

# WHAT HELPS LEARNING?

3 Sneaky Causes of Failure at Learning

5 Principles That Work and That Are Worth Sharing

How to Learn Is Learnable – What 3 Students Wrote about Their Own Learning

## 3 Sneaky Causes of Failure at Learning

Failure at learning comes when people don't ask themselves these 3 questions about the methods they use (or habits they have):

1. If I keep using this method, *how* will I know if I am wrong? FYI: Sooner or later you will be wrong. Example: taking notes in a **separate** notebook instead of writing your notes in your book. If you don't know why this fails, ask me.
2. If I keep using this method, will I finish in time to meet the schedule?
3. If I keep using this method and get good at it, will anyone want to hire me at a decent salary?

Make sure you look at your habits--you can choose habits that match the person you plan to be.

## 5 Principles That Work and That Are Worth Sharing

A brief list quoted by Kathleen F. Gabriel highlights fundamental principles of how to help learning. The ones I have bolded are things that this course tries to do to help you.

1. What and how much is learned in any situation depends **heavily on prior knowledge and experience**.
2. Learning is generally enhanced when learners are required to take information that is presented in one format and "**re-represent**" it in an **alternative** format. [bold added]
3. Varying conditions under which learning takes place makes learning harder for learners but **results in better learning**. [bold added]
4. The single **most important variable** in promoting **long-term retention and transfer** is practice in **retrieval**. [bold added]
5. Learning is influenced by both students' and our own [the professors'] epistemologies . (pp. 38-39)

The author: Kathleen F. Gabriel is the author of *Teaching Unprepared Students: Strategies for Promoting Success and Retention in Higher Education*. The quotation is on page 67.

She places this introduction just before the quotation: "As a complement to the investigation of learning styles and learning approaches, it is **also helpful to share with students some of the research findings on how people learn**. In their article 'Applying the Science of Learning,' Halpern and Hakel (2003) discuss **10 'basic laboratory-tested principles drawn from what we know about human learning'** (p. 38). My favorite five to discuss with students are...." [bold added]

## How to Learn Is Learnable – What 3 Students Wrote about Their Own Learning

I love history because history (and some wonderful experiences and colleagues) taught me to think. Seeing how my professors learned and having them invest in me made a difference for me. I am glad to help any of you as they helped me.

The methods I use worked for me and they match research in learning as well. They may help you.

These students were kind enough to write to me so I'm sharing their statements about how to learn is learnable. I've separated their statements with the ---- line. I have added **bold** in their statements.

-----Student 1-----

I first wanted to thank you for all that you did for me when I was your student. I do not know if I ever fully expressed this to you but you really made a huge impact on me and my approach to learning. Your dedication and willingness to go above and beyond for your students inspired me to truly give 110% of my effort. (Up until that point I did not do that; I was able to do well in the majority of my classes giving the bare minimum). The methods you taught us to **really understand the information we were faced with versus rote memorization** completely **changed the way that I learn** and **I still use that approach today...**

I want you to know that had you not invested in me like you did and given me the confidence that I can succeed in life I do not think I would be where I am today or even be the person I have become.

-----Student 2-----

I just wanted to let you know, that the **skills I learned in your class especially essay writing**, paid off in my geology class in spades. My teacher lets us answer 3 essay questions for bonus points for our test. He gave us a possible of 8 ?, out of those 8 Five showed up on the test, I could pick any 3 of those. I nailed my essays.

From a second email: - I remember last semester being lost by all the different types of information but my meetings with you **helped me see how you presented the information** and it started to click and **became a great source of information tools**. But it was a **change in learning styles and I had to go through that process of adjusting to change**.

-----Student 3-----

To tell you the truth, I will be a better teacher myself having had been in your classes! I have taught my 13 year old **how to read more efficiently** and her grades have improved substantially over the past year!

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**WCJC Department:** History – Dr. Bibus  
**Contact Information:** 281.239.1577 or [bibusc@wcjc.edu](mailto:bibusc@wcjc.edu)  
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**WCJC Home:** <http://www.wcjc.edu/>