

Exercise walk-through

2.6

Retrieving Memories

AP Psychology

Retrieving and Forgetting

Retrieval takes two forms: **recall** (producing information without cues) and **recognition** (identifying it among options). Recognition is easier, which is why a multiple-choice question feels easier than an essay.

Practising retrieval helps too – the **testing effect** shows that testing yourself beats rereading.

Memory is reconstructed, not replayed

reconstructive

each recall **rebuilds** the memory from fragments, and can alter it

misinformation effect

information encountered *after* the event changes what a person remembers of it

context-dependent

recall is better in the **place** where the learning happened

state-dependent

recall is better in the same **physical or mood** state

source amnesia

remembering the content but not **where it came from** – the root of many false memories

This is why eyewitness testimony is unreliable, and why the wording of a question can change the answer a witness gives.

Later misinformation and memory accuracy

2025 Article Analysis Question: selected results

Participants watched a video, then received summaries with different amounts of misleading detail. Mean response percentages were:

Summary condition	Correct	Misled
Low misinformation	74%	19%
High misinformation	63%	30%

Explain how a specific finding supports or refutes the misinformation effect. Connect the result with information received after the event.

A finding connected to the memory process

Original worked response: Participants in the high-misinformation group chose misleading answers on 30% of responses, compared with 19% in the low-misinformation group. This supports the **misinformation effect** : more later misleading detail was reflected in participants' reports of the earlier video.

The difference is 11 percentage points. The correct-answer comparison, 63% versus 74%, also shows lower accuracy, but the misled category directly identifies answers matching the later false details.

The official Part F criterion requires an accurately interpreted specific result linked to the concept. Neither a definition alone nor an unexplained number earns both points.

Four failures, all called forgetting

ENCODING FAILURE — it never got in, so it was never forgotten

STORAGE DECAY — the trace weakens over time

RETRIEVAL FAILURE — it is there, and the cue is missing

INTERFERENCE — another memory is in the way, from before or after

The tell is what happens with a **cue**. If a prompt recovers it, the memory was stored and the failure was retrieval

Exercises 2.1-2.2

2.1 State the difference between recall and recognition and say which is easier. [2]

2.2 Explain how a retrieval cue helps. [2]

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2.1

- recall requires producing the information unaided; recognition requires identifying it among options; recognition is easier
-

2.2 Explain how a retrieval cue helps. [2]

2.2

- a cue is a feature associated with the memory at encoding, providing a route back to it

Exercise 2.3 (a)

2.3 A student revises in the room where the exam will be held.

(a) Name the effect being exploited.

[1]

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(a)

- context-dependent memory

Exercise 2.3 (b)

2.3 A student revises in the room where the exam will be held.

(b) State one limitation of relying on it.

[1]

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[1]

(b)

- the effect is modest, and material encoded with meaning transfers across contexts anyway

Exercises 3.1-3.2

3.1 In a 20-item list, items 9 to 12 are usually recalled

[1]

☐

A best of all

B worst of all

C the same as the first items

D the same as the last items

3.2 Remembering an event more easily when in the same mood as when it happened is [1]

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A context-dependent memory

B state-dependent memory

C the serial position effect

D recognition

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- B worst of all
- C the same as the first items
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3.1 B

- middle items are neither rehearsed into long-term memory nor still in short-term memory

3.2 Remembering an event more easily when in the same mood as when it happened is [1]

☐

- A context-dependent memory
- B state-dependent memory
- C the serial position effect
- D recognition

3.2 B

- the internal state acts as a retrieval cue

Exercise 3.3 (a)

3.3 A multiple-choice test yields higher scores than a short-answer test on the same material.

(a) State the reason in terms of retrieval.

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- recognition supplies the retrieval cue directly

Exercise 3.3 (b)

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(b) Explain why a high multiple-choice score may overstate what the student can use.[2]

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- real use usually requires recall, so a score that depends on supplied cues may not predict unaided performance

Exercise 3.4 (a)

3.4 Applied research task. Divers learned a word list either on land or underwater, and were later tested either on land or underwater. Those tested in the same environment in which they had learned recalled about 40% more than those tested in the other environment. In a second study, participants who had been made mildly sad recalled more sad memories than happy ones.

(a) Name the effect shown by the diving study and the effect shown by the second study.[2]

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- **Context-dependent** memory (1); **mood-congruent** memory (1). (State-dependent memory is also acceptable for the second if the answer refers to the internal state.)

Exercise 3.4 (b)

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(b) Explain what both effects show about how retrieval works.

[2]

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- Retrieval works by **cues**: whatever is present at encoding – surroundings, sounds, mood – is encoded alongside the material (1); when those cues are present again they

act as a route back to the memory, so recall improves, and memory failure is often a failure to find the route rather than a loss of the trace (1)

Exercise 3.4 (c)

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(c) A student cannot recall a name but is certain she knows it and can say what letter it begins with. Name this experience and explain what it shows about the difference between storage and retrieval.

[2]

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(c)

- The **tip-of-the-tongue** phenomenon (1). The information is clearly still **stored** – she has partial access to it – so the failure is one of **retrieval**, which shows the two are separable processes (1)

Exercise 3.4 (d)

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(d) State **one** practical recommendation a student could take from the diving study, and explain it.

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(d)

- Revise in conditions similar to the exam room, or reinstate the study context mentally before recalling, because matching the cues present at encoding makes retrieval more likely (1)

Exercise 3.5

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Delay differs with room condition; any recall difference could reflect delay rather than room/context; use equal delays and instructions; randomly assign learners or counterbalance room conditions with comparable material to reduce systematic group differences.