Beat the Forgetting Curve
How do we forget?

Herman Ebbinghaus, 1885
subjects memorize a list of meaningless, three letter words
tracked how quickly his subjects forgot the words
became known as the Ebbinghaus or Forgetting Curve

Graphic Source: www.york.ac.uk/depts/maths/histstat/people/ebbinghaus.gif
Ebbinghaus Curve:
www.psych.purdue.edu/~ben/285su2001/notes/figures/5-forgettingcurve.htm
How do we forget?

The Forgetting Curve

Forgetting curve would start here if we could remember everything after a lecture.

However, you have the potential to forget less PLUS remember more if you review immediately after class.

Forgetting curve would actually start here as we typically remember only about 75% at the end of a lecture – so we have less to remember.
Overcoming the Curve

Immediately after class
24 hours later
1 week later (or sooner)
1 month later (or sooner)

Notice how less is forgotten after each review!!
So Review

- 10 min - After class (or in evening) by completing, organizing & comprehending (rewriting, typing) notes (e.g. Cornell right column)
- 24 hr – Next day, before Ebbinghaus kicks in, reread notes, condense to main ideas & create questions (e.g. Cornell left column)
- 1 week - Before class the following week or earlier, review and self-test your recall (e.g. Cornell, cover right column & self-test from left)

Therefore, when you prepare to study for your midterms and finals, you have already reviewed the material a minimum of 3 times