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Does delayed interim testing enhance subsequent learning?

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Abstract

Testing on previously learned materials can enhance the learning of new materials studied after the test (the forward effect of testing). We examined how the timing of interim testing influenced subsequent learning. Participants studied trivia facts in two learning sections (A & B) and provided a mental effort rating for each section. Between the two sections, participants either restudied, took an immediate test, or a 15-min delayed test on Section A. They then proceeded to Section B and took a final test on both sections. The results demonstrated that both the immediate and delayed testing groups outperformed the restudy group on Section B, indicating that the forward effect of testing was independent of the test timing. Furthermore, the testing groups showed a bigger increase in their mental effort from Section A to B than the restudy group, suggesting that the forward testing effect occurred probably due to more mental effort.