

2 Memory: encoding, storage, and why forgetting happens – Part 1

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Vocabulary

Write each word three times.

English	Write it 3 times (English)		
encoding	_____	_____	_____
storage	_____	_____	_____
retrieval	_____	_____	_____
Retrieval cues	_____	_____	_____
Context-dependent memory	_____	_____	_____
proactive interference	_____	_____	_____
retroactive interference	_____	_____	_____

Recall

- You have forgotten a phone number seconds after hearing it.
- You can still sing a song you have not heard for years.
- You know that testing yourself works better than reading a page again.

New ideas

Read these first. Each idea has a short worked example. Then do the Practice below.

■ 1 Three stages, three failures

Memory has **encoding** (getting information in), **storage** (holding it) and **retrieval** (getting it out). Forgetting can fail at any of the three, and the remedy differs each time.

Worked example. A name you never really attended to was never encoded; a name on the tip of your tongue was encoded and stored but not retrieved.

■ 2 Why cues matter

Retrieval cues are the hooks that bring a memory back. **Context-dependent memory** means recall improves when the surroundings match those at encoding, which is why revisiting a place brings memories with it.

Worked example. You cannot remember why you walked into a room; you go back to where you started and the reason returns - the original context was the cue.

■ 3 Interference

Old learning can block new (**proactive interference**) and new learning can block old (**retroactive interference**). Both are failures of retrieval rather than losses from storage.

Worked example. After changing your password, the old one keeps coming to mind - proactive interference.

Watch out: “I forgot” is not one explanation but three. An answer that does not say *which stage* failed has not explained anything.

Practice

2.1 Name the three stages of memory. [3]

2.2 A name is on the tip of your tongue. State which stage has failed and why. [2]

2.3 Define a retrieval cue. [1]

2.4 Explain what context-dependent memory predicts about revising in the exam room. [2]

2.5 Distinguish proactive from retroactive interference. [2]

2.6 Explain why interference is described as a retrieval failure. [1]
