Previewing. When encountering new material it can be helpful to have a mental framework, a sort of guide-map, if you will. The process of becoming familiar with material before exposure is previewing. It is a very powerful technique which can help you better master new material.

Steps for Previewing:
1. Begin by asking questions. Why is this information important? What do I know about this topic?
2. What are the Learning Objectives? Get a sense for what you are to get out of the material.
3. Read the general summary and the major subheadings, and take in the pictures/graphs.
4. Compile a list of questions before you dig into the material.

Using Textbooks Effectively. Focused reading, in which the student reads only a part of the text to clarify a topic, is common in an academic program. This is because of time constraints that typically preclude a cover-to-cover reading of course textbooks. To get the most out of a text:
- Preview chapters
- Get an understanding of the format of the chapter before you begin
- Read with a purpose (e.g., to answer questions)
- Look up unfamiliar vocabulary
- Look for relationships between information
- Try to summarize the main ideas when you are done.
- Monitor your concentration.
- Ask yourself, “Do I need to consult another resource about this topic?”
- Highlight, take notes, or annotate if it will make the information more memorable.

Memory Strategies.
Getting information in and making sure it stays there takes quite a bit of effort. Besides rehearsal (repetition - which is not the best strategy because information learned this way tends to be forgotten), creating meaning is a powerful strategy. Connecting ideas and concepts and/or adding new information to already learned frameworks is a powerful way to make sure you retain information in the short and long-run. Other strategies include elaboration (expanding on information), integration (combining information), and using clinical examples and mnemonics. Info on medical mnemonics can be found in a variety of books and on the internet (e.g., http://www.medicalmnemonics.com; http://www.studynow.com/mnemonics).

Ellis (2000) in The Master Student, recommends the following additional memory techniques:

Learn from the general to the specific
Write it down
Reduce interference
Use daylight - some people concentrate better during the day
Distribute your learning - avoid the marathon study sessions if possible
Be aware of your attitude - negative attitudes can affect learning
To facilitate recall, remember something similar or related

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