

SHORT-TERM MEMORY

Short-term memory (STM) is a temporary store for information. Information in this store gets forgotten or, if important, kept in another store - the long-term memory store.

One important component of STM is what is called the "working memory". The working memory component takes the information held in the main STM store and uses it in some way. For example, we use working memory when we do mental arithmetic.

Example for using your working memory:

carefully read the following sentence through ONCE ONLY and then try to work out the sum in your head. Add 5 and 3 and 8 and 4 and then divide by 2.

Poor short-term memory, especially in the visual and auditory modalities, is often associated with dyslexia. Below are some of the difficulties it causes:

General difficulties

- remembering telephone numbers
- copying down numbers correctly
- remembering messages, instructions and directions
- keeping track of ideas when speaking, listening or writing
- remembering people's names
- remembering where things have been put

Study difficulties

- taking notes in lectures
- formulating responses to questions in seminars

Workplace difficulties

- taking notes in meetings
- following discussions
- following oral instructions
- taking telephone messages

Managing the difficulties:

- break numbers and words into chunks
- read sentences slowly and methodically
- try to identify the central theme of each paragraph you read
- request repeats or written back-up for instructions
- ask for instructions to be given in visual form, eg, flow charts
- use set formats for telephone messages
- use visual symbols or pictures as cues and reminders
- tape record instructions / lectures / meetings
- take regular rest breaks
- do relaxation exercises