Interleaving

What is it and why do I care?

Interleaving is a learning strategy that involves mixing different topics and/or ways of studying to improve retention, deepen understanding, and increase mastery of the topics you're learning. This differs from blocked practice, where you study "like" material in a grouped format or practice the same skill in the same way.

Specifically, interleaving helps you:

- make more errors; we know it seems counterintuitive, but mixing topics and adding variability often leads to more initial errors which push you to dive deeper and make stronger connections about everything you're learning
- notice the similarities and differences between different concepts you're learning; ultimately helping you learn the concepts better
- actively search for the details to answer a question or solve a problem without the benefit of "knowing" the general topic ahead of time (e.g. you don't know to focus on cardio symptoms because you're studying multiple systems)

How do I use it?

Interleaving isn't always the right study strategy for every topic. It can be hard and generally works best as a long-term strategy. It may even feel like you're having a harder time studying initially. With that in mind, you need to be deliberate about when and how you use interleaving.

Decide WHAT to Interleave

- Apply it to multiple subjects or with topics within a single subject?
- Choose topics that are loosely related or complimentary, but not too similar or too different.
- Possibly, you only want to interleave single elements across multiple subjects (e.g. pathophysiology).
- There is no single "right" way to interleave; if you see connections between topics they are likely good candidates for this type of studying.
- Don't just assume it's working; try the method consistently for several weeks and evaluate the effectiveness.

Decide HOW to Interleave

- How many subjects do you want to interleave?
- If just one subject, how many topics make sense?
- Consider the pattern you'll follow…
    - A little time spent on each topic during each study session?
    - A longer time spent on one topic, with the additional topics interleaved at the end of the session?
- Will the topics be studied in a random order each time or a set pattern?

Video Resources

https://youtu.be/kV64Bu6sec0   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtsCD4RQiLU   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbDpYMp8F6o