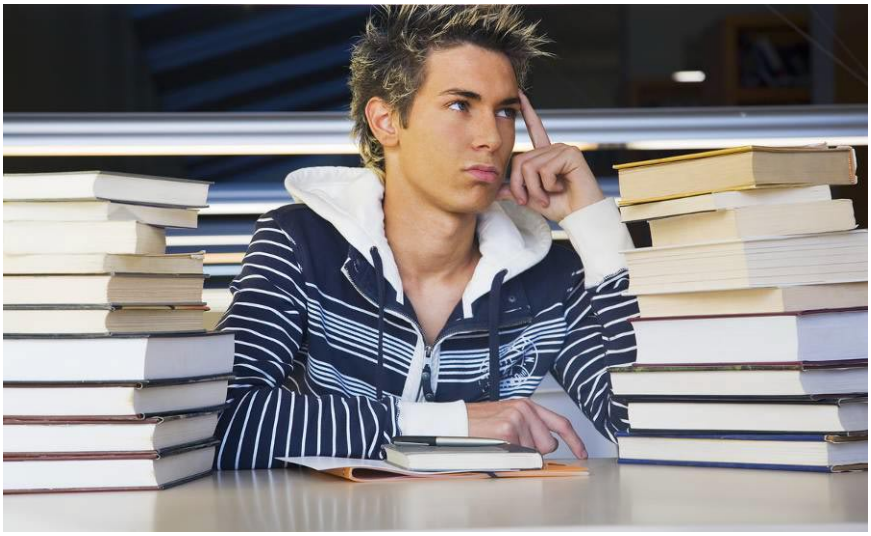
How We Think and Learn

Ways to Remember



Our minds are able to understand what we read even when some of the words are missing. As long as the text we read is logical, the brain will fill in the blanks.

Let’s see how this works.

Look at the paragraphs on the next page and read each sentence carefully. Then fill in the missing words so the sentences and paragraphs make sense. Think about why you put in a certain word or if other words would also fit.

Then compare your answers with those of a partner. Discuss your decision to select a certain word over another. Change your answer if another word makes more sense. Sometimes more than one answer is possible. Choose the word that sounds best given the meaning of the passage.

Ways to Remember[1]

Some people try to remember things just by _____ them over and over, like this: comb, book, can of beans, left shoe, and so on. If you tried that, you were using what scientists call your "working _____".

When you look up a telephone number and repeat it over and over until you ____ it, you're using your working memory. Your working memory is great for jobs like remembering a _____ number for a few minutes.

But five minutes later, after you made a phone call using this method, you probably won't be able to _____ the number. Your working memory can hold a small amount of information for a relatively ____ time. Repeating a list of things over and over lets you remember some of the _____ on the list for a little while. But it's _____ to store twenty different things in your working memory and remember them long _____ to write them down.

One way to remember more things for a _____ time is to use what scientists call *"elaborative encoding."* "Encoding" is another word for _____ something into a memory. "Elaborative encoding" lets you connect _____ information to memories that you already have, and that helps you remember the new information. It can help you move that list of objects out of your working memory and into your _____ memory. (Long-term memory is just what it sounds like: memories that last for a long time – days or _____ or years.)

Note

There are 14 blanks to fill in.

How many of your answers are you sure about? _____

Go back and think once more about the answers you are not sure about. Read the next couple of sentences to see if you have the right word or if another word makes more sense.

Scoring

How many did you get right by yourself? _____

How many did you get right with a partner? _____

[1] Adapted from Ways to Remember
http://www.exploratorium.edu/memory/dont_forget/playing_games_2.html

Answer Key

Ways to Remember

Some people try to remember them just by repeating them over and over, like this: comb, book, can of beans, left shoe, and so on. If you tried that, you were using what scientists call your "working memory".

When you look up a telephone number and repeat it over and over until you dial it, you're using your working memory. Your working memory is great for jobs like remembering a phone number for a few minutes.

But five minutes later, after you made a phone call using this method, you probably won't be able to remember the number. Your working memory can hold a small amount of information for a relatively short time. Repeating a list of things over and over lets you remember some of the items on the list for a little while. But it's tough to store twenty different things in your working memory and remember them long enough to write them down.

One way to remember more things for a longer time is to use what scientists call *"elaborative encoding."* "Encoding" is another word for transforming something into a memory. "Elaborative encoding" lets you connect new information to memories that you already have, and that helps you remember the new information. It can help you move that list of objects out of your working memory and into your long-term memory. (Long-term memory is just what it sounds like: memories that last for a long time -- days or months or years.)