MEMORY 101
TBH 3 STEPS TO LEARNING AND MEMORY HANDOUT

The three steps of memory – Acquisition, Storage and Retrieval – is the framework for how we learn and remember everything. To improve our memories, we first need to understand how memory works:

Step 1: Acquisition. The first step of memory is Acquisition. Acquisition is the step by which we take in the new information. Acquisition requires us to be able to sense – that is to hear, see, smell, feel or taste the "information" we are learning. In addition, attention is critical to acquisition. We have to be able to focus on this new information to acquire it effectively. Because it relies on sensation and attention, the acquisition stage of memory is very sensitive to interference. Often, we think we have forgotten something when we never actually "got it in the first place."

Step 2: Storage. The second step of memory is Storage. At this step, we take the information we successfully "got" or acquired and "move" it into "storage" so that we effectively put it away for when we need it. This step is also referred to as "encoding." Storage is perhaps the least understood step of memory, as the process our brains use to store different kinds of information is complex and can differ across individuals. However, this step is tremendously important as we work to improve our memories. Why? Because it is at this step – storage – that memory strategies come into play. These strategies work by enhancing our "storage" of this new information, making it much more likely we will later remember things like someone's name or a conversation. And this is exactly what we will be learning how to do in this course together!

Step 3: Retrieval. The last step of memory is Retrieval. Retrieval is the step we are truly referring to when we talk about "remembering." To retrieve, we go into our brain's "storage" and access information we effectively acquired previously.

It is these 3 steps of memory that we use to learn and remember everything. And while memory is a complex part of cognitive function, in some ways it is just as simple as this "1-2-3" framework.