



# **Beginner's Guide to Anki**

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October 2020  
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### **About StudyAid**

StudyAid is a student organization at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. Throughout the academic year we host seminars in the major theoretical subjects: anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, immunology, pathophysiology, supplementing the lectures provided by the university. We are a group of 25 tutors, who are students at JU, each with their own field of specialty. To make our seminars as useful and relevant as possible, we teach in an interactive manner often using drawings and diagrams to help students remember the concepts. In addition to most seminars we create booklets, on which the seminars are based to aid the students in following the presentations. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact StudyAid at [www.studyaid.no](http://www.studyaid.no), we are always happy to answer any questions you may have academically related or not.

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## Section 1 – Introduction

- 1.0 – Active vs. Passive Learning
- 1.1 – Spaced Repetition
- 1.2 – Anki in Your Study Routine
- 1.3 – Time Management

In Studyaid we are always working towards helping students study effectively, and this guide is made to emphasize the benefits of using Anki. This is only a beginner’s guide, feel free to explore further on YouTube and Google :-)

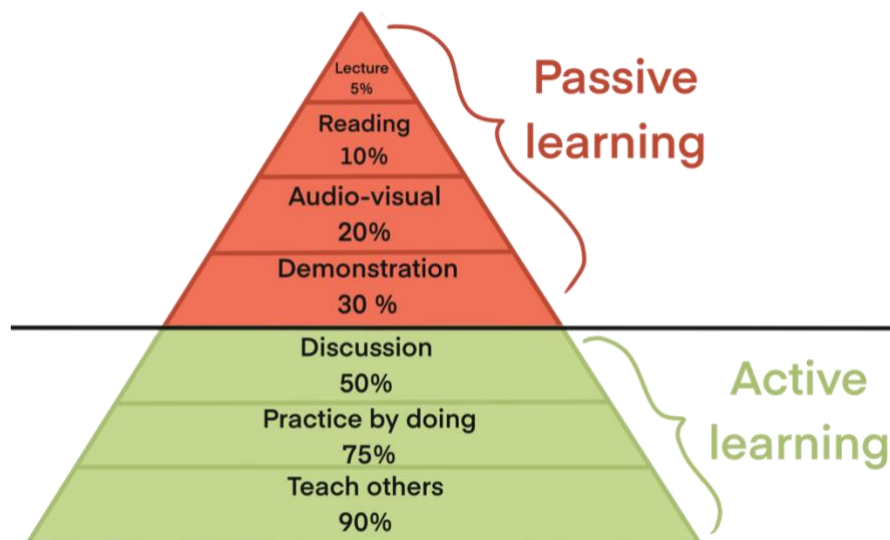
One of the basic principles of learning is that 1: to learn new material properly one must spend the majority of ones time on active learning, and 2: to retain the information, i.e. move it to long-term memory, one must review said information regularly.

### 1.0 – Active vs. Passive Learning

There are generally two ways of learning, active and passive. Active learning is when we are actively participating in an activity to learn. Passive learning on the other hand is when we are receiving information without engaging in it. Here are some examples:

Active learning	Passive learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doing questions and flash cards</li> <li>Quizzing yourself</li> <li>Recalling information</li> <li>Discussing problems</li> <li>Teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watching videos</li> <li>Lectures</li> <li>Reading</li> <li>Listening</li> </ul>

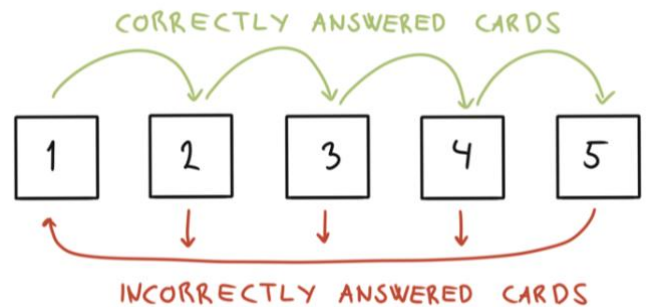
The **learning pyramid** represents how much information we retain using these methods:



**Why are we writing about this here?** This is the reason we are recommending to prioritize Anki when studying in medical school. Anki uses both of the two basic principles mentioned above in their algorithm. 1: The program is a flashcard based system, which is a form of active learning, and 2: their algorithm, based on spaced repetition, makes sure you review the information you need at the right times and in the right way (active recall). We are not saying never to read or watch videos, but as fun as it is to read and take good notes, it might not be beneficial to you if you want to excel in medical school.

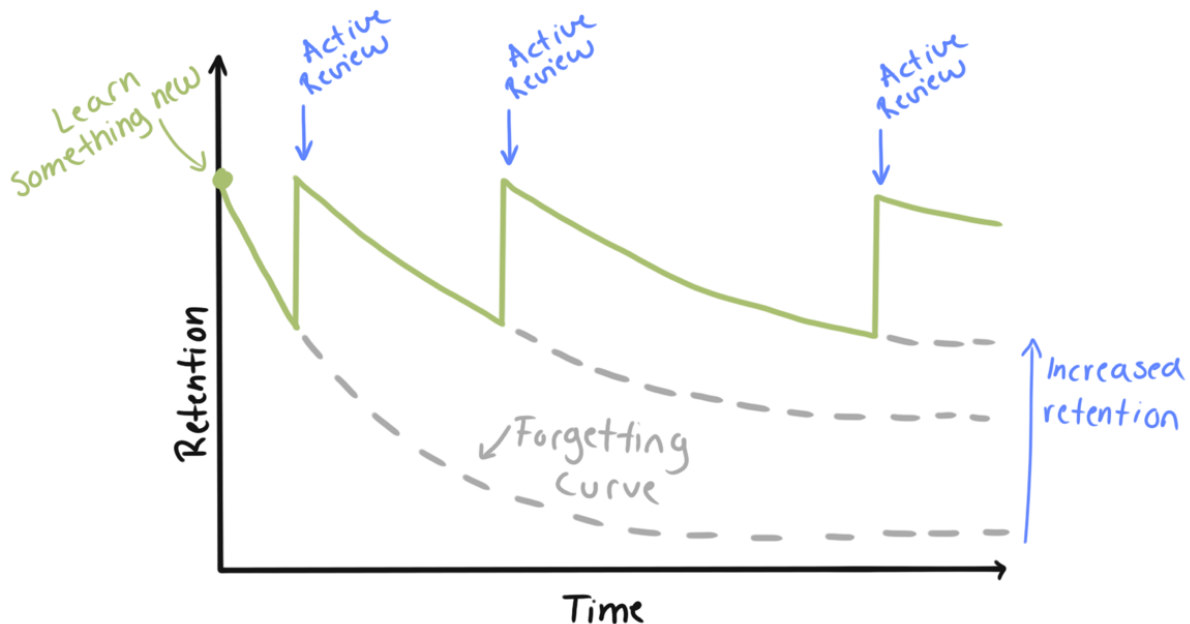
### 1.1 – Spaced Repetition

Spaced repetition is an evidence based technique developed to increase the efficiency of practicing flash-cards. The basic principle is that difficult and new cards are shown frequently and easier cards are shown less frequently.



The spaced repetition technique is based on the forgetting curve, which illustrates how we forget information if we do not review it regularly.

When we are talking about reviewing here, we are actually talking about actively retrieving the information. Passively reviewing by reading or watching a video again will be inefficient, but trying to recall an old flashcard will allow you to retain the information longer.



## 1.2 – Anki in Your Study Routine

Anki should not be used to cram for a test, but rather to continuously learn the material piece by piece as, well as retaining it. In emergency cases it can be used for cramming, but you will not get the full benefit of their algorithm. In a cramming situation, Anki is no different than other flashcard apps.

There are two main types of cards in anki: new cards and “due” cards. The due cards are the ones you have already started learning, your cards to review.

To get the most out of Anki, you should make sure you always do your review cards every day. There are two reasons for this.

1. Doing your reviews everyday sets you up for optimal retention of the information
2. When you don't do your reviews, the due cards will start to pile up and you will most likely feel overwhelmed, and stop using the program

To make sure you get all your due cards done every day, or at least the majority of them, you should find time during the day where you feel like you can focus well and make it a routine to do it then.

For example:

- When having breakfast
- If you have a short hour between classes
- 10 min here and there throughout the day

It's generally a good idea to do them as early in the day as possible, so it doesn't get put off.

## 1.3 – Time Management

When you start doing anki you might find yourself getting tired fast and losing focus easily. This is expected as Anki is a highly active way of studying and it takes a lot of brain power. In the beginning we recommend starting with short intervals, 5-10 minutes at a time. When you feel like you can maintain your focus well you can increase the time little by little. Using the Pomodoro technique is beneficial when doing Anki.

Just keeping up with your reviews can be time consuming if you do too many new cards every day. To prevent the trap of having too many cards due, make sure you start with just a few new cards each day. Like with time management, slowly increase your number of new cards as you get used to Anki. Make sure you set your maximum reviews to as many as possible (9999) to make sure you always see all of your review cards.

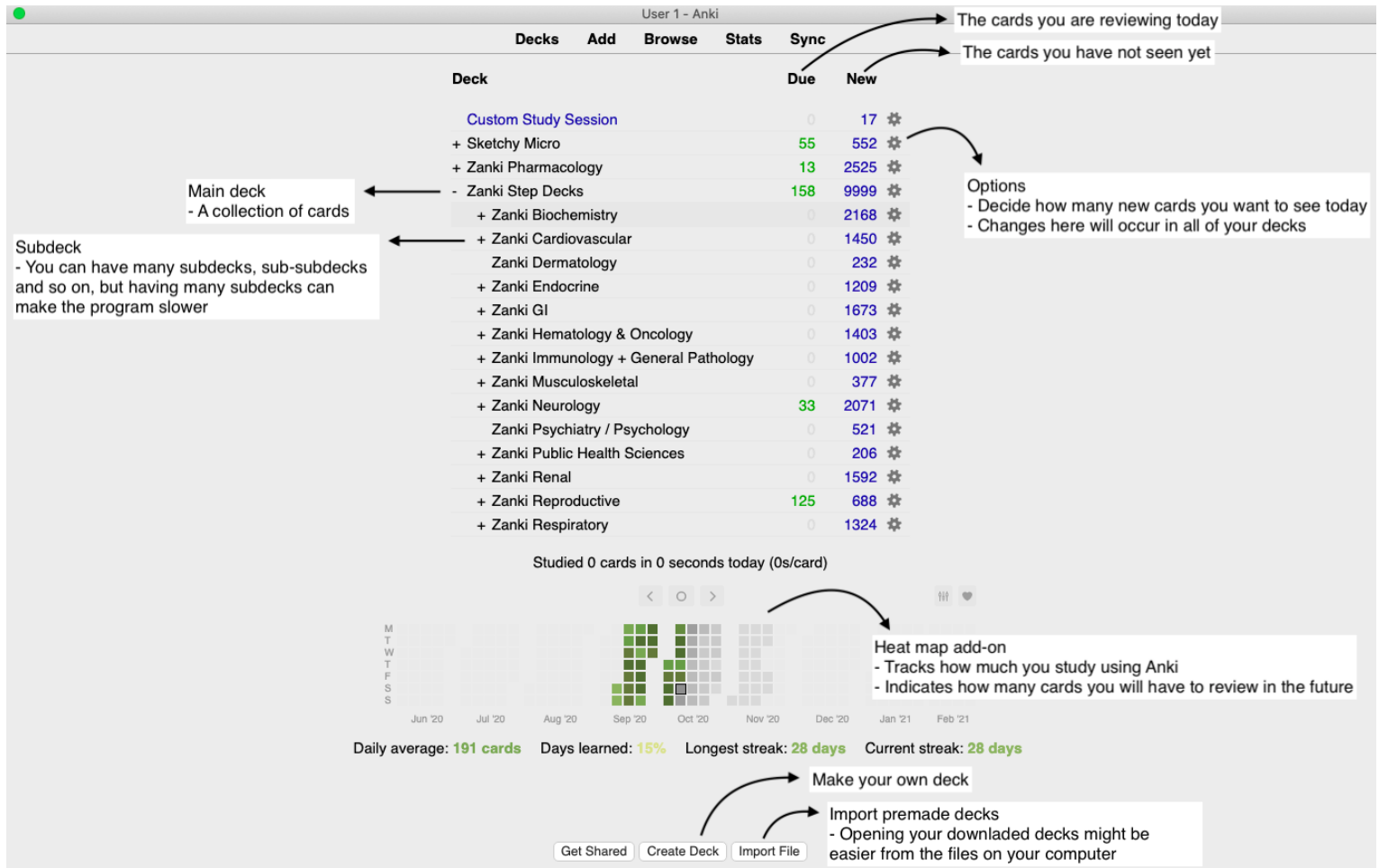
The optimal number of new cards each day depends of what you feel comfortable with and how many cards you need to get through. We recommend that you start at 20-30 new cards, and work your way up from there. You should not do too many new cards each day as this will reduce your ability to retain the information and it will overload you with reviews.

## Section 2 – General Principles of Anki

### 2.0 – Main Page

#### 2.1 – The Cards

### 2.0 – Main Page



The screenshot shows the Anki main page for 'User 1 - Anki'. The interface includes a top navigation bar with 'Decks', 'Add', 'Browse', 'Stats', and 'Sync' buttons. Below this is a table of decks with columns for 'Deck', 'Due', and 'New'. The 'Main deck' is highlighted as a collection of cards, and a 'Subdeck' is noted as a collection of subdecks that can slow down the program. A 'Heat map add-on' is shown as a calendar grid tracking study progress, with a daily average of 191 cards, 15% days learned, and a 28-day streak. At the bottom, buttons for 'Get Shared', 'Create Deck', and 'Import File' are visible, with a note that importing premade decks from files is easier.

Deck	Due	New
Custom Study Session	0	17
+ Sketchy Micro	55	552
+ Zanki Pharmacology	13	2525
- Zanki Step Decks	158	9999
+ Zanki Biochemistry	0	2168
+ Zanki Cardiovascular	0	1450
Zanki Dermatology	0	232
+ Zanki Endocrine	0	1209
+ Zanki GI	0	1673
+ Zanki Hematology & Oncology	0	1403
+ Zanki Immunology + General Pathology	0	1002
+ Zanki Musculoskeletal	0	377
+ Zanki Neurology	33	2071
Zanki Psychiatry / Psychology	0	521
+ Zanki Public Health Sciences	0	206
+ Zanki Renal	0	1592
+ Zanki Reproductive	125	688
+ Zanki Respiratory	0	1324

Studied 0 cards in 0 seconds today (0s/card)

Daily average: 191 cards Days learned: 15% Longest streak: 28 days Current streak: 28 days

Buttons: Get Shared, Create Deck, Import File

Annotations:

- Main deck** - A collection of cards
- Subdeck** - You can have many subdecks, sub-subdecks and so on, but having many subdecks can make the program slower
- Options** - Decide how many new cards you want to see today - Changes here will occur in all of your decks
- Heat map add-on** - Tracks how much you study using Anki - Indicates how many cards you will have to review in the future
- Make your own deck**
- Import premade decks** - Opening your downloaded decks might be easier from the files on your computer

#### 2.0.0 – Options

- Choose how many new and review cards you want to see today. You can change this throughout the day. New cards should be between 30-50 (or more if you feel like you can do that properly). Review cards should be set to max (9999).
- The changes you make will happen to all your decks
- Turn on and off bury cards function

## 2.1 – The Cards

### I. Flashcards

- Normal flashcard format with a front and a backside

### II. Cloze Deletions

- The “front” of the card will be a sentence with missing word(s) and the “back” will reveal these words
- For each word made into a cloze deletion, anki makes a new card (3 missing words = 3 flashcards)
- The most effective card as you can easily learn information in two directions and you can make many cards with minimal effort.
- Buried cards: The cards with multiple cloze deletions become a group of cards that are “related”. If you turn on the “bury related cards” function in Options, you only see one of the cards in such a group in a day.

Turning on this function can be useful to prevent too many new cards a day, but it also might mean you will miss out on some memorizing if you don’t get through all the cards.

#### *Example*

You do flashcards, and in your flashcards you have the question: “Where is the hormone cortisol produced?” Your brain will remember this: “cortisol is produced in the adrenal glands”. On the day of your exam you get the question: “Which hormones are produced in the adrenal glands?” and your brain will have difficulty remembering this because you did not learn the information in this direction.

If you have been using cloze deletions the situation will be more like this. Your cloze deletion card will look like this:

[Cortisol] and [aldosterone] are hormones produced by the [cortex] of the [adrenal glands].

This card will turn into 4 separate flash cards, each asking for a different missing word. When the day of your exams come you will be able to answer all these questions:

“Which hormones are produced in the adrenal cortex?”

“Where is aldosterone produced?”

“Where is cortisol produced?”

“Which layer of the adrenal glands produce cortisol?”

“Which layer of the adrenal glands produce aldosterone?”

### III. Image occlusions

- Works well when studying anatomy or other visual subjects
- Front side of card is the picture with a “patch” over the structure you are learning. Backside is the picture without the patch over it.



## Section 3 – Navigating Anki Decks

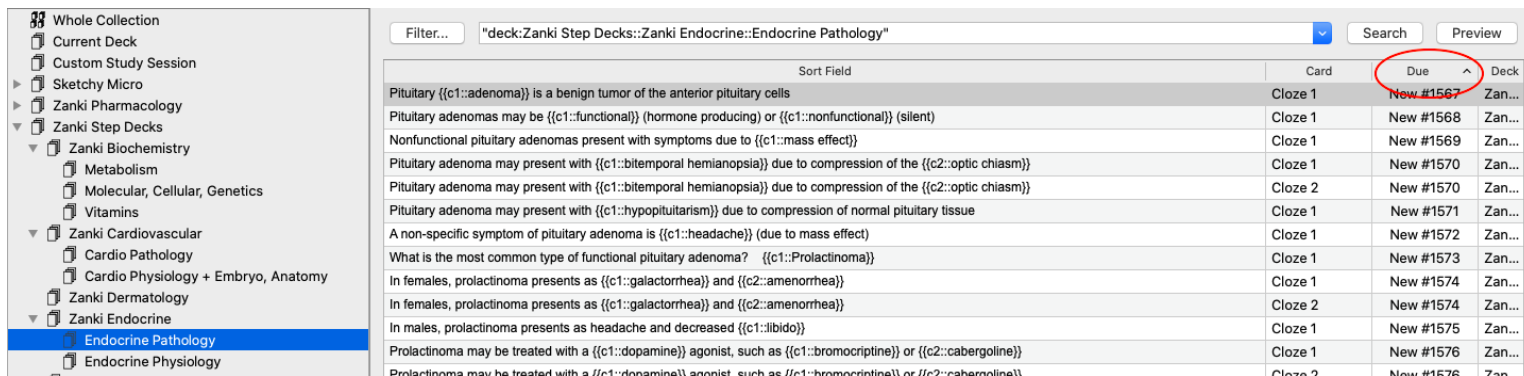
### 3.0 – Adding Tags

#### 3.1 – Custom Study Session

Navigating the Anki decks may be difficult as many of them are large without being sub-decked. The solution to this problem is to use tags and create custom study sessions (as seen on top of the picture in section 2.0). In this section you will find step-by-step tutorials to be able to navigate the decks.

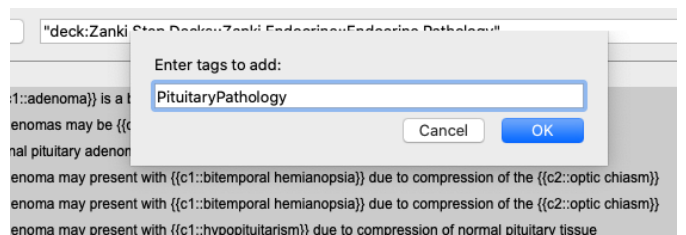
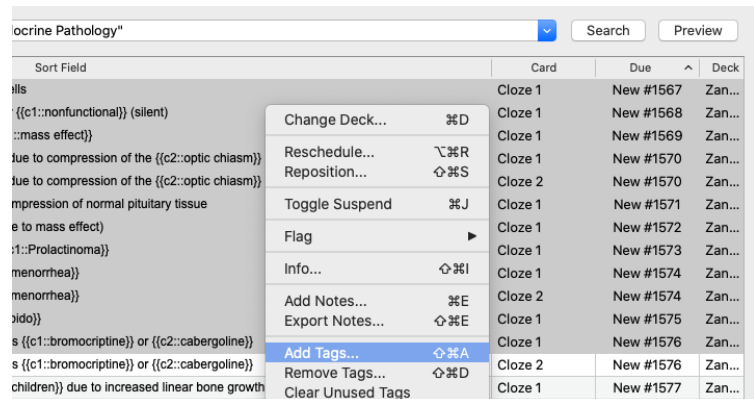
### 3.0 – Adding Tags

1. Go to the browse platform
2. Find the deck you want to study cards from in the menu to the left, and click it. Now all the cards in this deck will show up in your window.
3. In the menu above your cards you have a toolbar where you can decide what you want your cards to be sorted by. Make sure the cards are sorted by when they are due, with the new cards at the top (see red circle). The arrow after “Due” should point upwards.



This way you will get the cards in the order they were put in, and the cards related to the same topic will be together. In the picture below you can see that all the cards related to pituitary adenoma are together.

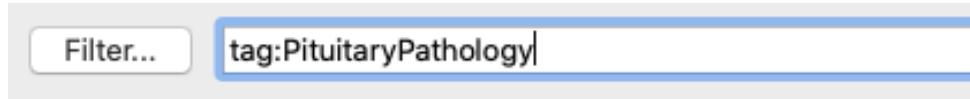
4. Scroll down and find the cards that correlate to the topic you are studying
5. Mark the relevant cards and right click on the marked cards
6. Click Add Tags
7. Create a tag relevant for your topic and hit ok



Done 😊

### 3.0.0 – Searching Tags

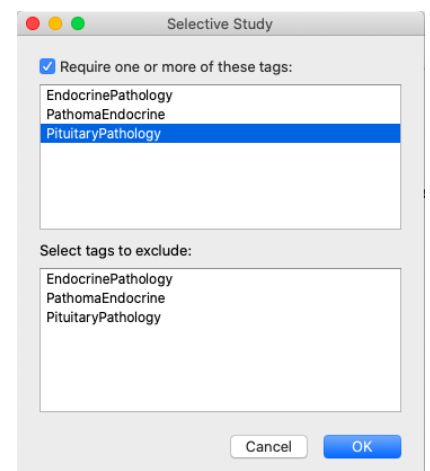
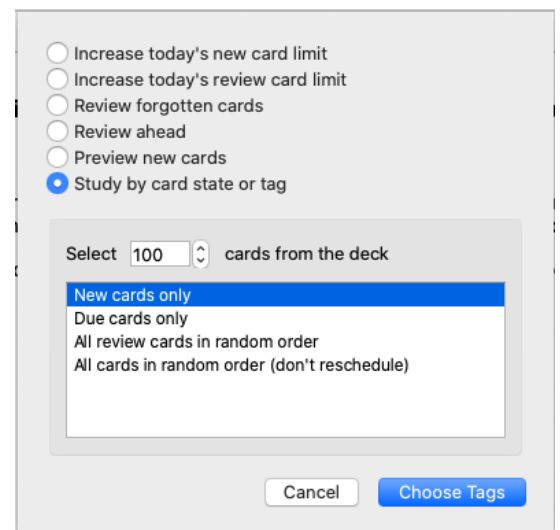
- To search a tag you write “tag:” in the box next to the filter button, and then the tag you are looking for (no space after the “:”)



### 3.1 – Custom Study Session

Create a custom study session for the topics you read about to make sure the new cards of the day are relevant to what you are studying that day.

1. Set number of new cards today to 0 in the option menu on the main page
  2. Click the deck you want to study
  3. When you enter the deck it will say that you have finished all your cards for today (because you set the number of cards for today to 0 in step 1)
  4. Click “custom study” at the bottom of the page. The menu in the picture to the right here will show up.
  5. Choose the option “study by card state or tag”
  6. Enter the number of cards you want to include in your custom study session. Make sure you select enough cards for it to include all the cards you want to study.
  7. Choose “new cards only” and press “choose tags”
  8. Mark the box saying “require one or more of these tags” and select the tag(s) you made (as shown in section 3.0). Click ok
  9. Now you have your custom study session!
  10. When you are done studying these cards, go back to the main page, click options → delete. This will move the cards back to their original decks, and when you open your Anki the next day they will show up as review cards with the rest of the cards in that deck.
- You can only create one custom study session at a time. Creating a new study session before finishing an existing one will automatically delete the first one.
  - Each tag is separated by space



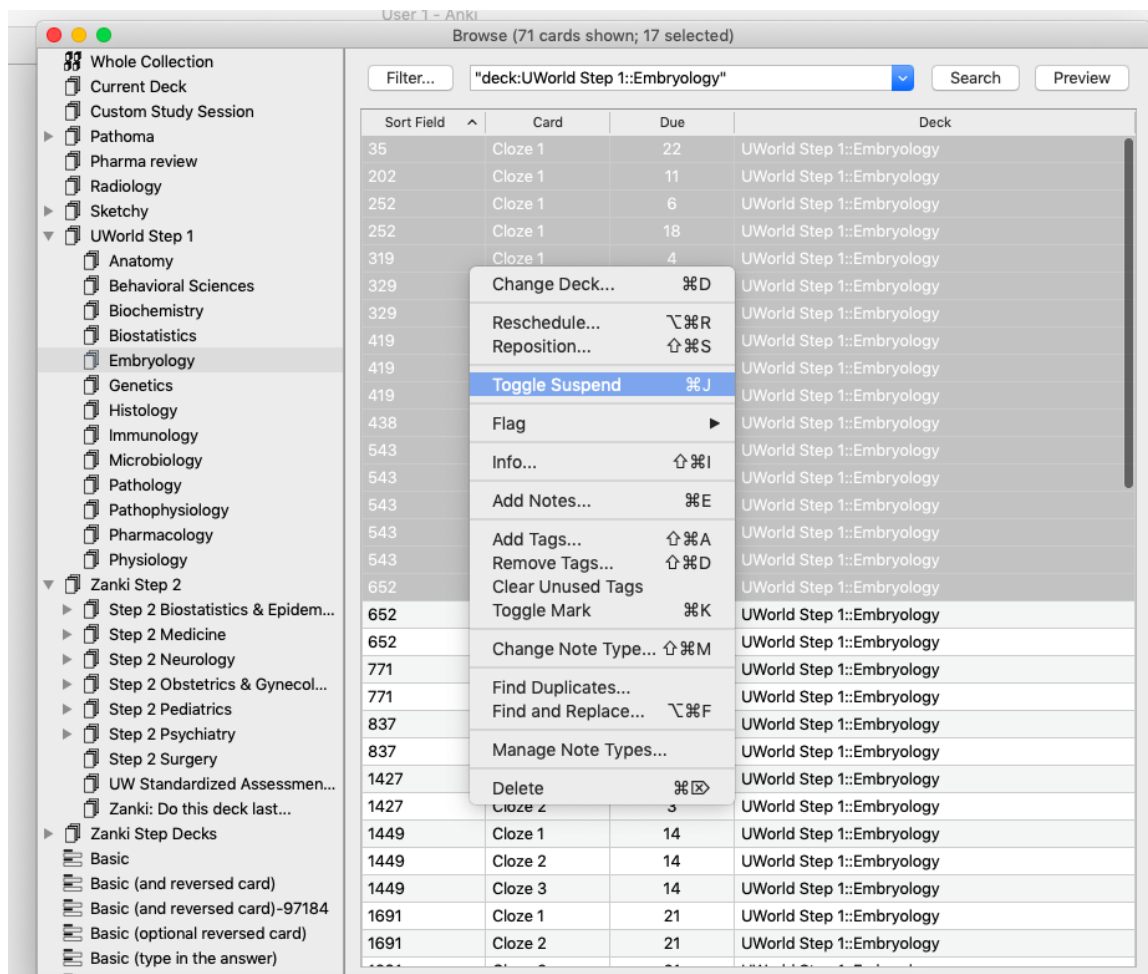
### 3.2 – Moving Cards Between Decks

1. Go to browse
2. Mark the cards you want to move
3. Right click and choose “Change deck”
4. Choose the new deck

### 3.3 – Toggle Suspend – Organize Your Cards

- When you download premade decks they often come with many different topics, i.e. UWorld step 1 has anatomy, behavioural sciences, biochemistry, etc.
- When you are studying, you might not be using all these decks at once, and it can be quite overwhelming to see that your card total is 2234
- Toggle suspend is a great way to “put away” the cards you are not using, and only focus on the topic at hand

1. Go to browse
2. Choose the deck you wish to manage
3. Mark the cards you want to hide
4. Right click the marked cards and choose Toggle Suspend
5. To show the cards again just repeat the 4 steps above



## Section 4 – Add-Ons

- Add-ons are extra features you can download to increase the efficiency of Anki
- Having too many is not ideal as it will make the program slower and more confusing. Choose a few that you find helpful.
- Make sure you have the right version of anki for your add-on! Which version each of the add-ons are made for will say on the page where you download them. You can check your version of anki in the information about the file on your computer.
- There are many add-ons out there, one that is helpful to stay motivated is called Heatmap:



- Heatmap will give you a visual on how much you are studying and how often. The darker the square, the more cards you have learned and reviewed. The grey boxes show you a prediction of how many cards you have to review in the future, which can be a good help to make sure you don't overwhelm yourself with too many new cards.
- Links for add-ons:

**Heatmap:** <https://ankiweb.net/shared/info/1771074083>

**All Anki add-ons:** <https://ankiweb.net/shared/addons/>

## Section 5 – Links to Premade Anki Decks

Here are links to some of the anki decks we have experience with

**SketchyMicro:** <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vTHQFSxPLBqfbGcovW95ZfeAJFWRs1WX/view>

- Includes a deck called «0 Putting it together». As you got through the subdecks of each video, move the cards from their original subdecks into the sub deck «0 Putting it together» and delete the now empty subdeck of the video. This way you will have less decks and you can easily review all the cards you've done. How to move cards is explained in section 3.2.

**SketchyPharm:** [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CaProOY-qvL-tSbQtTjB\\_ATFbXEo6BUT/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CaProOY-qvL-tSbQtTjB_ATFbXEo6BUT/view)

- Includes this deck «0 Putting it together» as well, as explained above.

**Zanki Step 1:** <https://ankiweb.net/shared/info/861094887>

- 1<sup>st</sup> year subjects: Anatomy, embryology, physiology, biochemistry
- 2<sup>nd</sup> year subjects: Immunology, pathology, biochemistry
- 3<sup>rd</sup> year subjects: Dermatology, biostatistics and epidemiology

**Zanki Step 2:** <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1R4h5SMrKqIN-1SxmynyMzpG3QYIrGHG2/view>

- 3<sup>rd</sup> year subjects: Dermatology, ophthalmology, epidemiology/biostatistics, (intensive care)
- 4<sup>th</sup> year subjects: Neurology, ENT, immunology
- 5<sup>th</sup> year subjects: Orthopedics/sports/rheumatology, infectious disease, (toxicology)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> year subjects: Internal medicine, surgery, OB/GYN, pediatrics, psychiatry