

Application

TASK 14 Study this extract from the summary of a chapter called 'Meet Your Memory', from a guide for students on how to improve memory. List at least five main questions this chapter deals with.

There is no such thing as a memory in the sense of some *thing* that can be seen, touched, or weighed. Memory is an abstraction referring to a set of skills rather than to an object. Neither is there a single standard for judging a good or poor memory. There are a number of different ways in which a person may have a 'good' memory.

Memory is generally viewed as consisting of three stages: (1) acquisition refers to learning the material; (2) storage refers to keeping the material in the brain until it is needed; and (3) retrieval refers to getting the material back out when it is needed. These three stages may be viewed as the 3 R's of Remembering: Recoding, Retaining, and Retrieving. Retrieving is where many problems come. We cannot do much about retrieval directly; but since retrieval is a function of recording, we can improve it by improving our methods of recording.

Memory consists of at least two different processes: short-term memory and long-term memory. Short-term memory has a limited capacity and a rapid forgetting rate. Its capacity can be increased by chunking, or grouping separate bits of information into larger chunks. Long-term memory has a virtually unlimited capacity. Short-term memory and long-term memory also differ in several other ways.

One measure of memory is recall, which requires you to produce information by searching the memory for it. In aided recall, you are given cues to help you produce the information. In free-recall learning you recall the material in any order; in serial learning you recall it in the order it was presented; and in paired-associate learning

you learn pairs of words so that when the first word is given you can recall the second word. A second measure of memory is recognition, in which you do not have to produce the information from memory, but must be able to identify it when it is presented to you. In a third measure of memory, relearning, the difference between how long it took to learn the material the first time and how long it takes to learn it again indicates how much you remember. Relearning is generally a more sensitive measure of memory than is recognition, in the sense of showing retention where recognition does not; recognition is generally a more sensitive measure than recall.

Some material may be remembered in visual form (pictures), and other material may be remembered in verbal form (words). Some research evidence indicates that there are two different memory processes for these two kinds of material. Pictures may be processed differently from words, and concrete words high in imagery may be processed differently from abstract words low in imagery. Visual images are easier to remember than words alone, leading some researchers to suggest that we should try to use visual images as much as possible in memory.

There are several explanations of why we forget. Passive-decay theory says that learning causes a physical 'trace' in the brain that decays with time. Repression theory says that we purposely push unpleasant or unacceptable memories into our unconscious mind. Systematic-distortion theory says that our memories may be distorted by our values and interests, to be