# Spaced Practice

Spaced practice is a learning technique that involves spreading out study or practice sessions over time rather than cramming all the material into a single session. Spaced practice has been found to enhance long-term retention and understanding. Here are a few ideas to get you started on spaced practice in teaching.

## SPACED PRACTICE

### KEY TERMS:

* Spacing: the act of presenting information over spaced intervals
* Retrieval practice: recalling information from memory
* Optimal timing: shorter, more frequent study sessions

### What is Spaced Practice?

Spaced practice is a learning technique that involves spreading out study or practice sessions over time rather than cramming all the material into a single session. The UC San Diego Department of Psychology further defines these spaced out study sessions to become shorter and shorter. They say, “By repeatedly revisiting course materials over multiple sessions, you will be able to more effectively encode that information into long-term memory, fill in any gaps in your knowledge, and be better equipped to use that information on the next exam.”

This strategy capitalizes on psychological principles of memory retention. So, spaced practice has been found to enhance long-term retention and understanding. Here are some elements of spaced practice.

Elements of Spaced Practice:

* Spacing → information is better retained when it is presented over spaced intervals. This is in contrast to massed practice where information is presented in a short amount of time (such as cramming it all in one learning session).
* Retrieval practice → the act of recalling information from memory. The effort in retrieving information enhances learning and strengthens memory.
* Optimal timing → research suggests that shorter, more frequent study sessions with intervals of rest between them are more effective than one long, continuous study session. The timing of these intervals is crucial.

Spaced Practice

Anon. Spaced *Practice*. (n.d.). UC San Diego Department of Psychology. https://psychology.ucsd.edu/undergraduate-program/undergraduate-resources/academic-writing-resources/effective-studying/spaced-practice.html

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### How Can We Implement Spaced Practice?

This all sounds great, and of course it’s our goal as teachers to help transfer knowledge to students that they will retain and use for the rest of their life rather than just for the test. How exactly can we apply spaced practice in our classroom? Here are a few ideas to get you started on spaced practice in teaching.

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Create a Study Schedule

First, create a study schedule for your lessons that will cover material throughout a series of lessons. This can also be done by just putting little nuggets of knowledge to review throughout the school year. Not only will this help you as a teacher, but it will also model this effective study skill to your students. Encourage them to create a study schedule that involves reviewing material over several sessions with intervals of rest in between.

Incorporate Retrieval Practices

Retrieval practices are ways to get students to practice doing what they can or recalling information without looking at it in their notes or text. It’s a way to strengthen their memory so they can do it on their own without aid. Some examples of this are quizzes, flashcards, brain dumps, or other activities that prompt students to recall information from memory.

Use Technology

Part of living in the 21st Century is dealing with and implementing technology wherever we go. There are online platforms and apps that can be designed to deliver content in a spaced manner. For example, you could use technology to create your study schedule and put reminders in your phone to review or learn a new concept.

Monitor Progress

To manage spaced practice effectively, use regular assessments to monitor students’ progress. This way, you can be aware of any adjustments to space the learning activities accordingly. Monitoring helps ensure that the material is revisited at optimal intervals.

So, spaced practice is a powerful teaching and learning strategy that teachers can use to help students build a more robust and enduring understanding of the content. Using these elements of spaced practice will help you and your students benefit from spaced practice.

### So What?

In conclusion, spaced practice should be used in schools because of the long-term benefits. Spaced practice has been shown to be highly effective in education because it improves long-term retention, optimizes memory consolidation, enhances retrieval practice and facilitates the transfer of learning to different contexts. Repeated exposure to information helps learners generalize their knowledge. It also allows for better time management and minimizes the risk of burnout for students and teachers. So ask yourself, how will you apply spaced practice in your classroom?

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