Your notes

GCSE Psychology: revision notes

The multi-store model of memory

Contents

1. The multi-store model (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968)
2. The serial position effect (Murdock, 1962)
3. Evaluating the model
4. Key terms
5. Quick questions
6. What to do next

The multi-store model (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968)

- Information enters sensory memory from the senses. Only what we pay attention to passes to short-term memory (STM).
- STM has a small **capacity** (about 7 plus or minus 2 items) and a short **duration** (about 18 to 30 seconds without **rehearsal**). It mainly encodes acoustically.
- Information that is rehearsed passes into long-term memory (LTM), which has an unlimited **capacity** and can last a lifetime. It mainly encodes semantically.
- Information is retrieved from LTM back into STM when we need it.

The serial position effect (Murdock, 1962)

- Murdock gave participants lists of words and asked them to recall them in any order.
- Words at the start of the list were recalled well (the **primacy effect**), because they had been rehearsed and passed into LTM.
- Words at the end were also recalled well (the **recency effect**), because they were still in STM.
- Words in the middle were recalled least well. This supports the idea of separate STM and LTM stores.

Evaluating the model

- Strengths: evidence such as the **serial position effect**, and case studies of brain damage, suggests STM and LTM are separate.
- Weaknesses: it is too simple (STM and LTM may each have several parts), it overemphasises **rehearsal** (some things are remembered without it), and much evidence comes from artificial lab tasks.

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Key terms

Multi-store model	A model of memory with separate sensory, short-term and long-term stores.
Capacity	How much information a store can hold.
Duration	How long information stays in a store.
Rehearsal	Repeating information to keep it in STM and pass it to LTM.
Primacy effect	Better recall of items at the start of a list.
Recency effect	Better recall of items at the end of a list.
Serial position effect	The pattern of better recall for the start and end of a list.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Who proposed the multi-store model of memory?
2. What is the capacity of short-term memory?
3. What is the capacity of long-term memory?
4. How does information pass from STM to LTM?
5. How is information mainly encoded in STM?
6. What is the primacy effect?
7. Why does the recency effect happen?
8. Who studied the serial position effect?

Answers

1. Atkinson and Shiffrin
2. About 7 plus or minus 2 items
3. Unlimited
4. Through rehearsal
5. Acoustically
6. Better recall of items at the start of a list
7. The last items are still in short-term memory
8. Murdock

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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