

Active Recall

+ AI.

Active recall means retrieving information from memory. It is the most effective way to improve retention and memory,

This guide helps you turn any AI chatbot into your personal Socrates (learning coach).

WORKS WITH

ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, or any modern assistant. Copy, paste, fill in the brackets.

TL;DR.

Four ways to use AI for active recall. Pick one based on what you've got: typed notes, a photo, a broad topic, or just your brain.

01

Paste Notes

BEST FOR · TYPED NOTES OR SLIDES

AI finds the 3 confusing concepts → quizzes you on them

02

Photo Notes

BEST FOR · HANDWRITTEN PAGES

AI reads your photo → you fill gaps → it quizzes you

03

Topic Quiz

BEST FOR · BROAD REVIEW

Name the topic + subtopics → tough-professor quiz

04

Summarize First

You write from memory → AI finds what you skipped

RULE OF THUMB

Close your notes. If you can't retrieve it, you don't know it.

EXTRA CREDIT

Add the Mindset Prompt (page 8) to any option for tougher feedback.

01

OPTION 1

Paste your notes and get quizzed.

BEST FOR Typed notes, slides, or copied textbook sections.

THE PROMPT · STEP BY STEP

STEP 1 – SET THE CONTEXT

I'm going to paste my notes on [topic]. Before you quiz me, identify the 3 concepts most likely to confuse a student who just read this for the first time. List them so I know what to focus on.

STEP 2 – ASK FOR THE QUIZ

Now quiz me on those 3 concepts. Ask one question at a time. Wait for my answer before continuing. Do not give hints.

STEP 3 – REQUEST HONEST FEEDBACK

After I answer all 3, tell me what I got right, what I got wrong, and what I seemed to avoid explaining.

TIP Paste only one section at a time and wait for a reply. Too much text = shallow questions.

02

OPTION 2

Photo of your handwritten notes.

BEST FOR Handwritten notes. Works with ChatGPT-4o, Gemini, Claude.

THE PROMPT · STEP BY STEP

STEP 1 — VERIFY THE AI READ IT CORRECTLY

I'm giving you a photo of my handwritten notes on [topic]. Before doing anything else, tell me what you were able to read clearly and what parts were unclear or unreadable.

STEP 2 — FILL THE GAPS YOURSELF

Here is what you missed: [fill in any gaps]. Now quiz me on the full content, one question at a time.

TIP Photo quality is KEY. Check lighting before snapping. Flat lay on a desk beats holding it in the air.

03

OPTION 3

Describe the topic, get a targeted quiz.

BEST FOR Broad topics where you need to test your general understanding.

THE PROMPT · STEP BY STEP

STEP 1 — BE SPECIFIC ABOUT WHAT YOU STUDIED

I just studied [specific topic] from my [subject/course name] class. We covered [briefly list 2-3 subtopics].

STEP 2 — SET THE DIFFICULTY

Quiz me the way a tough college professor would. Not definitions, but application and reasoning. One question at a time. Wait for my answer before moving on.

TIP **Be specific:** "Quiz me on biology" gets you a trivia. "Quiz me on how mitosis differs from meiosis in terms of cell division outcomes" gets you real practice.

04

OPTION 4
★ MOST POWERFUL

Summarize first, then find the gaps.

BEST FOR Deep understanding. The act of summarizing is already active recall.

THE PROMPT · STEP BY STEP

STEP 1 — COMMIT TO NO-NOTES SUMMARY

"I'm going to write everything I remember from my study session on [topic] —without looking at my notes. Do not respond until I say DONE.

[Write your summary here. Seriously, close your notes first.]

STEP 2 — FILL THE GAPS YOURSELF

Now tell me: what did I explain correctly, what did I get wrong, and, most importantly, what did I completely skip or seem to avoid? Be direct. I need to know my real gaps, not encouragement.

TIP Writing the summary with your notes open defeats the entire purpose. Close them first.

BONUS

The Mindset Prompt.

Add this to any prompt above to stop AI from being *too nice*.

PASTE THIS:

"Do not tell me I'm doing great unless I actually earn it. Your job is confident. If my answer is vague, push back. If I'm avoiding something, call it out.

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