

Hello Mini MBAers! Before we get started together, here's our science-backed tips to optimise your learning.

### **HANDWRITE YOUR NOTES**

The research is very clear that handwriting notes is significantly more effective in forming memory than typing them, and it suggests that those who do so perform better in subsequent tests.

**PRO TIP:** If you write your notes first and then type them later, that's an even more effective way to enhance your memory.

### **USE IT OR LOSE IT**

Did you know that our brains form memories by creating connections between literally trillions of neurons? As you learn, you develop these new connections as they communicate through neural networks.

But here's the thing. These connections are very delicate at first, and if you never think about that thing again, you lose those connections. As Jill Professor Klein at the Melbourne Business School has noted, the brain is very efficient. If you're not using something, you lose it.

"This is why you want to think about something again and again, go back through your materials and what was said in class or a meeting," she said.

**PRO TIP:** Be sure to share what you learned with others. This act of recall and repetition helps solidify the connections between neurons for use later.



## FOCUS FOCUS FOCUS

It's also useful to understand that in order to retain information, it must move from our working memory to our long-term memory. The vast majority of what we encounter does not make this transition.

Our working memory has a very small capacity and can only process three to five things at one time.

Professor Kein again: "If you are trying to keep in mind several facts or ideas, and you are interrupted with a new piece of information (such as an incoming text), something will fall out of working memory and possibly never get into long-term memory."

Therefore, focus really matters. The research shows that whether or not you're likely to remember something, even a few weeks later, depends on what happens in the first few seconds after encoding. If you're distracted, you're toast.

**PRO TIP:** We've used storytelling techniques and lighter moments for 'mental breaks' during the lectures to help with your focus – and to make learning more enjoyable... And memorable.

## MULTITASKING IS A MYTH

To all those blokes who have been told that, "men can't multi-task", we have bad news. It's absolutely right! But guess what? It's true for everyone, not just the male of the species.

In fact, the research finds that when we try to multitask, it only slows us down, we're unable to remember things, and we end up with reduced cognitive capacity. While we can complete a cognitive task and a procedural task at the same time, what we can't do is multitask by doing two cognitive tasks at once. It turns out that cognitive and procedural tasks rely on different systems in the brain.

Professor Klein gives an example where we can ride a bike and problem-solve, or clean up a kitchen while thinking about how to win an argument.

**PRO TIP:** Attempting to multitask while studying is a bad idea. Instead, you're better off trying to focus in the first instance, and then associating the new information with something that you already know, or something that you have previously experienced.

"If you connect something new that you learned to a network that's already there, then you have multiple ways to get to it later," Professor Klein said.



## THE THREE VITALITY HACKS

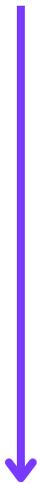
Another great thing to understand is that it is when we sleep that we consolidate memory. Many actors use this when they're learning their lines, but running lines, recording them, and listening back to them right before they go to bed. In fact, it's been found that this can improve recall between 20 and 40%.

In addition to sleep, physical activity and nutrition play a role in making our study experience and outcomes all the better.

Professor Klein, one more time: "All of these affect our physical, cognitive, emotional health – and our ability to learn."

### PRO TIP(S):

- Get seven to nine hours of good-quality sleep each night.
- Any movement is better than staying still, but a combination of both cardio and strength building is ideal.
- Stay clear of sugary snacks. These cause fluctuation in insulin. Instead, omega-3 and vitamin b9 support a protein in the brain - brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) - which aids in increasing neurons and increasing connections.



Congratulations on beginning your journey at the Field Bell Institute. We're just about ready to go – see you in class!