Measuring Memory and Remembering

by Sophia Tutorial

☰ WHAT'S COVERED

The lesson is going to cover the ways memory is measured by focusing on:

1. Measuring Memory
2. Recall
3. Recognition
4. Relearning

1. Measuring Memory

In the process of memory, information is taken in from the outside world, encoded, and stored for later use. The measure of effective processing of information and memories involves whether or not they can be retrieved later on. Measuring memory involves how well a person can remember specific information.

⤳ EXAMPLE When you are taking a test, you want to be able to remember all the facts that you studied. If you don't, you haven't processed the memories well.

It's important to note that memory isn't an all-or-nothing process. It is possible to partially remember things.

⤳ EXAMPLE During the test, you feel like you know an answer, but you can't quite remember it. This is what is called the "tip of the tongue" experience. You know you have a memory, but you're not able to retrieve it.

How do you effectively measure how memory actually works? Well, there are several different ways to do this, including:

- Recall
- Recognition
- Relearning

2. Recall

The first measure of effective formation of memories is **recall**. This is the direct retrieval of information; a

person is able to reproduce the information that they learned. This is done in an exact, or verbatim, way. If you are able to reproduce the information, then you remembered it correctly.

⤳ EXAMPLE An example of recall would be repeating a song or a poem you learned, word for word.

If a particular memory is only partially remembered, then you can often reconstruct that information based on logic.

⤳ EXAMPLE Suppose you are thinking back to your fifth birthday, and you don't have a specific memory of your mother being there. However, you know that your mother was an integral part of your life at that time, so you would logically infer that your mother was there, even though you can't explicitly remember seeing her at that birthday.

This explains why, at times, there can be problems with the recall of certain events. Because a person can piece information together, sometimes incorrect assumptions are made about that memory.

When recalling something like a list of information, there's a certain phenomenon, called **serial position effect**, where a person can usually remember the first and the last items of the list better than the middle items. This occurs because recall can be a very difficult process to accurately and exactly recount everything from memory on your own.

📄 TERMS TO KNOW

Recall
Direct retrieval of information, where a person reproduces information learned

Serial Position Effect
When recalling a list of information, a person usually remembers the first and last items best

3. Recognition

A more sensitive process that makes the retrieval process easier for people is**recognition**. Recognition is being able to recognize information that was previously stored inside your mind.

⤳ EXAMPLE If a test you are taking has multiple choice options, it might be easier to recognize the correct choice, versus a fill-in-the-blank test, which uses recall.

It's important to note that this can lead to certain ideas of false recognition.

⤳ EXAMPLE In eyewitness accounts of crimes with people in a lineup, you are more likely to think that you recognize a person in the lineup, even if the person you are actually looking for isn't there.

📄 TERM TO KNOW

Recognition
Being able to recognize information that was previously stored to retrieve information

4. Relearning

Relearning is the most sensitive process of remembering. Relearning means that a person tries to learn information that they had previously learned.

> ⤶ EXAMPLE As a child, you might have learned the names of all 50 states; then, later on in life, you attempt to relearn that information. It will take a shorter amount of time for you to learn that information than somebody who's learning it for the first time.

📄 **TERM TO KNOW**

Relearning
Retrieval of memory where a person attempts to learn information that they have previously learned

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📋 **SUMMARY**

The **measure of memory** depends on how easily and accurately information is retrieved later on. Memory is not an all-or-nothing process; it is possible to partially remember things. There are three different ways to measure memory: **recall**, **recognition**, and **relearning**. Recall is the ability to retrieve and reproduce information exactly, or verbatim. Recognition is when you are able to recognize information you had previously stored. Relearning is when you attempt to learn information that you have previously learned; it will take you less time than someone who is learning it for the first time.

Good luck!

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Erick Taggart.

📄 **TERMS TO KNOW**

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Recognition
Being able to recognize information that was previously stored to retrieve information.

Relearning
Retrieval of memory where a person attempts to learn information that they have previously learned.

Serial Position Effect
When recalling a list of information, a person usually remembers the first and last items best.