

Using Bloom's thoughts to help students learn.

Why do students not like learning?

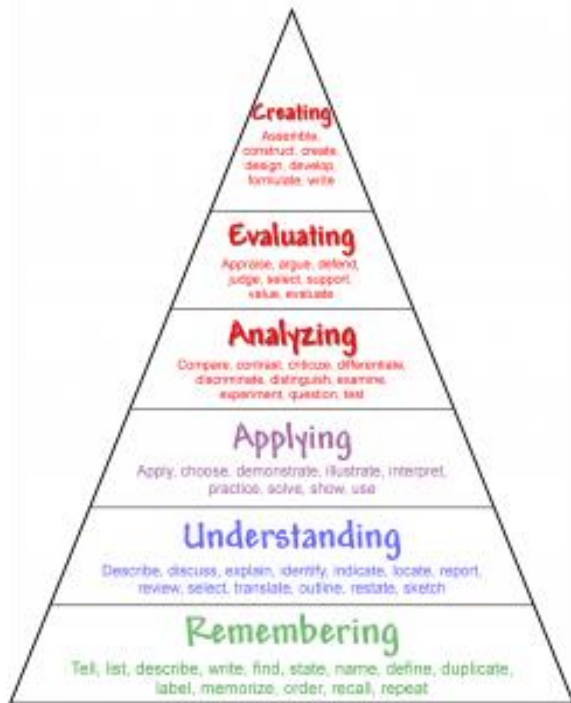
That's because students have never been taught how to learn. Most students find these tasks boring and laborious... and they will find few adults who could honestly argue with them!

We can help students make these tasks easier and much less boring! The right strategies can help them work around the fact that they might not care about a given topic. Instead, they can focus on strategy, which is actually quite fun!

Shift Students Out of Low-Gear Learning

Remember Bloom? Benjamin Bloom? We all had to learn about him in college (and most of us probably got a little sick of him after a while). But, Bloom's "Taxonomy of Thinking" is really critical for all learners to understand. (Yes, I said "learners." It's time to transfer some of the responsibility for learning to the *learner!*)

This taxonomy illustrates the different levels of thinking at which the human brain can function. As you may recall, the most basic level is listed on the bottom, the most complex on top. The more we can engage our brains in higher levels of thinking, the more we can learn... in a shorter amount of time.



Students love to learn about Bloom's Taxonomy! Although, when I share it with students, I change a few things. For one thing, I call it the "**Learning Pyramid.**" (Taxonomy sounds too much like "taxidermy" for my liking. I think it's a confusing word for students.)

I also don't emphasize the six different levels. I *explain* the six different levels, but I tell my students that all they really need to know is that the bottom of three are "low-gear" learning levels. The top three are "high-gear" learning levels.

Think about two cars--one driving 20 miles down a side-street, the other driving 20 miles down a freeway. Which car will reach its destination faster? Which car is working more efficiently?

The car on the freeway is obviously going to reach the destination faster because it can travel at a higher speed and will have fewer stops and interruptions along the way. The car on the freeway can drive in a higher gear, brake less, work more efficiently, and burn less fuel than the other car, slowly trudging along on a side street.

Our brains work the same way. In high gear, our brains can learn a lot more, in a lot less time, and remember it better. Surprisingly, high-gear learning is comfortable for the brain; it's engaging and interesting.

In low gear, however, the brain is trudging. It's working slow, hard, and for very long periods of time. On top of that, it only remembers information for a very short period of time, usually losing the information immediately after or a test, or sometimes *during* a test.

Unfortunately, students don't know how to shift into high-gear learning. They have probably experienced it before, but usually by accident. Those are times when the student has been "on a roll," or in a "flow state" of concentration. They felt good and their brain was on fire, making all kinds of connections.

Instead, they spend the vast majority of their time on schoolwork stuck on those painfully slow side-streets... learning in low gear.

How to Shift Into High Gear

The key to shifting out of low-gear learning lies in one simple technique:

Ask questions.

The process of creating questions naturally shifts learning toward the back of the brain, where high-gear learning is processed. Creating questions will dramatically improve students' reading comprehension, which helps them pay better attention in class, which helps them complete homework more quickly, which helps them succeed on quizzes and tests.

This progression does *not* require hours and hours of training. It only requires a little time to learn how to use questions when reading, sitting in class, doing homework, writing a paper, or studying. It's a bit like playing the game show, Jeopardy™; flip information around into a question and, voila! Their brain starts to make all kinds of connections!

Then they can learn much, much more, in much *less time!*

"I have done much research over the last 2 years in an attempt to find "just the right thing" that I feel would be most beneficial to the at-risk students with whom I work. Though my work with students has been helpful, I have always believed something more concrete that systematically teaches organization and study skills would be more fruitful for students in the long term. I have concluded, FINALLY, that the SOAR Strategic Learning Skills program is the best I have ever seen, offering the most comprehensive coverage of the needs of the students I service. The author provides sound rationale for her approach and plenty of info to answer questions, as the site is easy to navigate. The resources are simple/kid-friendly, illustrating each desired skill. As a teacher, having viewed and used numerous curriculums over the years, I am most excited about this discovery."

~ Rita L., School Success Educator