

Introduction to Psychology  
*“Factors in Forgetting”*  
Jean Gorski

Objectives:

1. Students will identify factors which can limit the correct retention of information, including the serial position effect, interference and confabulation.
2. Students will identify methods which can help combat the factors involved in forgetting.

Learning Activities:

1. Students will participate in an online experiment which demonstrates the nature of the serial position effect.
2. Students will participate in an online experiment which demonstrates the influence of interference on memory.
3. Students will participate in an online experiment which demonstrates the nature of confabulation in memory reconstruction.
4. Students will participate in a class discussion in which they compare their individual results with the rest of the class. What trends do you see? What does this suggest about why we forget? How might a person combat these effects?

Culminating Learning Activity:

1. Students will write a 1-page fictional letter to a friend who is struggling with memory retention. Students will demonstrate their understanding of interference, confabulation, and the serial position effect by suggesting methods to combat the negative influence of these factors.

Samples of Materials Used in this Lesson:

1. Web activity: The Serial Position Effect  
<http://www.essex.ac.uk/psychology/experiments/memtask.html>
2. Web activity: The Role of Interference in Short-term Memory  
[http://www.wadsworth.com/psychology\\_d/templates/stripped\\_features/try\\_online/TIY/ka\\_lat\\_intro\\_06.html](http://www.wadsworth.com/psychology_d/templates/stripped_features/try_online/TIY/ka_lat_intro_06.html)
3. Web activity: Confabulation: The Creation of False Memories  
[http://www.wadsworth.com/psychology\\_d/templates/stripped\\_features/try\\_online/TIY/ka\\_lat\\_intro\\_07.html](http://www.wadsworth.com/psychology_d/templates/stripped_features/try_online/TIY/ka_lat_intro_07.html)

### Laptop Implications:

In this one-day lesson, each student is able to individually participate in the experiments listed above. By obtaining individual results, students are able to apply the content of the lesson to their own experience, making an important connection between theory and practice. The laptops allow students the opportunity to experience psychological principles in the real world, as opposed to just reading about them in a textbook.

### Role of the Instructor:

**Preparation:** It is the instructor's responsibility to post up-to-date links for the experiments in the Blackboard shell. The instructor will also ensure that headphones are available for the online experiments.

**During the lesson:** The instructor will introduce the topic of forgetting by leading a review session in which students cite examples of encoding aids. Students will then discuss if it is reasonable to assume that a lack of encoding is the only reason why a person forgets. During the laptop portion of class, the instructor will circulate to assist with any technological problems, to answer questions, and to discuss individual results. After the experiments have been completed, the instructor will lead a discussion of the results from the experiments, and challenge students to consider any discrepancies between individual results. Finally, the instructor will explain the culminating activity and answer any student questions.

### Student Reaction:

Students very much enjoy the opportunity to participate in online experiments. Typical in-class survey results include comments such as, "I love the experiments and demonstrations we do in class. They help me to understand more about what we're studying." Because experiments such as these provide teachers with the means to accommodate different learning modalities, the success rate for student achievement is high.