Additional Try It Yourself Exercises Chapter 4

Try It Yourself

Do you prefer multiple-choice tests or essay tests? Why? If you said that "multiple-choice tests are easier", you are reflecting the view that recognition tends to be easier than recall (at least most of the time). What about short-answer tests? Where do they fit in, and why? Have you ever asked a teacher for a hint about a question? What form of memory process do hints involve?

Multiple choice tests involve recognition because the correct answer is given in one of the alternatives, but short-answer tests involve recall because we have to provide the answer, with only a bare hint coming from the question itself. When we ask for a hint, we are asking for an additional piece of information that we might recognise and that lead us to remember more about the topic under evaluation.

Try It Yourself

You may wish to explore your own memory, and how STM and LTM differ; the following examples can give you a starting point:

Short-term memory: To explore the capacity of STM, read through the list of letters below. Read the list slowly, but only once (or ask someone to read it to you). Immediately after the last letter, try to write down the entire sequence in the original order.

L R X D F Q M V S B

For scoring, give yourself credit for each letter recalled in the correct order, not counting

any reversals, omissions, or other errors. Typical recall would be about 6-7 correct.

Long-term memory: Are there episodes of your life, perhaps years in the past, that you remember vividly? What was the situation? Is this an example of episodic, semantic, or procedural memory? What details do you remember? How confident are you that your recall of this memory is accurate? Was it emotionally significant, and if so, positive or negative? (Later in the chapter, we will consider the possibility that recall can be distorted or false, and the significance of emotions in memory.)

Try It Yourself

Would you like to become more creative? Here are some additional techniques that can be helpful:

- Take the time to define the problem. Be very sure of what the problem you want to solve is, and state it as specifically as possible. (If you don't understand a problem, you can't solve it—or you may try to solve the wrong problem!)
- Suspend judgment. DeBono advocated identifying what is 'plus, minus, and interesting' about a situation or idea, in order to avoid premature critical judgments. (Interestingly, writers reviewing products sometimes use this technique!) Using humour can also help, both to reduce the pressure that people sometimes feel when they believe they 'have' to be creative, and to see a situation from a different angle.
- Deliberately try to change your point of view. Imagine how other people might approach the problem: people you know, characters from books or films, historical personages, or people in the news. Even if they are not like you, thinking about this

may ignite different ideas in your own mind.

Many people find that being asked to be creative is stressful for them. They fear that they will not find creative solutions or the solutions they find will be ridiculed. Get over this fear! Creativity is enjoyable. It gives one the chance to think in novel ways, and if done appropriately, without chance of criticism. Most of us have rich fantasy lives in which we create all sorts of interesting situations for ourselves, so let this playful, creative ability that you have manifest itself in other endeavours. Practice in situations in which creativity doesn't matter. Just to pass the time while waiting in line, try thinking of how many different ways you could use a toothbrush for example. Pick up a sketchbook and coloured pens and draw anything abstract and free form. Listen to a piece of music without vocals and imagine what kind of scenery you would set this music to. Have fun!

Try It Yourself

Cognitive dissonance theory can be helpful in understanding a variety of everyday situations. For example, did you ever have to choose between two similar products, bought one, and later decided that this was absolutely the best choice? (Alternatively, you may have felt that you made a mistake as soon as you left the store—this is called *post-decisional regret*.) Perhaps the one you bought really was the best one; on the other hand, you may have *made* it the best one by changing your attitude due to cognitive dissonance. See how cognitive dissonance has been used to explain terrorism in The World Today Box.

Can you think of a situation in which you have experienced dissonance? How did you resolve it? Do you think knowing about Festinger’s theory will make it more or less

likely that you will experience dissonance in the future?

Knowing about Festinger's theory is unlikely to make you less likely to experience cognitive dissonance, but it might make you question yourself more when you make a decision. If you find yourself 'talking yourself into' a decision, you may be attempting to add consonant elements or reducing dissonant elements to a decision. Knowing this, you may want to ask yourself whether the choice you are contemplating is really a good choice or whether it's just the choice you want to make for some other reason.

We usually recall 5-9 items in STM, but we can recall a very large number in LTM. STM recall typically reveals an exact match to the stimuli given, but LTM is different. If you recall an event (or episode) from your past, you are using episodic memory. This memory, as we will see) is liable to be distorted. For example, when we have an argument with someone, don't we usually remember our part as being much more reasonable and controlled than the other person remembers our part as being? And doesn't the other person remember their own reactions as much more reasonable and controlled as we remember them as being? Who's right? (Probably neither one of us!) If you recall the answer to most test questions, you are using semantic memory. This is generally subject to less distortion, but typically our concern is whether we remember the answer at all. If you remember how to play tennis, you are using procedural memory, and this is usually the most accurate. Wherever emotions have the most impact is where the most distortion usually lies. So in episodic memory in particular, emotions can have a great affect of how we remember. This is one reason why many people remember

negative events more than positive events: because they often have a greater emotional impact on us. For example, we often remember the time we made a blunder in a social situation, but we forget the many times we were socially very adept. Often, because we were embarrassed in making the blunder, we recall it as much worse than it really was!