

4. Elaboration: connecting new information to existing knowledge.

This strategy is a little bit more subtle and is something you can think about when trying to take in new material. Elaboration is where you enhance the information of the learning material by relating it to other information that you already know so that you think about it differently.⁵

Mixing ideas in your mind in relation to other things is a great way to remember. An example of elaboration that I have used in the past to great effect, is to imagine a patient in front of you experiencing the pathology that you are learning about. Then think about what you are learning and how you would explain it to them and what you would do.

So, for example, if you are learning about myocardial infarction, imagine you are on the ward with a colleague, and one of your patients has just had an MI.

- How would you explain what has happened to the patient's family member?
- How would you treat the patient there and then? Why?
- What would you see on the ECG and on the blood results?
- How would you explain all the drugs you will be starting the patient on afterwards?

This strategy makes you ask more in-depth questions about how and why things work; deepening your semantic understanding. Instead of just facts on a piece of paper, it connects what seems quite abstract to a real scenario! You'll find that by doing this you are linking ideas, and this will help to improve your memory.

