



Hi graduate friends,

Happy holidays! I hope you've been able to rest, or that you will have the opportunity to do so before the term starts! Right before the new year, there is always a lot of talk about making changes. So, I'm here to quickly give some learning insights you could use to change your upcoming study sessions.

It's very likely that you've heard about the [Pomodoro Technique](#) that promotes studying/working for short amounts of time with quick breaks in between. To study in short sessions, some students use a timer that counts down while others use a timer that counts up. Your choice really. But let me tell you how studying like this can improve your memory.

When Ebbinghaus (1880, 1885) experimented with memory, he realized the ability to remember something on a list depended on where on the list that particular thing was. The items learned at the end of the list were recalled best (the recency effect) and the items at the beginning of the list were recalled better than the items in the middle (the primacy effect). Ebbinghaus only experimented using his own memory, but his experiments were replicated later on and the same results were found (Murre & Dross, 2015).



So, if we transfer this over to you sitting down to study, what you study/work on first and last in your session could stick better in your memory. And by breaking down your long study sessions into shorter ones with mini breaks in between, you are granting yourself more opportunities to learn things first and last (Tipper, 2018). What you learned last may be remembered better in the short term, but what you learned first will be remembered more in the long term (Storm & Bjork, 2016). One way to take advantage of this is to plan to study your most important concepts first, review old material in the middle, and/or go over newly learned material at the end of your session (Cherry, 2021).



Can you think about ways to tweak your study sessions to benefit from the primacy and recency effects?

Best,



Najmeh Keyhani (she/her/hers), PhD, from your [Learning Development & Success](#) team!

**Reference:**

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