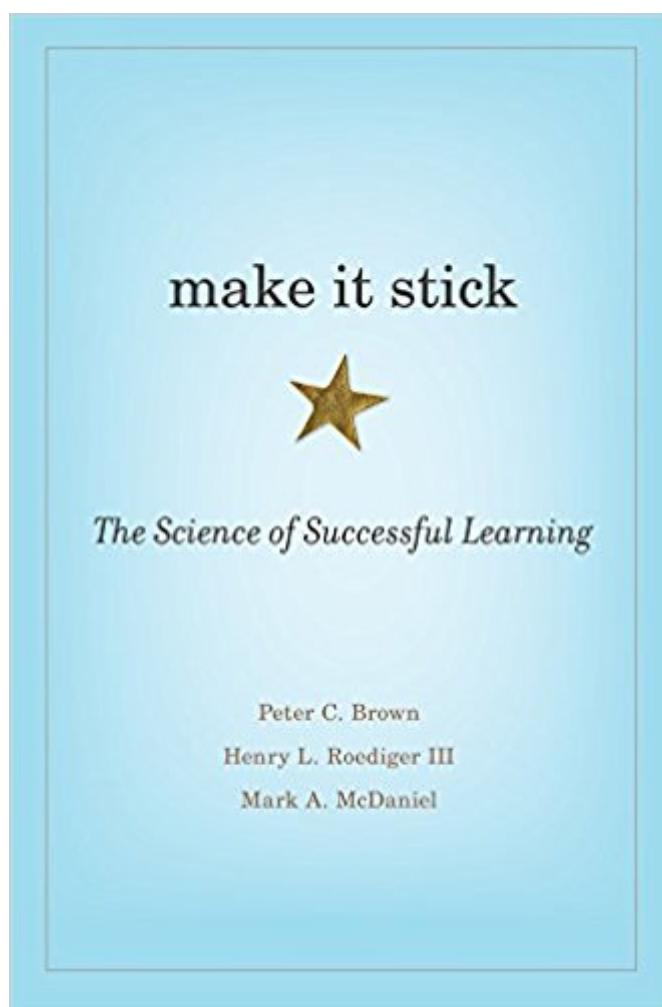


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# Make It Stick: The Science Of Successful Learning



## **Synopsis**

To most of us, learning something "the hard way" implies wasted time and effort. Good teaching, we believe, should be creatively tailored to the different learning styles of students and should use strategies that make learning easier. *Make It Stick* turns fashionable ideas like these on their head. Drawing on recent discoveries in cognitive psychology and other disciplines, the authors offer concrete techniques for becoming more productive learners. Memory plays a central role in our ability to carry out complex cognitive tasks, such as applying knowledge to problems never before encountered and drawing inferences from facts already known. New insights into how memory is encoded, consolidated, and later retrieved have led to a better understanding of how we learn. Grappling with the impediments that make learning challenging leads both to more complex mastery and better retention of what was learned. Many common study habits and practice routines turn out to be counterproductive. Underlining and highlighting, rereading, cramming, and single-minded repetition of new skills create the illusion of mastery, but gains fade quickly. More complex and durable learning come from self-testing, introducing certain difficulties in practice, waiting to re-study new material until a little forgetting has set in, and interleaving the practice of one skill or topic with another. Speaking most urgently to students, teachers, trainers, and athletes, *Make It Stick* will appeal to all those interested in the challenge of lifelong learning and self-improvement.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

If you want to read a lively and engaging book on the science of learning, this is a must-read!

Make It Stick benefits greatly from its use of stories about people who have achieved mastery of complex knowledge and skills. Over the course of the book, the authors weave together stories from an array of learners—surgeons, pilots, gardeners, and school and university students—to illustrate their arguments about how successful learning takes place. This is a rich and resonant book and a pleasurable read that will leave you pondering the processes through which you, and your students, acquire new knowledge and skills. (Hazel Christie Times Higher Education 2014-04-03) Many educators are interested in making use of recent findings about the human brain and how we learn. Make It Stick [is] the single best work I have encountered on the subject. Anyone with an interest in teaching or learning will benefit from reading this book, which not only presents thoroughly grounded research but does so in an eminently readable way that is accessible even to students. (James M. Lang Chronicle of Higher Education 2014-04-23) Aimed primarily at students, parents, and teachers, Make It Stick also offers practical advice for learners of all ages, at all stages of life. With its credible challenge to conventional wisdom, Make It Stick does point the way forward, with a very real prospect of tangible and enduring benefits. (Glenn C. Altschuler Psychology Today 2014-04-10) Presents a compelling case for why we are attracted to the wrong strategies for learning and teaching and what we can do to remedy our approaches. In clear language, Make It Stick explains the science underlying how people learn. But the authors don't simply recite the research; they show readers how it is applied in real-life learning scenarios, with engaging stories of real people in academic, professional, and sports environments. The learning strategies proposed in this book can be implemented immediately, at no cost, and to great effect. Make It Stick will help you become a much more productive learner. (Stephanie Castellano TD Magazine 2014-11-08) If I could, I would assign all professors charged with teaching undergraduates one book: Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning. It lays out what we know about the science of learning in clear, accessible prose. Every educator and parent, and student, and professional ought to have it on their own personal syllabus. (Annie Murphy Paul The Brilliant blog 2014-02-07) This is a quite remarkable book. It describes important research findings with startling implications for how we can improve our own learning, teaching, and coaching. Even more, it shows us how more positive attitudes toward our own abilities and the willingness to tackle the hard stuff enables us to achieve our goals. The compelling stories bring the ideas out of the lab and into the real world. (Robert Bjork, University of California, Los Angeles) Learning is essential and life-long. Yet as these authors argue convincingly, people often use exactly the wrong strategies and don't appreciate the ones that work. We've learned a lot in the last decade about

applying cognitive science to real-world learning, and this book combines everyday examples with clear explanations of the research. It's easy to read and should be easy to learn from, too! (Daniel L. Schacter, author of *The Seven Sins of Memory*) For a deeper dig into the science of learning, make sure to pick up *Make It Stick*. It's an illuminating read. (Drake Baer Business Insider 2014-06-18)

Peter C. Brown is a writer and novelist in St. Paul, Minnesota. Henry L. Roediger III is James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor of Psychology at Washington University in St. Louis. Mark A. McDaniel is Professor of Psychology and Director of the Center for Integrative Research on Cognition, Learning, and Education (CIRCLE) at Washington University in St. Louis.

Okay, well maybe I am overstating that a little. But the main "thesis" of Peter Brown's book - aside from being a summary of what cognitive science data shows about how we learn - is basically that many of the things we often assume about learning are wrong. Here are some of them: we learn best by reading and rereading a passage until we really understand it. WRONG! We learn best when we isolate a skill and practice it over and over again. WRONG! We all have learning styles that are the way we learn best. WRONG! IQ (or something like it) imposes relatively firm limits on how much information we can absorb. WRONG! In this pretty easy-reading book, Peter Brown summarizes some of the latest findings in cognitive science, and many of these findings contradict what is often assumed about learning. First, many k-12 and college students are taught to (and do) use the 'reread and highlight' method to try and absorb content. Well, while this works to an extent, it leads more to an illusion of mastery than mastery. What works better? Read the content and quiz yourself; information retrieval is the key. Retrieving helps to build stronger connections in the brain that will lock information into memory. What's more - and this is another chapter - the harder the retrieval, the stronger your retention of what is retrieved. (So, writing a short essay recalling the concepts works better than true/false and multiple choice recall.) Another myth? While we all certainly have learning preferences (I like to receive my information in written form), that doesn't mean we learn best when receiving information in that form (I can do as well when I receive information audibly as when it is written, even though I prefer the latter). Brown reviews literature that shows that, at least as of now, there is no evidence that shows that how one receives information substantially affects how well we learn the material (after all, hearing or reading a phone number is immaterial to what I am remembering: not the sound or sight of the number, but the number itself). But what they do find is that whether one is an "example learner" or a "rule learner"

does have an impact in how well one learns. That is, those who see and practice a math problem and are able to see what the rules are behind the example and commit the rule, rather than the example, to memory will tend to learn better. Also, another factor that affects how well we learn is our mindset, whether we learn for mastery or learn for performance. Those who learn for performance - so that they can show how good they are - tend to tackle learning new things (things that might make them look bad) with trepidation, but those who learn for mastery aspire to acquire new skills openly, without regard to whether they will fail before mastering. These are just some of the lessons from this book. Whether you are a student, teacher, professor, coach, trainer, or any other professional whose job entails teaching others, this is a good book to have. (I'm a professor in a College of Education, and I definitely plan on allowing what I've gleaned from this book to inform my practice.) It is quite informative not only by way of learning theory, but backs up the theory with both empirics and suggestions for practice. Good one.

Is there anything new in this book? I believe there is sage advice in it for many of us. That our brains adapt is good but also bad for studying. We become bored. For many of us, we were never taught how our minds work and how we should leverage its natural processes to learn. Sometimes, practice or studying feels painfully slow and we often switch to another method that feels good. Unfortunately, we often fail at assessing how much we're learning and have actually learned. Some students were never taught how to learn, and had few, if any, good teachers/mentors. Some teachers were never taught how to teach, and have forgotten what it was like to be a student. This book is for those both groups. The examples and advice for teachers and corporate trainers is also well written and useful. If you have had good teachers or learning exemplars, you might find this book less valuable than will most people.

**SUMMARY: PROs:** This book will show you how to structure your learning and assessment processes to learn and confirm you're actually retaining the material. It provides 27 pages of endnotes on scientific studies that support its recommendations. Having read and applied the principles of both MIS and WSSK (see below), I can say they do work, very well.

**CONS:** Be prepared to look for what you want. Most of us will focus on the prescriptions of Chapter 8: e.g. avoid rereading as a primary study method, and do use the blank paper assessment test, etc..=====While reading, I noticed two points made by the authors that will shape your experience: 1) page ix in the Preface: "first author is a storyteller" 2) page 200: "early readers (of the book draft) urged the author to get specific with practical advice" I agree with reviewers Soumen, T. Pagni, Economist: yes, the book could've been much shorter and focused on the advice. I also agree with the numerous reviewers who praise it: yes it provides excellent practical insight into the

best ways to learn (both physical and mental tasks). I will now use the book to evaluate the book. 1) Interpret/Elaborate/Infer from what I'm reading: Why is a storyteller the first author? I'm glad they told me. I'm now prepared to wade through long winded stories to find the main points. 2) Find the underlying rules/principles in what I've read: - Allow time to forget. You MUST give yourself time to partially, but not completely, forget the material. Then give yourself time to struggle with recalling it. - Effortful (i.e. NOT effortless!) recall is good. It dramatically increases retention. - sustained, deliberate practice, even when it feels ponderous, is helping me learn- Trust the process of study, forget, retrieve. - Reflection is a form of retrieval practice. 3) Scatter/Vary/Mix the information while you're studying it. By mixing the precepts in with the stories, the patterns were harder to see. I had to pick up the book several times because I was so annoyed by all the storytelling. However, DURING REFLECTION away from the text, I realized they were deliberately embedding kernels in the stories and forcing me to look for them. Upon revisiting the material, I found myself \*wanting\* to find and connect the ideas spread across the stories and the book. Clever, and more effective than giving me a list to memorize. During retrieval practice, I actually started remembering some of the advice from the stories, moreso than from the explicit recommendations. 4) Change the material BEFORE you've mastered it in that session. What are they trying to teach me? Sometimes before they "got to the point", they switched to yet another story (!) This made me really focus on connecting what I read previously to what I was currentl reading. Thankfully, the chapters often end with a "Takeaways" section. **RELATE IT TO WHAT I ALREADY KNOW:** I consider this book (MIS) a valuable complement to *What Smart Students Know* by A. Robinson (WSSK). WSSK tells you in much greater detail what to do while you are a matriculating student i.e. how to approach the conventional schooling process, how to assess class/book structure, how to relate the material to what you've learned, what specifically you should during the pre-study, study and post-study periods. MIS does present specific study methods but it also presents the bigger picture of learning: Why the "learn via re-reading" intuition is wrong, yet feels right. Why the "learn via struggling" process is right, yet feels wrong. In general, WSSK fully develops the terse advice of MIS p207: Elaborate/question/interpret what you're reading. MIS fully develops the terse advice WSSK p118: Quiz yourself Periodically. Both are excellent resources for improving your habits for studying from books. Personally, the advice in this book is worth far more than the cost of \$21, and a few hours of reading, reflection and note-taking that I paid for it. I do recommend you buy it and apply its principles, even to itself.

So I read about 10-20 reviews of this book because it sounded very interesting. I came to this conclusion. It probably has some good info but it's surrounded by hundreds of pages of fluff. If you

read a lot of books about learning new skills or other nonfiction, you know this to be a FAR too common theme among newer books. It's like they can't sell it if it doesn't reach 300 pages. No one will pay for a well written concise 20-40 page book. Well, after reading through reviews I found the article this was based on - if you have good google skills, then you should be able to find the PDF for free (I did): What Works, What Doesn't - Some study techniques accelerate learning, whereas other are just a waste of time - The Scientific American Mind (mind.scientificamerican.com) - by John Dunlosky, Katherine Rawon, Elizabeth Marsh, Mitchell Nathan and Daniel Willingham. This is a little 6 page article which seems to explain >80% of the key points listed in this book. Glad I read it and saved tons of time!

I really like this book because it was based on scientifically proven methods of learning. I'm in a very tough program at school and the methods that this book has suggested has brought me from C's to A's.

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