



*Learning is a scientific process, and for students to learn optimally they must be taught. This is true regardless of cognitive abilities and disposition towards learning.*

**Dr. Robert Bjork**

COGx Academic Partner

Professor of Psychology, UCLA; Bjork Learning & Forgetting Lab

**ABOUT**

This program provides students with the foundational skills necessary to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Students master evidence-based techniques and strategies to process information effectively and for building reliable prior knowledge, which is a prerequisite for critical thinking, creative thinking and effective communication. Furthermore, students learn how to monitor, organize, self-regulate and adjust their learning (metacognition, executive function). Students are equipped to apply what they learn to their classes and studies and are as such prepared to succeed in school and beyond.

**12-14 hours | 7 Modules | Synchronous + Asynchronous | \$150 pp | 20 Student Minimum**



## MODULES

### Module 0: Prerequisite Information

Module 0 is designed to set students up for success in the rest of the program. The focus of the module is understanding the science behind habits and **productive habit formation**. It begins by dispelling common misunderstandings about how habits are created and maintained. For example, most people assume the ability to create good habits is related to self-control; however, this is not scientifically true. Students are tasked with reviewing studies about habit formation and making predictions about their outcomes. Through this analysis, they learn the formula for creating habitual behaviors around their school work and beyond. Similarly, students explore the concept of **desirable difficulties** and practice methods to persevere through difficult tasks. The module concludes with an opportunity for students to create a “time capsule” video that captures their new understanding of habit formation and how they will put it into practice during the program.

### Module 1: Unlearning

Module 1 begins by looking at students’ existing assumptions, feelings and **misconceptions** about learning. It introduces basic **brain anatomy** and how **emotions** can interact with cognitive functions. It explains the role that **stress** can play in decreasing our cognitive capacity. Students are asked to read a letter of gratitude about a positive learning experience, and then use the letter as a model to write a letter or film a video of their own. Through the letter writing, students identify what are the most common and essential aspects of a **successful learning experience**. They then share their learning experiences with peers and reflect as a group on common themes such as clear goals, immediate feedback, and a relationship of belonging and trust.

### Module 2: Relearning

Module 2 starts by asking students to think of qualities of someone they consider a good student or a successful person. Next, they engage with a mini lesson on **neuroplasticity**, the brain’s ability to change in response to our actions and behaviors. Students are introduced to the role of mindset in learning through personal stories. In particular, the reasons that having a **“growth mindset”** is beneficial are outlined with the caveat that it is only one of the necessary ingredients for learning success. Students learn how to interpret their own emotions and how to respond to them. In this context, students are exposed to research on finding a “flow state” and the importance of finding work that is neither too challenging nor too easy. To apply the content of this module, students are asked to write or film an “advice column” to an imagined fellow classmate who has had a negative experience in an introductory science course and wants to abandon her goal of being a doctor.



In the second half of the module, students are introduced to the idea of **metacognition** as their own “personal coach” who can (free of charge!) provide valuable feedback to improve their performance on tasks. They create a baseline for their metacognitive function with a shortened version of the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory. Finally, we introduce **deliberate practice** as an essential element of learning success and dispel the idea that experts in a field are all naturally more gifted and do not have to work hard to achieve mastery.

### **Module 3: Learning for Mastery**

In this module, students are introduced to the basic processes of how memories are created beginning with the **myth of familiarity** and the fact that we are often not the best judges of our own depth of knowledge. Students then dive into the metaphor of **attention as a filter** and the ways in which we can control what information enters that filter. Mini lessons detail how our **working memory** capacity is limited in both time and space and how we can overcome these limitations when learning new information. Next, students explore why **long-term memory** is essentially unlimited in capacity and specific strategies for encoding information. In order to actively apply these **study strategies**, students are asked to apply them to the prior content of the course. The specific techniques we use include **association, visualization, grouping and chunking, the method of loci, linking** and **mind mapping**. The final activity in this module has students create their own mind map to remember some of the key terms in the module.

### **Module 4: Mastering Retrieval**

The fourth module begins by introducing the “**forgetting curve**.” Students develop the understanding that while counter-intuitive, it is best to allow some forgetting to occur before we try to retrieve information that we just learned. Furthermore, the act of retrieving information from memory is in fact one of the best ways to make that memory durable. To demonstrate the power of **retrieval practice**, students are asked to use four retrieval grids that ask them to recall information from earlier modules. The retrieval grids illustrate other key **study strategies** such as **spacing, elaboration**, interleaving and **self-testing**. We ask students to reflect on their current study routines before the module and then update their study methods with our guidance.

### **Module 5: Executive Function**

In module five, students learn about the role of **executive functions (EF)**, the “CEO” of the brain. Throughout the module, students construct an answer to the question, “How does your mind go about managing all the tasks before, during and after a goal that you have set?” They learn that there are many skills that their internal CEO must accomplish from planning and organizing to monitoring attention and reflecting on performance. Students learn about the brain regions that are responsible for EF. Next, they experience a mini lesson on writing **effective goals** that are short term, specific and moderately challenging.



To apply the content, students are introduced to a fictional peer who is embarking on a major long-term senior project. They read the transcript of an interview with the peer and examine her schedule for the week. They are asked to offer constructive criticism on her **planning, organizing, time management** and goal setting for her senior project.

### **Module 6: Metacognition**

This module builds on Module 5 to discuss executive functioning behaviors needed to sustain **attention**, reduce distraction and **impulsivity** and **manage frustrations**. Students apply these skills to supporting their fictional peer to help her stay on task and submit her senior project on time. The module concludes with a discussion of why **mistakes** are essential for learning and how to benefit from **feedback** and even **failure** and use it effectively for improvement. Students examine the teacher feedback that their peer received on her senior project and recommend how she can incorporate this feedback into improving her future work in college.

#### **Age Groups:**

There are three versions of Becoming a Sophisticated Learner: Middle School; High School; as well as College-level Students.