

Flash card Exchange Review

Now, let us take a look at some of the major offerings out there beginning with the most famous of flash card websites:

[Flashcard Exchange](#) (Review the [Flash eCard Maker and templates](#))

Data Portability: None for free users. Export of flash cards allowed with one-time fee of \$20 or for owners of the Mental Case iPhone application.

Interval Study: None for free users. Spaced repetition for premium users.

Fields: Normally 2. Three possible by using the hint field and a special option.

Flashcard Exchange is perhaps the most well known online library of flashcards and web site allowing the online review of such websites. I have watched this website grow through the years. It now dwarfs most of its competitors with the huge quantity of cards it offers in all languages.¹

This website started ugly and despite years of growth and change, it is still ain't pretty. Interface elements like tabs float strangely out of place in my Firefox browser when clicked and the whole design of the site is full of color inconsistencies and poorly thought out placements. Searching for flashcards is handled via google and the interface feels a little like the web from the late 1990s. The huge size of its database, however, does keep people from dismissing it entirely, however. It also prevents a mass exodus of its users by offering **No Data Portability** for its free users. It also provides **No Interval Study** for its free users.

For premium users cards found on the site can be exported in a wide variety of formats and can be studied using interval study. Interval study provided by flashcard exchange is a basic static TTF (Time to Forget schedule, see my [Terms](#) page) which advances from a spacing of 4 days for words at stage 1 to 11 years for level 14. Incorrect words have their TTF reset. My feeling is that the intervals increase too quickly for only 14 stages and the site should at least offer users the option of tailoring the interval schedule to their own memories (iFlash for OS X offers this ability, and Mental Case and Anki offer similar). However the site is to be commended for being one of the earliest online sites to appreciate the power of spaced repetition.

Flashcard Exchange does support three sided cards via a special option, but in a bizarre way: the third side must be included in the "hint" field which is then included in the rotation of each card.

The flash card study itself is fairly smooth and allows you to continue studying incorrect cards (cycle elimination) but the flash screen is distracting with all the content included the window. There are keyboard shortcuts for studying but they are chosen without any thought to convenience of location (i for correct, x for incorrect – these two keys should be next to each other. Same for p for previous card and n for next card). I also found that clicking is only accepted on the words of the card itself, not everywhere on the card which led to a lot of missed clicks. Flashing was also somewhat slow and there is no differentiation between the sides so it can sometimes be unclear what side is being viewed without looking at the top right (color coded or shaded sides is a better method). Overall the flashcard interface is way too cluttered with options. Most of the page should be stripped away, or a full screen option be permitted.

Finally, although the use of the site is tempting given the millions of cards it is host to, I have found that the quality of these flashcard collection is often incredibly poor. This is inevitable, given the huge number of users contributing, but one should choose a web site based primarily on functionality, and only judge the number of flashcards the site hosts if one finds quality flashcards for the textbook or language one is studying, not based on the total aggregate number of cards a site hosts. The only way to get some indication of the quality of the cards without looking closely is to compare the “favorite count” which is the number of people who added the set to their favorites. It might be more useful to offer a more traditional rating system instead.

Mental Case users on the iPhone get free download access to the flashcards without a premium account and can study their cards on their iPhone or iPod touch so one is no longer tied to the online web version. This was a fantastic move for Mental Case and a boon to its users since it gave it immediate access to a large database of cards.

Overall, however, the design of the website leaves much to be desired, it has a very basic and inflexible interval study feature provided only to premium users, and also provides export only to premium users so many students will want to look elsewhere for their online study home.

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