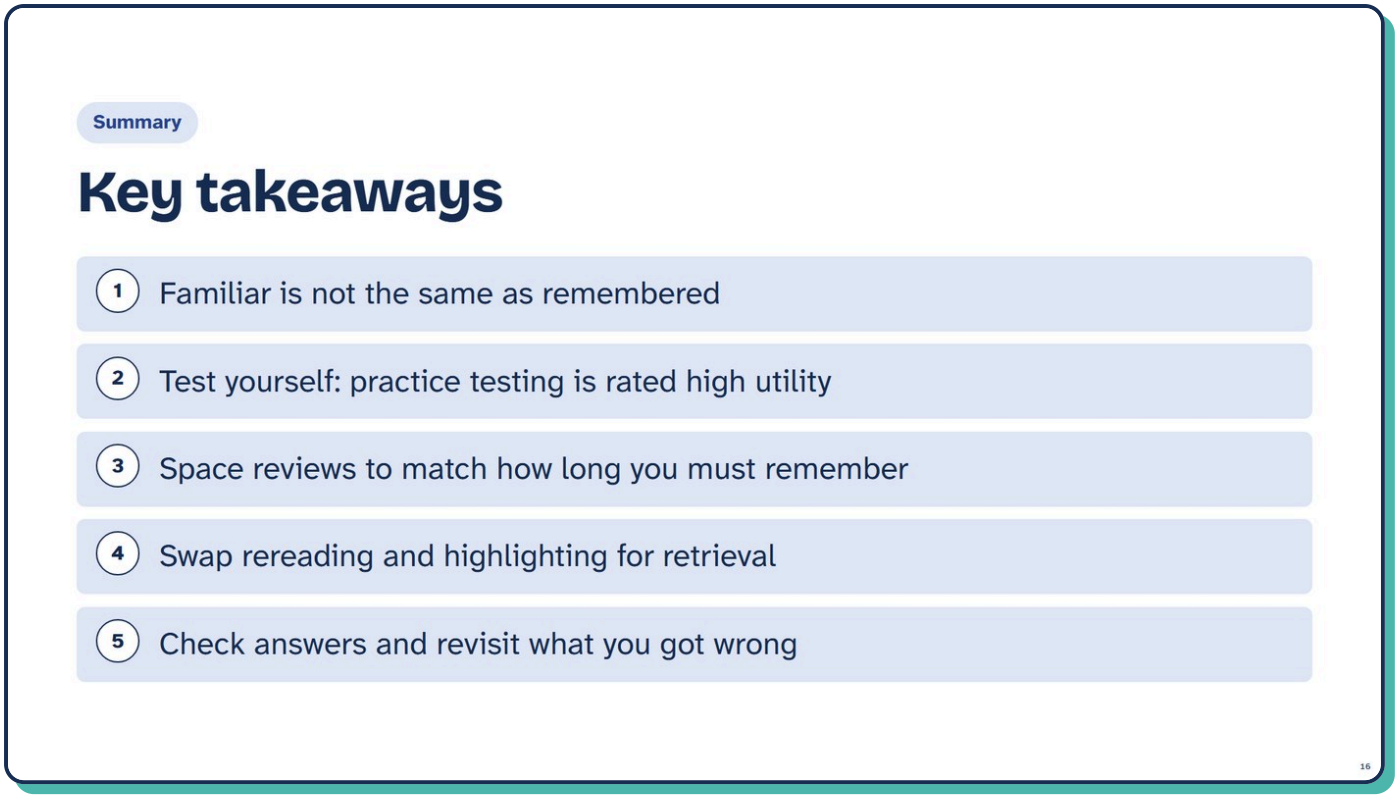
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Quick check

Teacher notes

Answer: C, writing everything you remember with the book closed. The other three are passive review. Take a show of hands before revealing the answer.



Key takeaways

Teacher notes

Ask every student to write three recall questions on today's session and answer them tomorrow without notes. Then take the five-question quiz on the page.

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