

Stage 3 – Processing, Reviewing, Planning

Slides 1-2: Stage 3 is the stage with which most students struggle - or for which they most need to adjust their strategies. Post-lecture processing is best done on the same day as lecture, possibly the next day, but no later than that – when too much time passes between lecture and processing memory of the material falls off pretty steeply. So it is best to do this review and processing shortly after class.

Often the goal of post-lecture review is to complete an outline or study guide that consolidates or synthesizes information from slides, syllabus and/or texts. Such an approach can lead to a couple of problems – the first is that it is a project that is likely to be time and labor intensive, and may be tough to keep up with day in and day out. It can lead to falling behind, or to keeping up but then not having time for more regular practice-based work that incrementally builds over time.

So, the goal here is adjusted – from finishing a comprehensive study guide to writing a summary that reflects your level of understanding, that organizes the material, that identifies questions to address, that identifies best resources to use for review and investigation of questions, and that indicates the next steps in studying on subsequent days.

Slide 3: The post-lecture summary should be brief, but should indicate organization of the material that makes sense to you. Such organization can be in line with the syllabus outline, the slides, the learning objectives, or the way you understand or think through the material.

For example, for biochemistry, you might review a lecture and summarize your understanding of a process or pathway by trying to write what goes in – what comes out – how the process is regulated – and what can go wrong... You can then also make note of where answers to each question can be located in the slides or other resource material.

Slide 4: The adjustment here in the third stage is to focus less on the project of completing a detailed study guide to which you may later return, but to which you often don't get a chance to return to, or to review at all, or not until the days right before an exam.

Copying material into an outline on day one is generally not an efficient way to really learn or remember the material. The goal for this stage, then, is to get to a good foundation of readiness to work with the material going forward – to decide how best to study it (for example, will you want to draw and label diagrams or complete tables or draw pathways or work with flashcards or teach learning objectives to a study partner... or some combination of these) and to decide how best to test yourself as you work with the material in coming days.

This adjustment in goals and expectations for same day processing allows one to create a little more time each day and each week to incorporate practices of reiterative practice-based, question-based self-testing and review – earlier and more often with the goal of incrementally building mastery over time. So next we will discuss strategies for active study and self-testing to be done, spaced out over time in productive sessions of deliberate practice and review.