

Why we forget

Introduction

- **Level:** C1
- **Skills:** Reading
- **Topics:** Vocabulary
- **Merging subjects:** Psychology

The enigma

- **Keywords**

Vocabulary related to memory

- **Toolbox**

handouts

- **Description of the enigma**

The students are given the following text:

There are many theories explaining how and why we forget. Most people accept that memory fades as we get older (though some might dispute this); that a shock or trauma can cause memory loss; that a terrible experience can be so far suppressed that it might never have happened. The latter is sometimes referred to as motivated forgetting. Yet day-to-day forgetting, something we all experience, is more puzzling, and in some ways more worrying, because there's no obvious explanation.

The idea that memories dim over time goes back to the time of Plato and beyond, but on its own, it is not enough to explain forgetting. While it is true that much information is lost shortly after it is learnt, it depends on factors such as how the information was learnt and how often it was reinforced; this is necessary if it is to pass from the short-term memory, where it only lasts for 15-30 seconds, to the long-term memory, from where it has to be retrieved when you need to remember a date or a PIN. When information doesn't get stored in the long-term memory, this is known as an encoding failure.



Why we forget

Retrieval failure is another theory about forgetting which says that all new information creates a memory trace and that these traces can decay over time. What may make a trace weak is lack of reinforcement, as does interference, at the time of learning. This can mean either that a person was distracted or lacked concentration, or that other memories interfered with the new information, especially if the new information is similar to information already possessed.

A message is displayed on the board: read the text carefully and then decode the two statements and decide which one is correct according to the text.

The Morse Code Alphabet will be hanged on a wall, big enough for the students to see.

Morse Code Alphabet

A	.-	B	-...	C	-.-.	D	-..	E	.	F	..-
G	--.	H	I	..	J	.-..	K	-.-	L	.-..
M	--	N	-.	O	---	P	.-..	Q	--.-	R	.-.
S	...	T	-	U	..-	V	...-	W	.-.	X	-.-.
Y	-.-	Z	--..								



