The Cramming Effect

Sometimes our memories can let us down. You might forget someone’s name that you have just met, and have an awkward second introduction. You may accidently switch the last two digits of your best friend’s number and wind up reaching your local pizza delivery joint. Our memories do not hold up well to pressure or time constraints. In other words, our memories hate it when we cram information in large pieces over a short period of time. Bearing this characteristic of our memory in mind, it seems logical that we would not practice cramming on a regular basis. However, college students in particular frantically cram large amounts information into their memories as late as the night before an exam. In college, the key to correctly retaining information comes down to arguably one very important habit, distributed practice.

What is cramming?
- The practice of attempting to soak up enormous amounts of information the usually the night before being tested.
- An ineffective commonly used study strategy of college students
- The reason why you forget the answer or formula to a problem on an exam you previously studied
- The enemy of sleep and healthy habits

Why cramming cripples your memory...
- Our working memory has a limited capacity
- It takes time and frequent reviews to truly retain information in our long term memory
- Cramming sessions leave students feeling depleted physically and lack of sleep is a serious issue when it comes to taking exams
- When you cram you are only temporarily remembering information, after the exam is over the crammed information leaves your brain. This is especially frustrating in college because difficult courses build upon each other. Your success in future classes will suffer from this forgotten knowledge.

What is distributed practice?
- It is the opposite of cramming.
- It is a fancy way of referring to studying that takes place little by little each day.
- It is a habit that successful college learners practice throughout every course.
- It is the main component that should be applied to each memory strategy.
- The practice that makes the difference between stressed out students and relaxed, successful students
- Short previews, frequent reviews over several days/weeks