Flashcards as an Aid to Memory
Academic Support Center

Flashcards can be used effectively to learn both large amounts of specific facts and general principles. Factual flashcards can be made for vocabulary words, formulas, equations, definitions, dates, names, etc. General principle flashcards might be made for main ideas on a given topic, lists of characteristics, cause-effect relationships, categorizing groups of items, etc.

Coding the flashcards by page where the information can be found or date of lecture is a good idea for later use. Coding by topic or subject in the corner may also test your understanding and expand the use of the cards during review.

Frequent review of cards is what makes them effective. Short reviews frequently repeated will usually be more effective than long sessions of cramming.

Remember: While flashcards do take time to make, the writing of the cards is in itself an aid to memory!

SUGGESTIONS:
1. Review the cards often. Carry them with you to class or work.
2. Prepare the cards well in advance of the test date.
3. Spend most of your time studying card you do not know or are not sure of. Don't waste time studying the cards you already know.
4. When learning cards for the first time, break them up into small groups. Learn one group at a time and review all the cards from time to time.
5. Sort by chronological or sequential order. Make sentences from the vocabulary cards in a foreign language. This helps you to apply what you are learning.
6. Sort the cards by topics or relationships. This helps keep the overall organization of the course in your mind.
7. Ask questions you think will be on the exam and sort for the answers. This will give you practice on retrieving information from different points of view.
8. Shuffle the cards frequently and flip through them rapidly. Do this to avoid learning the cards in a certain order.