

How to Teach History, and Have Your Students Retain It

*[*See published article](#)*

As a teacher you have probably noticed that one of the most difficult subjects to teach can be history. With only a few exceptions, the young, active minds of students tend to shy away from textbook recitation and dusty lists of boring dates.



Image>>>https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/00/A_classroom_with_children_sitting_at_long_tables_and_a_teacher_Wellcome_V0039274.jpg >>>Source: Wikipedia Commons

Standard procedure is to memorize the corresponding names and dates and battles long enough to pass the next text. After which that knowledge is categorized and more or less lost.

History, however, is a fresh and exciting subject that should inspire and delight. As you prepare your next history curriculum, here are some important points to keep in mind.

Above all, keep on learning yourself. Being fascinated with your subject material is the best way to ensure that your students will remember it after the tests are done.

Remove Electronic Interference

Young people today spend a lot of time on electronic devices. Especially if you are teaching older students you will probably find that most will want to take notes on a laptop or even a cellphone.

If your goal is long-term retention, don't allow this. Scientific studies show that [taking notes by hand](#) helps a human mind memorize data far more effectively than typing. Rather like chiseling a message into stone, writing longhand notes will help them to comprehend and process the information in a lasting way.

Use Stories to Interest and Inspire

Don't make dates your central teaching platform. Instead, focus on the stories of the very real men and women who made history.

A great teaching aid is a living history book, also known as historical fiction. These books are written about real periods in history, and often feature real characters. The main character is usually fictionalized, a character that easily could have been.

[Historical fiction novels](#) come in every shape and genre, from tragedy to romance to young adult, with various heroes from rich noblemen to poor slave girls.

Try choosing a novel based in a central part of your field of study and read it aloud to your class for a certain amount of time every day. Many students, especially boys, are audio learners, and will appreciate this form of teaching.

For an older or more advanced class, you might consider using G.A. Henty novels. While sometimes heavy going, these novels are rich with fact and detail. Movies like Braveheart, Ben-Hur, and Gladiator can also be an aid for a high school class, as they provide tangible details and gritty reality.

Make Use of Memory Tricks

Pneumonic tricks, like rhyming stanzas, are used because they work. No one is ever very confused about when Columbus sailed the ocean blue. Associating different events that happened across the world during the same year is another great way to boost date memory.

Focus on Personal Idiosyncrasies

If you want your students to retain knowledge about the key players in history beyond their next test, you must incorporate more interesting facts than names, dates, and major life events. Trivia is a great attention grabber, and children especially love hearing about adults' naughty tendencies

For instance; Winston Churchill. His mother was an American, he almost failed to make it into military school, and Churchill was extremely accident prone. Best of all, Churchill loved [playing](#)

[poker](#), especially with his friend, US President Harry Truman. And Harry Truman allegedly threw a poker game during one of Churchill's visits to America.



Image>>>https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4c/Deaths_of_Russian_generals_timeline_and_causes_of_deaths.png >>>Source: Wikipedia Commons

Make History Tangible

To reinforce the impression that history is not a 2D, boring subject, have your students do hands on activities that supplement the textbook material.

Creating genealogical charts of complicated royal bloodlines, or crafting paper models of famous architecture, i.e. the Great Wall of China, will help to correlate names, dates, ideas and realities.