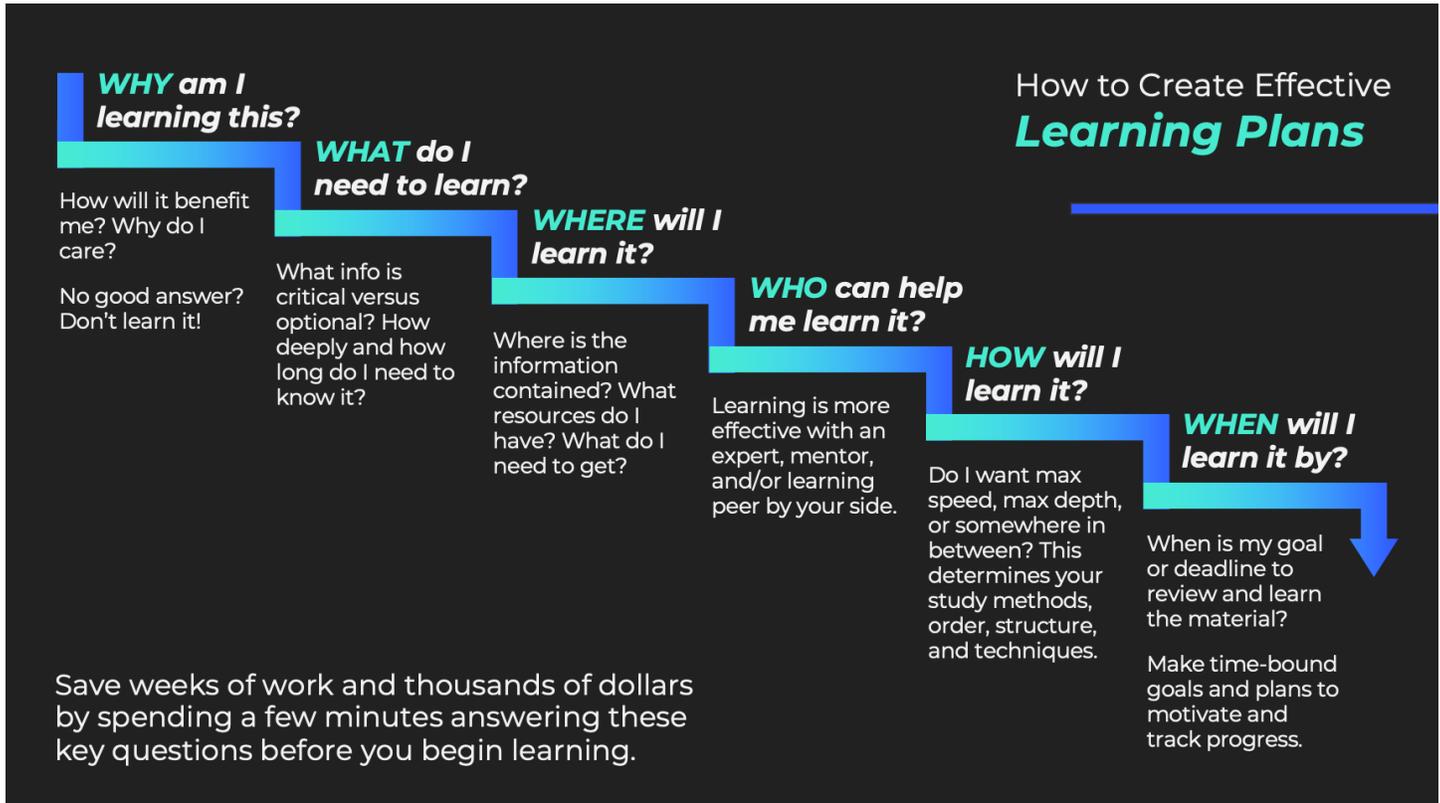




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Self-improving, together.



You're staring at a new book. Maybe you're excited to jump in, maybe you're feeling overwhelm and dread.

Either way, stop, drop, and **make a learning plan**.

Or maybe it's an article, a podcast, or a video. In every learning environment, your learning will be most effective if the first thing you do is create a Learning Plan.

How? Just answer the WHY, WHAT, WHERE, WHO, HOW, and WHEN questions, in that order.

How you answer those questions changes a lot about how best to approach your learning. Your answers might even reveal that you shouldn't bother learning or reading it at all. Indeed, **a few minutes of planning can save weeks of work and thousands of dollars.**

Ask yourself these questions once before you begin the learning project *and* quickly every time you continue it. Your learning materials and your needs change as you go, so consider your plan for at least a few seconds before every time you read and learn.

-Dr. Dan Lathen

Visit cortexeolution.com to learn how neuroscience-based Brain Coaching can change your life, or to join our "Strive Hive" community!

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WHY am I learning this?

How will it benefit me? Why do I care? What long-term goal will it contribute to?

If you don't have a good answer to this question, don't waste your time learning it! If you do have a good answer, let it guide and focus your efforts. It will let you quickly hunt for what you want, rather than slowly going through all the material possible and hoping that something useful jumps out.

WHAT information or skills do I need to learn?

What info is critical and what is optional? How deeply and how long do I need to know the info? What do I need to know about it? Just the gist? Every detail? Somewhere in between? Do I need to be able to recall or just recognize? Do I need to be able to problem-solve or just regurgitate information?

To answer this, consider your personal long-term goals as well as sample materials like exam questions and real-world situations.

WHERE will I learn it?

Where is the information contained? What resources do I have? What do I need to get?

Make sure you have the materials you need to achieve your goals.

WHO can help me learn it?

Who is an expert who can teach, coach, or guide me? Who is a peer I can learn with?

Learning is more effective with an expert, mentor, and/or learning peer by your side.



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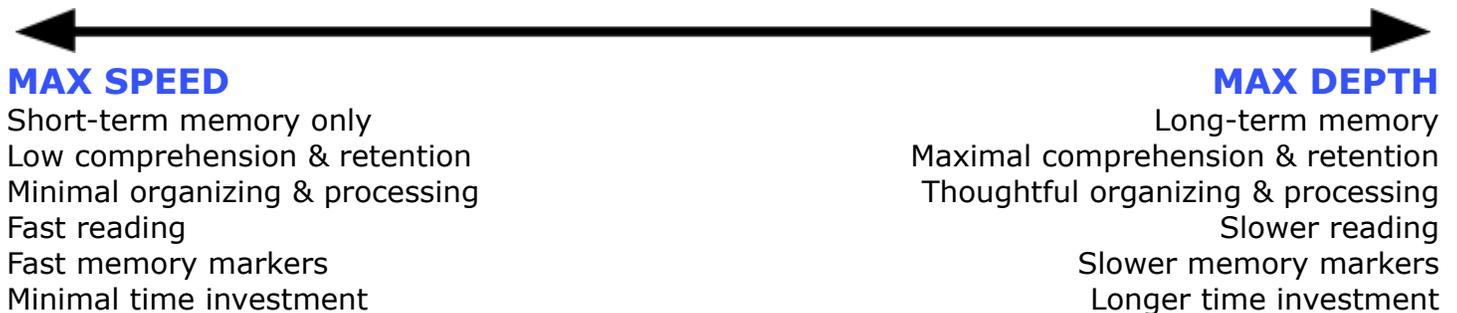
HOW will I learn it?

What study methods will I use? What order should I learn things? What learning techniques will I use? Mind maps? Speed-reading? Flash Markers or Build Markers? Cued Markers or Stored Markers? Memory palaces? What structure of memory palaces? What structure of markers?

A brain coach can explain the nuances between these different methods and help you make optimal decisions for your specific situation.

Your HOW depends on your WHY and your WHAT

Consider where your goals fall on this spectrum:



Where you choose to be on the spectrum will determine HOW you should learn, including your speed, the amount of time you commit to understanding and processing, if/how you organize and structure the information, and the techniques you choose to use (such as what kinds of markers and long-term memory systems).

WHEN will I learn it by?

What is my goal or deadline to learn the material?

Make concrete, time-bound goals and plans to motivate you and assess your progress.

Plan good spaced repetition for effective review.

If there is a hard deadline (ex: an exam), or if you just want to push yourself, you should make a full study schedule to keep you on track and make studying easy. This includes:

- 1) compile a list of essential study topics and desired practice exercises.
- 2) recommended: figure out the relative importance of each topic/practice.



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3) add the topics and practices to fill your calendar before the deadline so that more important ones get more time. Include some time at the very end for final quick review. Leave yourself a buffer of empty time before the deadline.

4) see if your plan is ready: could you sit down right now, glance at your schedule, know exactly what and how you're going to study/learn, and jump right in?

5) start doing it and stick to it! Include spaced repetition, and don't let yourself get behind. The more material there is, the more important it is to stick to your schedule, so you don't get bogged down on one topic and discover too late that you have no time to cover other important topics. It's the 80/20 rule – you'll have more success learning the main 20% of every topic/skill than learning 100% of only half the topics.

Some people prefer less structured study schedules because they're more flexible and less stressful. Just beware that if your studying is less structured, you may reach the deadline and discover there are some things you studied too much and others too little. And probably some things that you did not get to at all.
