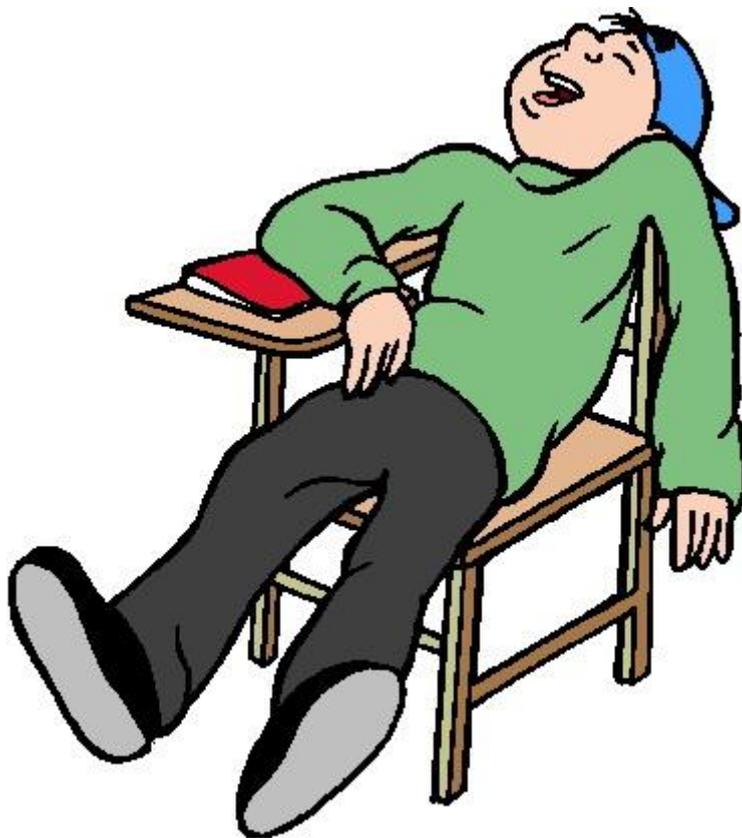


Distributed Practice – is shorter better?

Most people seem to prefer practising for significant amounts of time. Pupils often seem to have a habit of cramming everything into several big sessions all at the last minute. This method, however, has been shown to be ineffective for long-term learning than spacing out your practice with, short, more frequent sessions (known as distributed practice).

Studies have shown that students who practiced an instrument or studied a subject for shorter more frequent periods often learned more and achieved better results than those who had more study time overall but spaced in larger time segments. This is a result shown in both physical skills (finger dexterity) and memory and repetitious skills (like learning music).

It is believed that short regular sessions assist in the encoding of the memory process, and reviewing material in different locations and environments can help you to learn different cues that assist in the later retrieval of information. Differing moods, locations, environment can all be a factor.



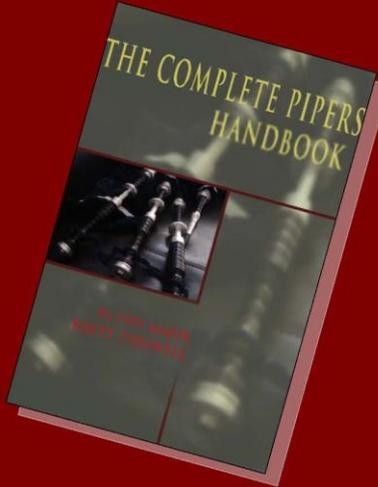
Sleep is an important part of learning

Also we are strengthening past memories when we rehearse previously learned material. The more often you bring them to mind the easier they are to retrieve. It is believed that the shorter sessions also promote deeper thinking about the subject matter as the mind is fresher and that builds a stronger connection with the subject matter and again makes it easier to recall.

Another factor is believed to be sleep. In sleep we replay events and memories. In Deep sleep parts of our brain become more active as we replay events and facts learned. This reinforces the material we have been practising and commits it to memory for later retrieval. Obviously the more days we practice the more effect sleep will have on the material we are learning. Different types of sleep are believed to be more beneficial to the learning of motor skills as compared to cognitive skills.

It is suggested that 30 minute practice sessions are most effective. That's enough time to look at a session meaningfully but not lose focus. After 30 minutes we can lose focus and should take a walk or a nap as both exercise and sleep are good for study. Changing to a different type of practice will also help. Like going from learning tunes and a practice chanter to actually playing up on the full bagpipe. The change will stimulate you and help you concentrate better.

This type of “distributed practice” is a great way to make our time more productive.



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