



Why Can't I Remember?

Visit the Office of Academic Support

Furst Hall 412

646-592-4285

academicsupport.wilf@yu.edu

Test Your Memory Skills

Try to memorize the following words in 30 seconds:

Ball

Tree

Yellow

Table

Cemetery

Hydrogen

Plastic

Picture

Daisy

Laptop

Bank

Lake

Pineapple

Luggage

What strategy did you use to remember the words?

Draw a Dollar Bill



Did you notice how difficult it was to remember the details despite how frequently you handle dollar bills?



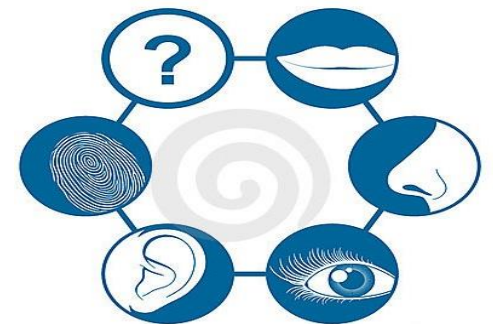
How Does Memory Work?

There are three components of memory:

- 1) Encoding
- 2) Storage
- 3) Retrieval

Encoding

- Sensory register: We meet someone, hear something, see something, etc.
- It lasts a fraction of a second
- For encoding to work properly, we need to pay **attention** and have an **interest**
- Most of what we experience at this stage gets filtered out



What Are We Likely To Remember?

At the sensory register (encoding), we tend to remember information that is:

- Meaningful—your best friend's birthday, the weather on your wedding day
- Unusual—a person wearing a winter coat in the summer

Storage

Short term memory:

- Has the capacity for seven items, +/- two items
- Lasts approximately 30 seconds

Can be extended by:

- Chunking, which is grouping information
- Repetition, which is repeating information

We transfer information to long term memory by:

- Organizing, associating and making connections
- Using a variety of sensory modes (reading text, watching tutorials, testing yourself, listening to audio)



Storage (cont'd)

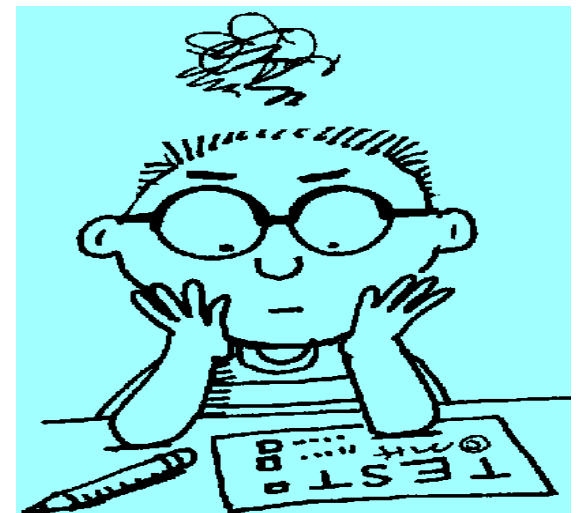
Long term memory:

- Takes place in many different areas of the brain
- Has infinite capacity
- Information “sticks”
- Strengthened by review of information (formation of new neural pathways)

The brain can form new neural pathways and rewire itself (neuroplasticity) allowing for new memories to be stored in multiple ways

Retrieval

- Accessing stored information
- The stronger and more numerous the neural connections, the easier it is to remember information



Why Do We Forget?

- Information is not meaningful or has no context
- The value for remembering information has become less important due to technology
- Information was not clear
- Information was not *consolidated*, which is the neurological term involving strengthening of neural pathways through:
 - a) review
 - b) taking breaks
 - c) sleep
- Interference—competing memories or other distractions



How Can We Remember?

Our brain prefers information that is organized, visual and spatial.

We can improve our memory skills by:

- Creating *loci*, which are memory “palaces”—specific and fixed positions
Watch a memory champion explain how to use this method:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vlpQHJ09do&vl=en>
- Intending to remember
Maintain focus and motivation and use active reading strategies
- Sustaining Interest
Improve motivation by obtaining background information

How Can We Remember? (cont'd)

- Using mnemonics (tools that help us retain information)
 - a) Chunking (123-456-789)
 - b) Acronyms (**SCUBA**–Self **C**ontained **U**nderwater **B**reathing **A**pparatus)
 - c) Acrostics-**P**lease **E**xcuse **M**y **D**ear **A**unt **S**ally
(Order of Operations–**P**arenthesis, **E**xponents, **M**ultiplication, **D**ivision, **A**ddition, **S**ubtraction)
- Associating
 - a) Connecting information to something you already know
 - b) Learn information from general to specific so you can make connections
- Reciting and repeating—to strengthen neural pathways and connections
- Visualizing—TV commercials use this strategy to make information memorable to viewers
- Exercising—can increase cognitive ability by 20%
- Learning something new—creates new neural pathways
 - a) Brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand
 - b) Taking a different route home
 - c) Learning a new instrument, language or recipe

Practice What You Have Learned

Now how many words can you remember in 30 seconds?

Ball

Tree

Yellow

Table

Cemetery

Hydrogen

Plastic

Picture

Daisy

Laptop

Bank

Lake

Pineapple

Luggage

If You Would Like To Learn More About Improving Your Memory Skills

Visit the Office of Academic Support
Furst Hall 412
646-592-4285
academicsupport.wilf@yu.edu



Sources

Doidge, N. (2007). The brain that changes itself: Stories of personal triumph from the frontiers of brain science. New York: Viking.

Foer, J. (2011). Moonwalking with Einstein: The art and science of remembering everything. New York: Penguin Press.

“How to Memorize Fast and Easily//Mind Palace: Build a Memory Palace,” YouTube video (6:26). (n.d.). Posted by Ron White.

Hopper, C. H. (2004). Practicing college learning strategies. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Learning is memory that persists. (n.d.). Retrieved from

https://students.dartmouth.edu/academic-skills/sites/students_academic_skills.prod/files/students_academic_skills/wysiwyg/retain_information.pdf

Nine ways to aid your memory. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://students.dartmouth.edu/academic-skills/learning-resources/learning-strategies/improving-memory-retention>

VanderStoep, S. W. & Pintrich, P. R. (2003). Learning to learn: The skill and will of college success. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.