The Three R’s of Memory

RETENTION
RECALL
RECOGNITION

I. RETENTION refers to the basic ability to keep the traces of past experiences available in our minds.

1) For most types of learning, one should learn facts and ideas in the same order or logical organization in which one will most probably wish to reproduce them at a later time.
2) General principles and meanings tend to be retained much better than isolated details.
3) The more significance you attach to whatever you are learning, and the more you value it, the greater will be the likelihood of effective retention.
4) You should concentrate on learning basic principles before attempting to master the details.
5) Retention is also facilitated by full attention.
6) Learning with the explicit declaration of intent to remember seems to strengthen retention of specific material.

II. RECALL is the power to reproduce correctly and to apply previous learning to subsequent problems and situations.

The principal methods of facilitating recall are:

1) development of enthusiastic interest in the subject matter.
2) learning with intention to recall.
3) evaluation of learning material, especially with the use of comparison and contrast.
4) concentration of attention.
5) spaced repetition of principles and facts.
6) logical organization of subject matter.
7) application of the learning material.

III. RECOGNITION is implicit in recall, for the student recognizes the identity or meaning of what he remembers.

1) Recognition starts with a feeling of familiarity as you realize that you have previously encountered a particular idea or its opposite.
2) By means of comparison and contrast, you associate the feeling of familiarity with past experiences and then recall the entire set of ideas into which the feeling of familiarity falls.
3) Association of facts with personal interests helps recognition and recall.
4) Recognition is easier than recall because the presentation of alternatives provides cues to the correct responses.

* Smith, Samuel, Best Methods of Study.