Class Activities

# Chapter 6: Working Memory: Forming and Using New Memory Traces

## 1. The Importance of Memory

The purpose of this activity is to get your students thinking about how important memory is and how much we rely upon it to perform day-to-day activities.

Tell you students that they have 5 minutes to write down everything they did yesterday that did not require memory. When the 5 minutes are up, ask your students to share what they have written down. Create two columns on an overhead: one for correct responses and one for incorrect responses. While you will certainly get some correct responses (i.e., breathed), you will also get many incorrect responses (i.e., walked). This activity will enable you to have a discussion about how many automatic behaviors, such as walking, does require memory. Walking, after all, is a procedural memory so even though it is automatic and requires no conscious effort, it still is memory-based.

## 2. Create a Mnemonic

For this exercise, divide students into small groups and have them create a mnemonic relative to material in this chapter. Once each group has created their mnemonic have them share with the class. This exercise will not only help students understand mnemonics as their ability to assist in memory retrieval but also in studying the content in this chapter.

## 3. Levels of Processing its Impact on Memory

This exercise is designed to demonstrate how the way we encode information affects our ability to retrieve it. First, divide your class into two groups. Random assignment is best, but if it’s easier to split them down the middle that will be fine, too.

Tell group 2 to put their heads down on their desks and to keep their eyes closed while you present the information from handout 6-1 to group 1 on the overhead.

Then, have group 1 put their heads down and eyes closed while you present the information from handout 6-2 to group 2 on the overhead.

Now, ask all students to write down as many words they can remember on a piece of scratch paper. When they are finished (allow 3 minutes or so), collect the answer sheets and analyze the results. You should find that group 2 remembered more items than group 1. This is because they were required to process each word at a deeper level. Use this to facilitate a discussion about how they may use this knowledge to be better students.

Handout 6-1

*Note:* This exercise works best if you create a PowerPoint presentation. Type one word per slide and adjust the settings so that the slides automatically advance at a constant rate (every 3–5 seconds or so).

*Instructions:* One at a time I will present you with a word. Your job is to keep track of how many of the words presented are typed in all uppercase. You may keep track in your head or by making a mark on a piece of scratch paper.

Dog

MIRROR

BLANKET

Vase

OTTOMAN

Lawnmower

MARKERS

Airplane

DOLL

Book

ENGINE

BASEBALL

Glasses

CRADLE

Overalls

DOORKNOB

Zamboni

BRIDGE

Poster

Baguette

Handout 6-2

*Note:* This exercise works best if you create a PowerPoint presentation. Type one word per slide and adjust the settings so that the slides automatically advance at a constant rate (every 3–5 seconds or so).

*Instructions:* One at a time I will present you with a word. Your job is to determine whether a person could carry what the word is on the bus with them. You may keep track in your head or by making a mark on a piece of scratch paper.

Dog

Mirror

Blanket

Vase

Ottoman

Lawnmower

Markers

Airplane

Doll

Book

Engine

Baseball

Glasses

Cradle

Overalls

Doorknob

Zamboni

Bridge

Poster

Baguette