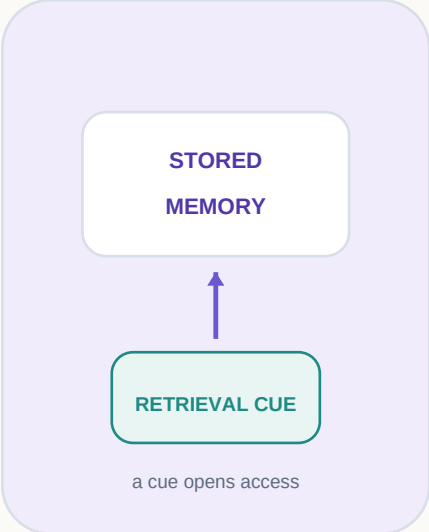
AP PSYCHOLOGY | UNIT 2

TOPIC 2.6

Retrieving Memories

Retrieval gets stored information back into awareness. Cues, matching conditions, and active practice shape access.



THE RETRIEVAL PATH

CUE — a prompt appears → **SEARCH** — memory activates → **ACCESS** — trace is reached → **REPORT** — answer returns

BY THE END, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO...

1. Compare recall and recognition and explain retrieval cues.
2. Distinguish context-, mood-, and state-dependent retrieval.
3. Explain retrieval practice, the testing effect, and metacognition.

BIG IDEA

A memory can be stored but temporarily inaccessible. Retrieval success depends on the route back to it.

1 Cues guide access

Recognition provides support; recall asks the learner to produce information with fewer cues.

RECALL VS RECOGNITION

RECALL

Produce information with few or no external cues.

Example: short-answer question

RECOGNITION

Identify previously learned information when cues are present.

Example: multiple-choice question

RETRIEVAL CUE Any prompt linked to a stored trace - a word, smell, image, location, or question - can help trigger access.

WHAT MATCHES ENCODING?

CONTEXT

Same environment or surrounding setting.

SAME ROOM

MOOD

Current mood makes mood-matching material easier to retrieve.

SAME FEELING

STATE

Same physical or internal state as during encoding.

SAME STATE

MATCHING PRINCIPLE

Retrieval often improves when the conditions at recall resemble the cues or conditions present during encoding.

2 Practice retrieval, not familiarity

Actively pulling information from memory strengthens the route used to find it again.

REREADING VS RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

REREADING

Re-exposure can feel fluent because the material looks familiar, but familiarity may overstate mastery.

FEELS EASY

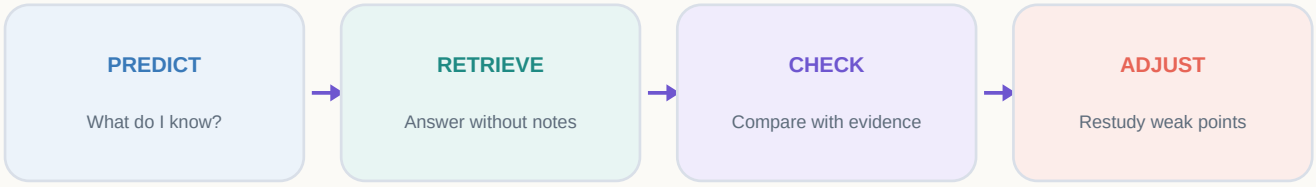
RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

Answer from memory, use flashcards correctly, or take a practice test before checking notes.

BUILDS ACCESS

TESTING EFFECT Memory improves when study includes active retrieval, especially when feedback corrects errors.

METACOGNITION: MONITOR AND ADJUST



A FOUR-STEP STUDY PROTOCOL

1. Close the notes and generate an answer.
2. Check accuracy and mark the exact gap.
3. Explain the corrected answer in your own words.
4. Return later and retrieve it again.