

TABLE 12.1

Distinguishing Between Near and Far Transfer

DOMAIN	DESCRIPTION	NEAR EXAMPLE	FAR EXAMPLE
Subject matter	Knowledge may transfer to a similar or very different subject matter.	Using knowledge from a calculus class to solve equations in a physics class	Using knowledge of the scientific method (science class) as part of a persuasive writing assignment (English class)
Physical context	Knowledge may transfer from one context to a similar physical context or to a different environment.	Applying knowledge about liquid measures to solving word problems at school	Applying knowledge about liquid measures to bake a cake at home
Functional context	Knowledge learned for one purpose may transfer to a similar purpose or to a very different purpose. ^a	Using knowledge of calculating percentages in math class to solve word problems (both academic purposes)	Using knowledge of calculating percentages (academic) to figure out batting averages of favorite baseball players (recreational)
Temporal context	Near and far transfer can be distinguished by the length of time between learning and transfer.	Transferring knowledge over a short period of time (same or next day)	Transferring knowledge over a longer time lapse (weeks, months, or years later)
Social context	Knowledge in the learning and transfer situations may involve a similar social context or different social contexts.	Working alone in both learning and transfer situations	Using what has been learned from a group activity to do independent research
Modality	Knowledge in learning and transfer situations may involve the same or a different modality.	Listening to a lecture on fetal pig dissection and being able to describe the process to a friend (oral modality for both)	Listening to a lecture on fetal pig dissection and being able to perform the dissection (oral versus hands-on)

SOURCE: Adapted from Barnett and Ceci, 2002.

^a Physical and functional contexts sometimes overlap. For example, baking a cake at home can be far transfer in terms of physical context (outside school) and functional context (real-life purpose). However, physical and functional context can also be distinct. A student may use percentages to calculate his or her favorite players' batting averages at an afterschool program at school (similar physical context, different purpose).