

Memory

- “Memory is the process of maintaining information over time.” (Matlin, 2005)
- It is all about the storage and retrieval of information.
- Psychologists (scientists that study the brain) think about memory in 3 stages:
 1. **Encoding:** memory comes into our memory system and we need to change it into a format we can cope with to store it - a picture, a sound or a meaning. Our short term memory mostly stores by sound, our long term memory often stores by meaning.
 2. **Storage:** Most adults can store 5-9 items in their short term memory (STM), but long term memory (LTM) is unlimited. STM only stores for around 30 seconds.
 3. **Retrieval:** When we get information out of storage, our STM is stored and retrieved in order but LTM is stored and retrieved by association.

There are a number of different strategies for memorisation.

Chunking: It is easier to memorise information when you break it up into small chunks. That's because most people can only remember between 5 and 9 items at a time. We use chunking every day to remember phone numbers. Have a practice with these:

- 3917058
- 45413604
- 23935422
- 701257890

Chaining: This is based on visualisation and imagination and chains random items by building a story around these items to link them together - usually the weirder the better for sticking in your mind!

Rhyming: Music is incredibly helpful for memory. As LTM is retrieved by association, the rhythm and rhyme in music helps us to unlock the information that we associate with these cues and clues. Putting information to a beat or a song might help you to remember it better!

Teaching: you are likely to remember a great proportion of what you can teach others! Talk out loud about the thing you are trying to remember.

Acronyms and mnemonics: We've all tried these - to remember the planets for example. A sentence or word where each letter stands for a memory trigger can help you to remember them better.

Memory Palaces: This is an unusual one to try. Picture a room you know well and visualise the different words or pieces of information in places all over the room. As you walk through the room or house, collect the different information!

Put all this to the test: how many of the 54 African countries can you remember?