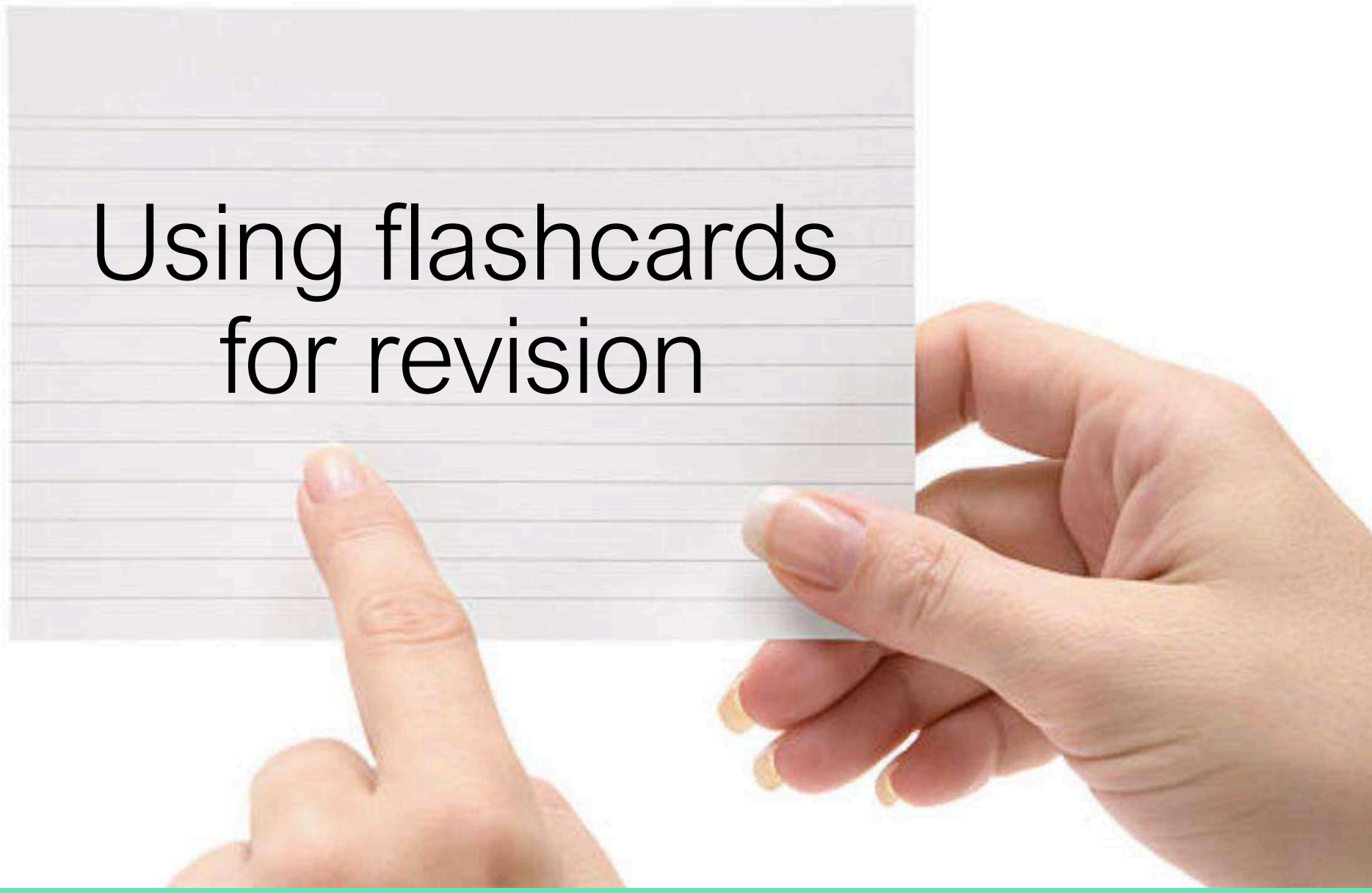
Using flashcards for revision



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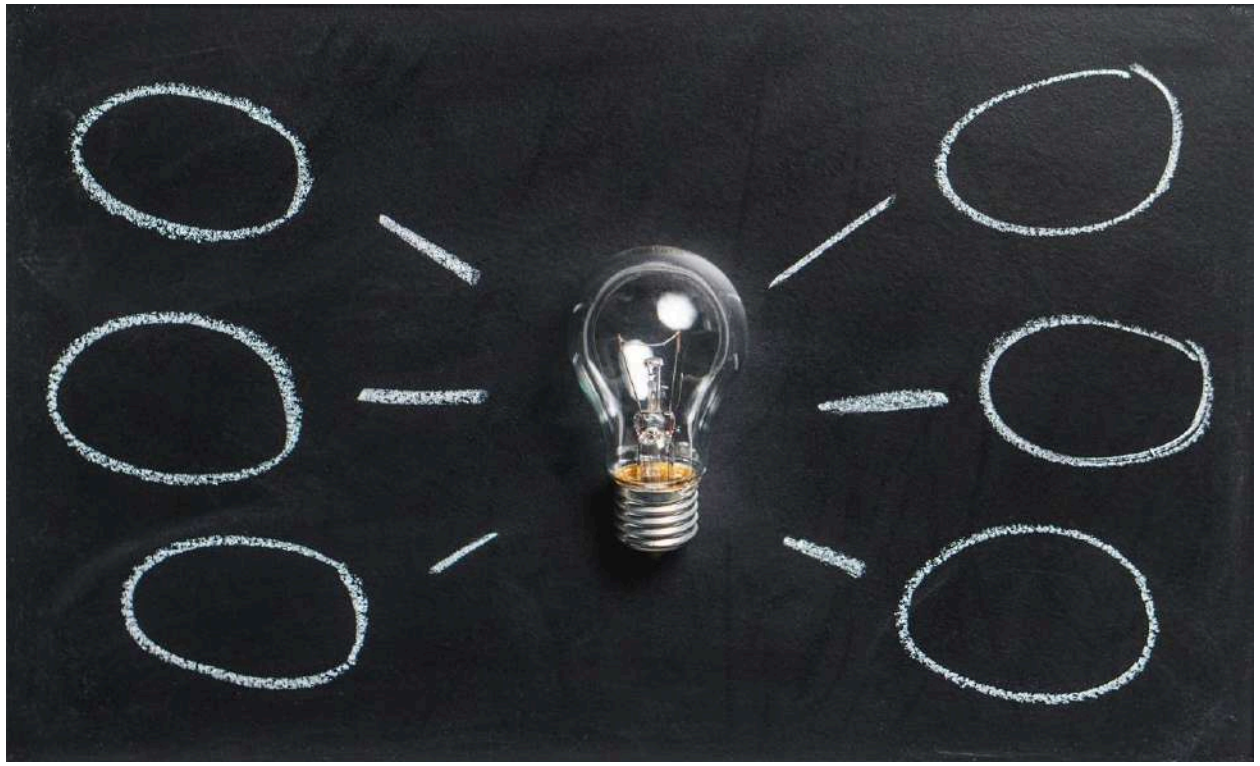
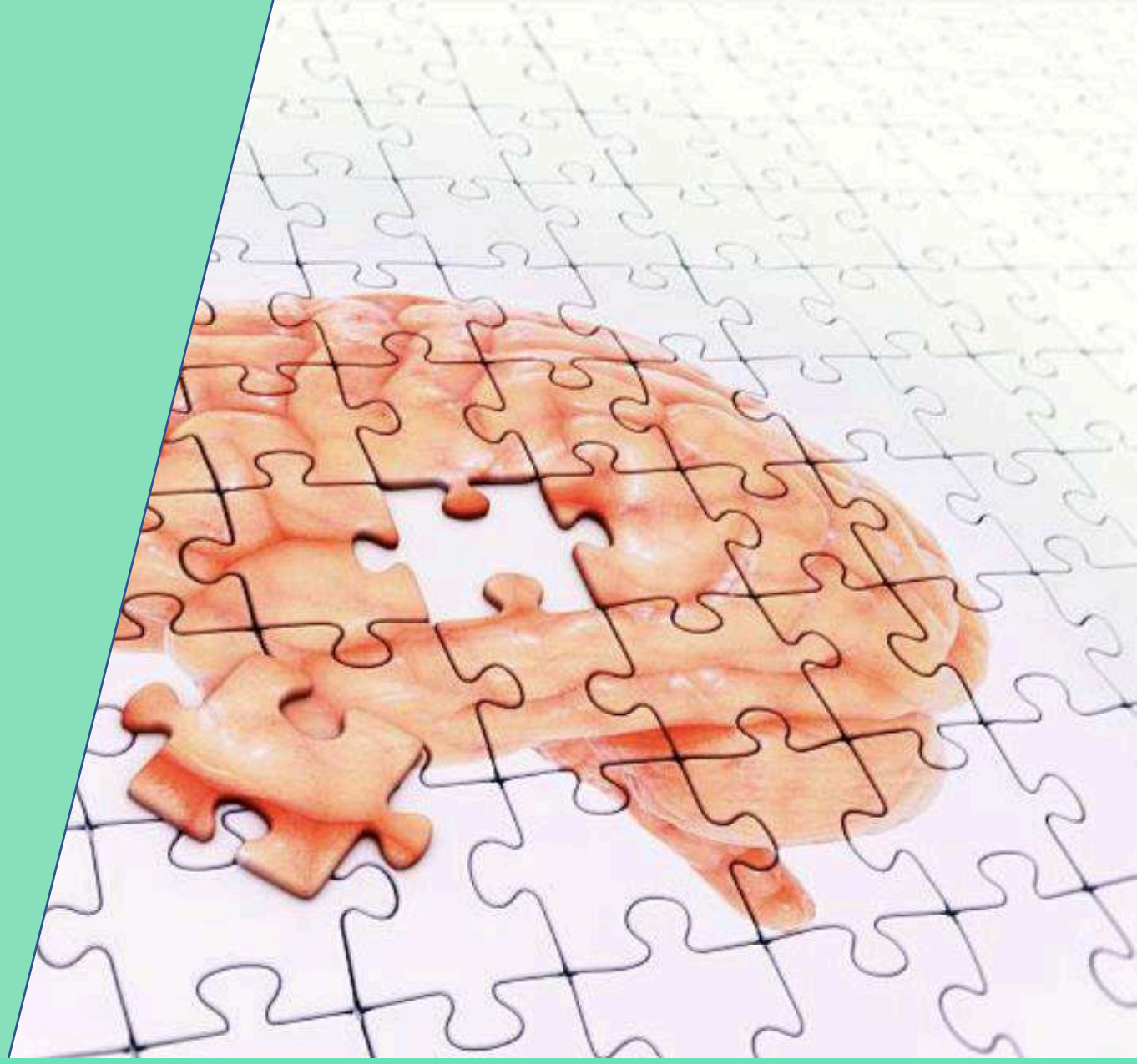
Using flashcards

- Using flashcards is a repetition strategy.
- They are a simple ‘cue’ on the front and an ‘answer’ on the back.
- Flashcards engage “active recall”.



There are many reasons why flashcards can help you learn. Let’s explore them….



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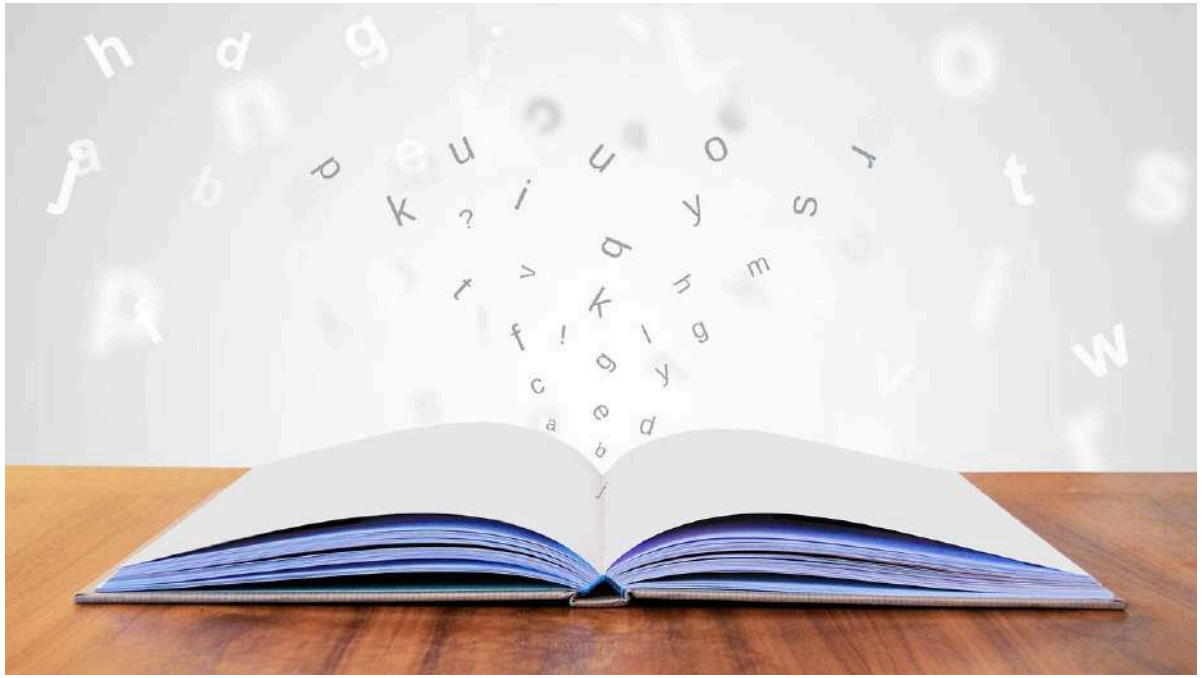
Why flashcards help you learn

- **They help you to 'recall' information** – this creates stronger connections for your memory.

- **They promote self-reflection** which ingrains knowledge into your memory.

Why do flashcards help you learn?

- When you make and use flashcards, you take control of your own learning.
- You have to decide what to put on each card, how often you're going to use them and then evaluate how well you know the information on each card.
- By doing all these things, you are using ‘metacognitive processes’ which have been proven to enhance long-term learning.



Why do flashcards help you learn?

- They help you to memorise facts quickly.

- Drilling - flashcards help you to practise the same information over and over again - and as we know, practice makes perfect!

You need to ‘be smart’ when making & using flashcards to make sure you are effective….

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How to make flashcards

1. Ensure that the flashcards have a **question or key term** on one side and the **answer or definition** on the other.

- The flashcard must work the memory.

- If flashcards only contain notes then no **retrieval practice** will be happening.

How to make flashcards

2. Ensure the right questions and knowledge are on the cards.

3. Keep information as short as possible.

4. Write clearly. You should be able to read what you wrote at a very quick glance.

How to make flashcards

5. Use different **coloured cards or pens** to categorise your flashcards. For example, use a different colour for each subject or topic. This can help your brain to categorise information better.

6. Make your flashcards as soon as you've learnt the topic in class.

Being smart when using flashcards

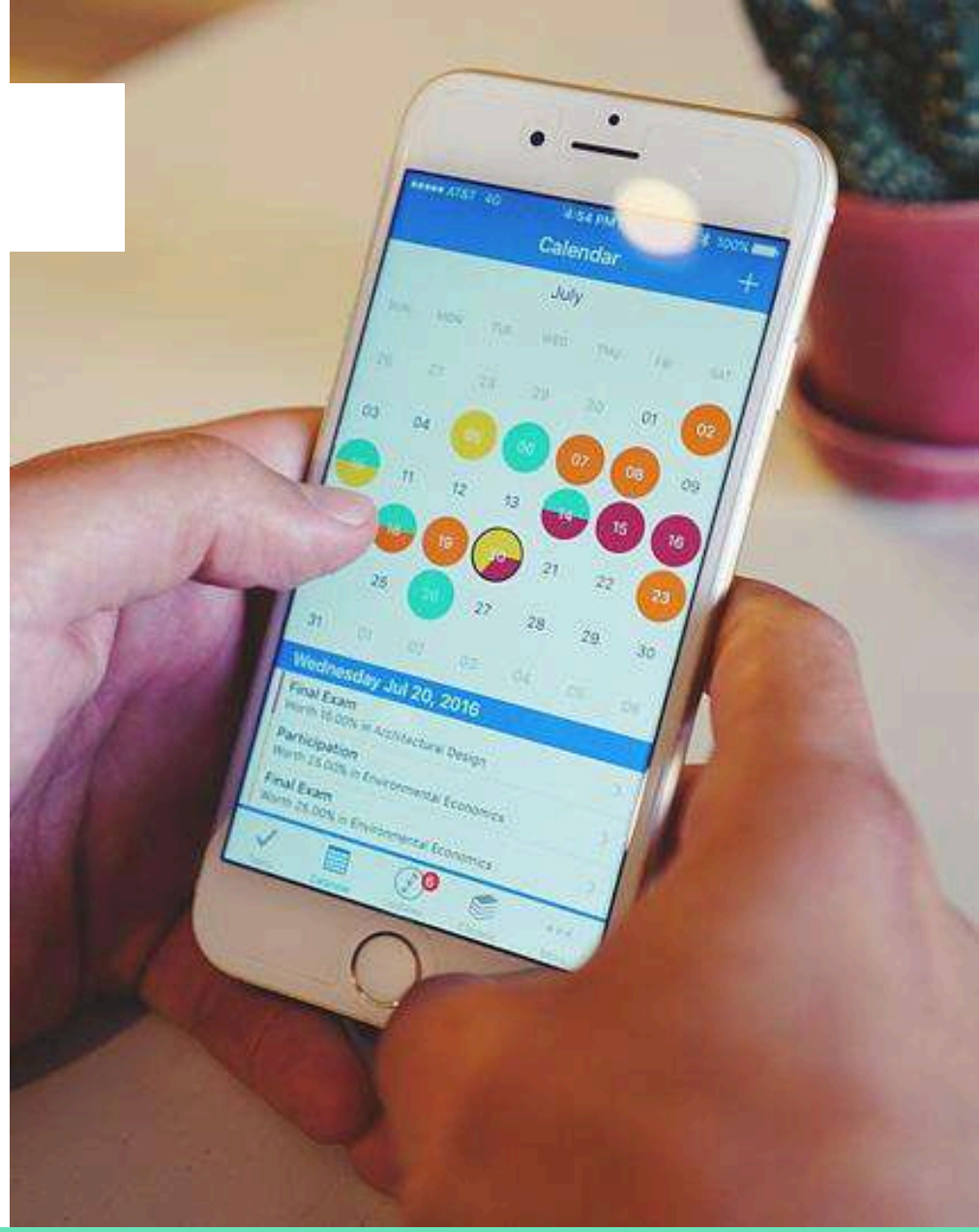
Studies have found that it's more effective to **review a whole stack** of **cards in one sitting** rather than to carry them around with you and glance at them every so often.

Flashcards are not an effective method for last-minute cramming!

Being smart when using flashcards

- **Use spaced repetition -** Review your cards at specific, increasing intervals: for example on Day 1, Day 2, Day 4, Day 8 and so on.

- Spaced repetition works because it activates your long-term memory, while leaving small breaks in-between studying uses your short-term memory.



Being smart when using flashcards

- Make sure you have a **'thinking pause'** after picking one up and reading the question, then turn the card over to read the information.

- Once you get an answer right using your flashcards – **DO NOT DISCARD IT**! You need to keep **repeating the questions** even if you get it right multiple times otherwise it will fall off your memory.

Being smart when using flashcards

- **Try writing the answer or definition in your own words and giving examples.** This will help your learning and recall.

- **Try 'interleaving'.** Once you have several decks of flashcards for different subjects and topics, try mixing them up. This will test your knowledge across subjects in a single session. Make sure **you are confident** enough to do this every so often.

Using a system to revise with flashcards

The Leitner system is a well-known and very effective method of using flashcards. It's a form of spaced repetition that help you study the cards you don't know more often than the cards you already know well.

In the 1970s, a Geman populariser of science, Sebastian Leitner, developed the method.

https://www.parent24.com/Learn/School-exams/watch-how-to-study-using-flashcards-20160825

Leitner System – The Method

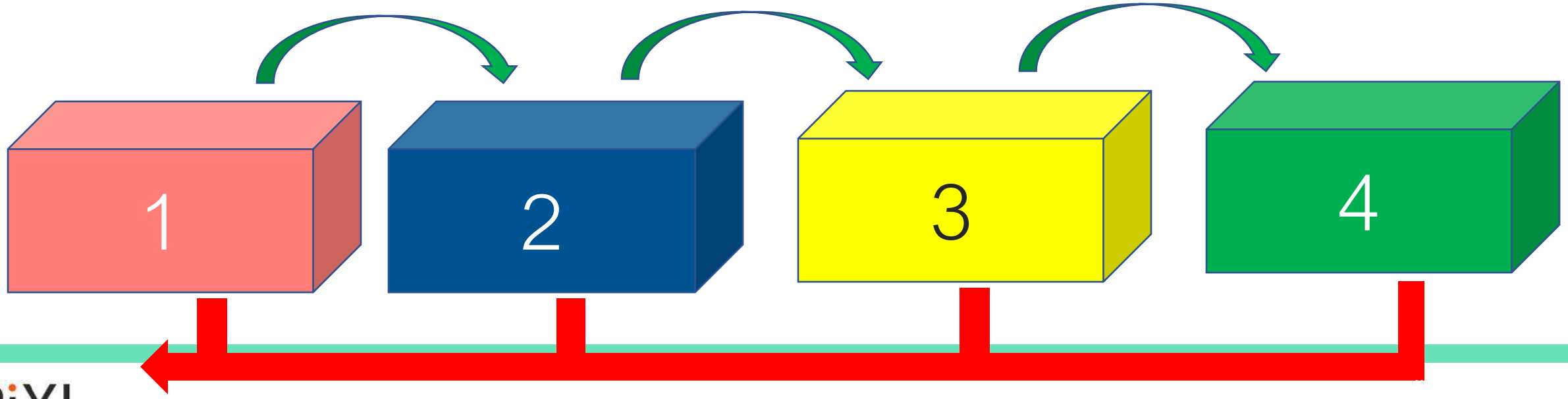
All flash cards start off in Box / Stack 1.

As you review the cards, each card you answer correctly goes into Box 2.

If you give the wrong answer the card stays in box 1.

When you review cards in Box 2, if you still get it right you move the card to box 3 and so on until all cards are in Box 4.

If you get a card wrong in any box, it goes back to Box 1.



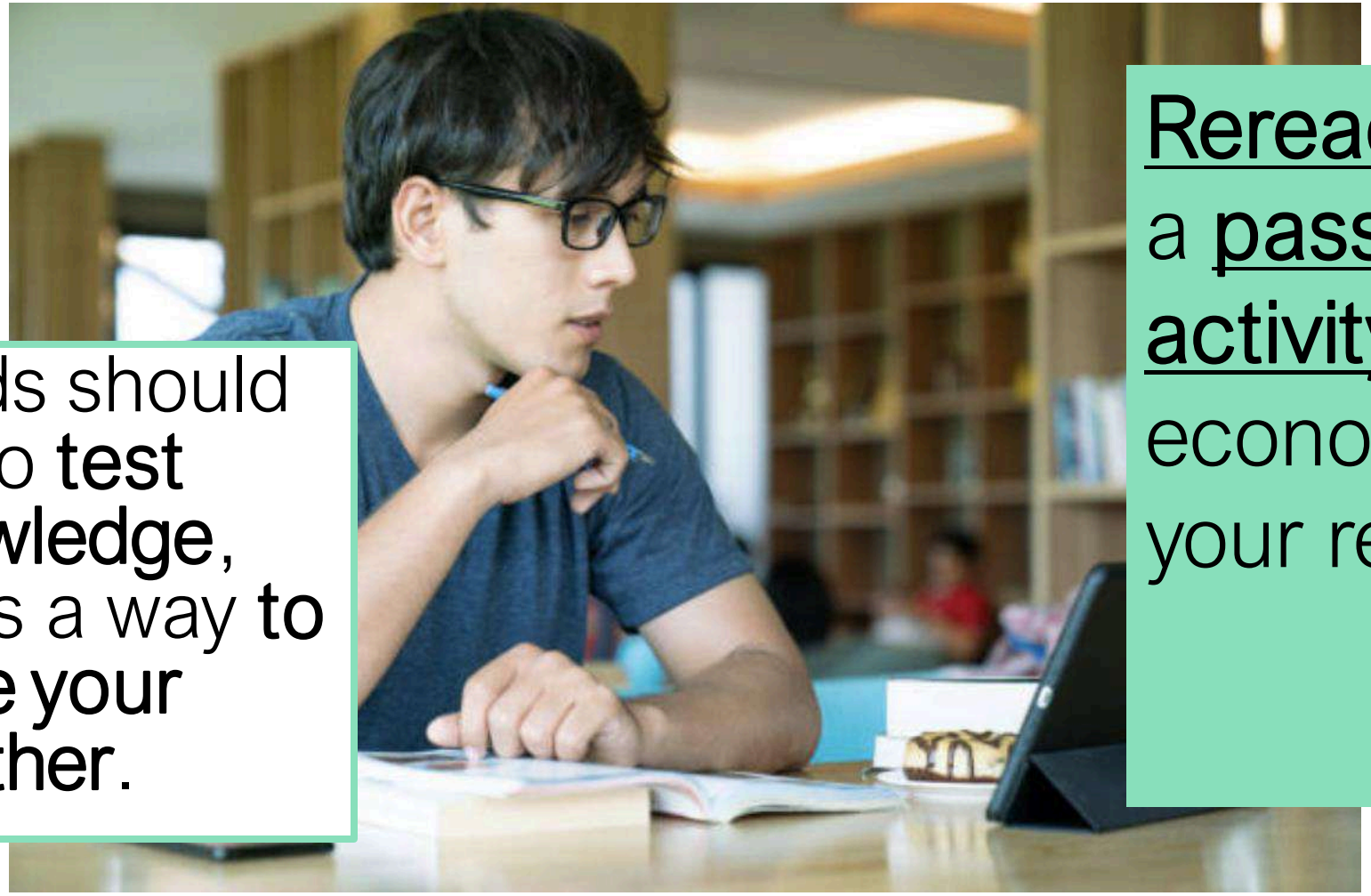
Leitner System – The Key

The key is that the cards you know less well are reviewed more frequently than the cards in the higher boxes.

You now must choose the frequency at which you review each box.

Box 1: Every day
Box 2: Every 2 days
Box 3: Every 3 days
Box 4: Every 4 days

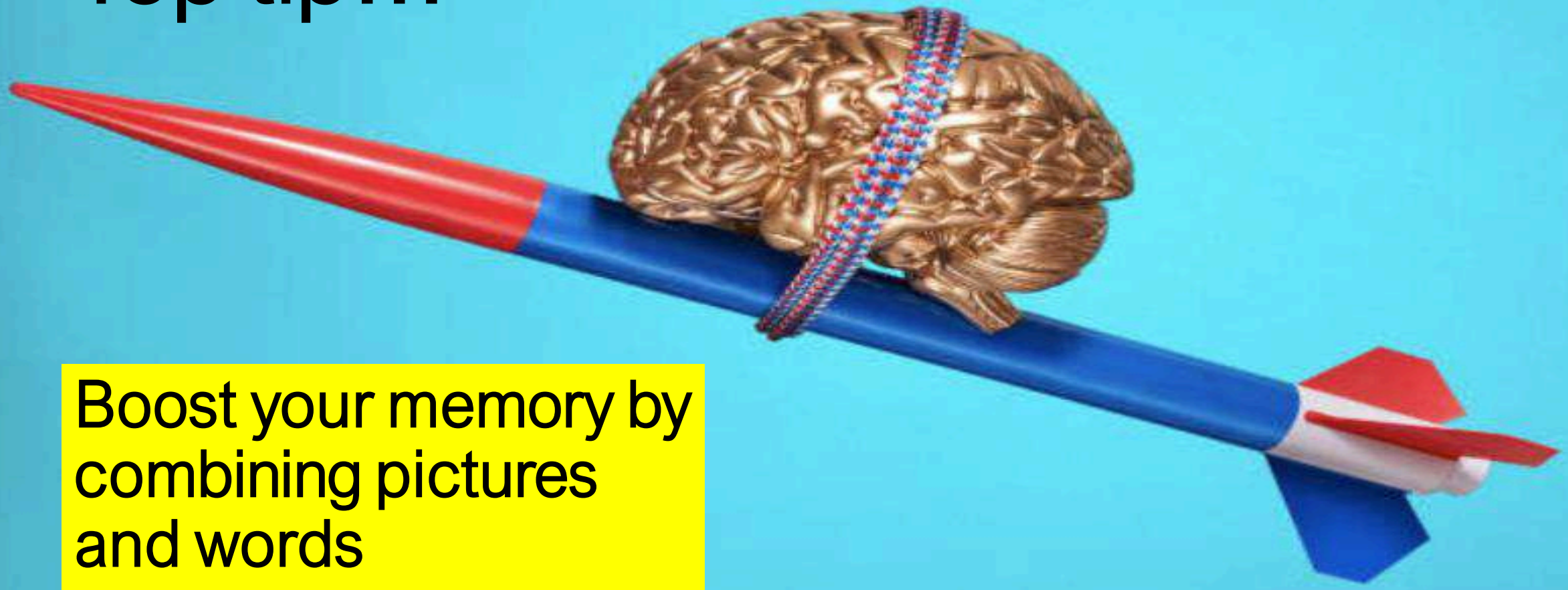
Remember…



Flashcards should be used to **test your knowledge**, **not** just as a way **to condense your notes further**.

Rereading notes is a **passive learning activity** so is not an economical use of your revision time.

Top tip…



Boost your memory by combining pictures and words

Top tip…

Flashcards are a great revision tool and they should be used along with other revision techniques such as mind maps, quizzes, exam questions.