

Why Revise?

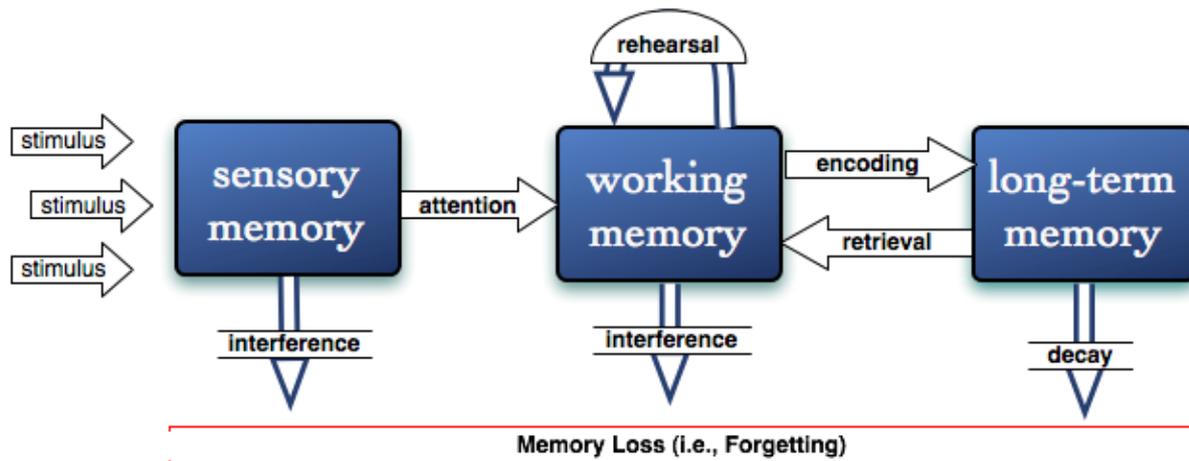


Diagram taken from <http://byuipr.net/564/2013/08/23/cognition-sensory-memory/>

It would be nice if we could just hit the replay button on our brains when we want to remember something, like a computer or a DVD player. Life would be so much easier. We would remember instantly where we left our keys instead of having to remember every step you took after you had them last. We would recall the shopping list or work to-do's without having to write them down and we would also remember 'who said what' rather than continuing to argue when something which was agreed is not remembered the same by those involved. Imagine the peace which would ensue.

Our brain is an amazing organ which never rests. It takes in so much stimuli and information from our environment and organizes it into compartments but it is up to us to do the work to remember it. This work is done in the aptly named 'working memory'. We must work so that the information we want to keep can be stored in our long term memory.

How working memory works?

Let's take reading for example. You are doing some reading with your child and they come to a word they can't read. You are frustrated because you have read this word on the two previous days, have helped your child sound it out successfully and you have even told them what the word is. What's going on?

Your child's working memory is extremely busy at all times. It is constantly taking in all the stimuli from the environment and now it is being asked to concentrate on something else – reading.

It has to stretch into the long term memory banks and **retrieve** what it already knows about letters, their formations, their sounds, their shapes, how you put them together. It finally works out what the word is based on its stored information and success ensues!! Yay!!

But then..... it lets the word go. Noooooooooo!! Why?????

It will let the word go because it is not important. It is far too busy to remember the word you have just told it. Instead it's already busy moving onto the next word which it does know and has to pull from the long term memory banks complete with all the information about sounds, how they go, together etc. Don't forget all this is happening while it is taking in every sight, sound, smell etc. in the environment and deciding if they are important to remember.

At this point we must remember the more positive news. The long term memory holds the base information which enables future learning. In this case, what is in the long term memory bank (how to sound, form and read a word) hasn't been forgotten and has helped your child to be successful reading the word. It's just the word which is gone.....again.

How do we get that word into the long term memory bank so our child can just simply recall it and move on next time?

How can we get the information into our long term memory?

Make it important!

If our survival relied on remembering that word – we would remember it!! How would we make sure to remember it? Repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat. We would walk around repeating it to ourselves, to others, writing it down, making up a rhyme about it, putting it somewhere where we could see it as often as possible – all these strategies until finally it would be 'worked' into our long term memory where we could simply pull it from for later use.

We need to let our working memory know that this word, while not important to our survival, is important. How do we do that? Repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat.

We have to be given as many opportunities as possible to **rehearse and retrieve** any information so it can be 'worked' into the long term memory and while it is in the long term memory it must also be retrieved and rehearsed(used) or it may be forgotten. This is why we revise information from the previous years' learnings before building on it in the new school year.

These [rehearsal strategies](#) (repetition, retrieval, spacing, pacing, use and cognitive depth) are what we use in school on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis and it is why we place so much importance on revision during this time of the year in school. Our children must be given time and opportunities to practice, rehearse, retrieve, repeat, revise all that they have learnt during the year so they can come back in September with all that lovely information stored in their long term memory ready to be accessed and built on in the new school year.

The following link contains strategies which can help your child to rehearse and recall the information they need to lodge in their long term memory bank.

<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/learning-at-home/homework-study-skills/8-working-memory-boosters>

[The Role of Working Memory in Mathematics](#)

[Working Memory Strategies for Literacy \(younger children\)](#)