

GRADE A* EVALUATION BOOKLET

AQA
A Level
2025 spec

Memory

Sample Copy - Not all pages are included

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Thank you for downloading this resource, I hope you find it useful!

You might have downloaded this booklet because you feel that your AO3 evaluation notes lack depth. Drawing from my experience of assisting numerous students studying AQA A-level Psychology, I've observed that a common challenge is the absence of adequate depth in AO3 notes. Recognising this need, I created this booklet as a valuable resource for students aiming for higher grades.

For students aiming for Grade A*/A, it is imperative to ensure that you have a sufficient depth of analysis in your essays.

Suggested way of using the A* Evaluation Booklet

- You can use this booklet as a supplement to your class notes to ensure that you have detailed AO3 analysis.
- Once you have sufficient detail in your notes, the next step is to work on memorising the information. Memorising every paragraph word for word is not feasible, so it's important to use techniques to store the information in your long-term memory. One effective method is to condense each paragraph into a flow diagram using a few key words for each point. You should then focus on learning this flow diagram and practice rewriting the points without referring to your notes. Afterwards, you can compare your written response to the exemplar provided in the booklet. Repeat this process until you have achieved an appropriate level of detail.
- You can also use this booklet to have to write out essays in the **Essay Planning booklet**. The essay planning booklet will walk you through writing an essay for each subtopic on the specification. The scaffolded templates will ensure you have the appropriate number of AO1 and AO3. You can pick your favourite A* evaluations from this booklet to help you write the perfect essays!

By keeping organised and approaching the A-level Psychology course systematically, you can ensure that you don't overlook any content, and it will greatly enhance your preparation for the crucial exams.

Good luck!

Marie

Other resources for AQA A-level Psychology which you may find useful are:

- PowerPoint Lessons
- A* Evaluation booklets
- Cornell Notes booklets
- Topic Summaries
- Revision Activities booklets
- Essay Planning booklet
- Topic Essays

Coding, capacity & duration

How do the stores differ?

Coding

A **limitation** of Baddeley's findings on the encoding of STM is the presence of contradictory research evidence.

Brandimonte et al. (1992) discovered that participants used visual coding in STM when engaged in a visual task and prevented from verbal rehearsal before having to visually recall the information. Additionally, Nelson and Rothbart (1972) found evidence of acoustic coding in LTM.

These findings indicate that encoding is not consistently acoustic in STM and semantic in LTM.

As a result, the generalisation of Baddeley's findings to all types of learning is not equally applicable.

A **limitation** of Baddeley's research is the lack of ecological validity in the findings. The research was conducted in a laboratory setting, and caution must be exercised when generalising the findings to real-world contexts.

Baddeley utilised meaningless words to test participants' recall, which does not accurately reflect how memory is typically employed in real-life situations. In everyday life, memory often carries more personal significance, such as remembering people's birthdays or recalling daily activities.

Therefore, since the task employed by Baddeley lacked mundane realism, the results may not accurately reflect how memory functions in real-world settings.

A **strength** of Baddeley's findings into coding is that they demonstrate the existence of distinct and separate memory stores.

This is evident in the important finding that short-term memory is coded acoustically, whilst long-term memory is coded semantically.

This discovery played a crucial role in the development of the multi store model of memory which was the first ever model of memory and has since sparked a significant volume of research.

Baddeley's findings have been replicated many times showing it is a reliable result.

Capacity

A **limitation** of Miller's research is that he may have overestimated the capacity of STM.

Cowan (2001) conducted a review of research and concluded that the capacity of STM is closer to 4 chunks of information. This falls towards the lower end of Miller's suggested capacity of 5, meaning that 4 may be a more appropriate 'Magic Number' than 7.

It is important to consider that memory can be influenced by individual differences such as age, which may make it challenging to draw universal conclusions in this area of research. The contrast in these findings could be explained by individual differences in the samples being used.

A **limitation** of Miller's research on capacity is that he was vague as he did not specify whether the size of the group mattered in chunking.

Simon (1974) discovered that individuals have a smaller STM capacity when dealing with larger chunks such as 8-word phrases, compared to single syllable words.

This finding suggests that the size of the chunk is important and that Miller's explanation alone is not sufficient to fully account for the capacity of STM.

However, despite this limitation the research does support the perspective that STM does possess a limited capacity.

A **limitation** of the research on capacity is the lack of ecological validity in the findings due to the often, artificial settings in which the research is conducted.

Studies by **Jacobs and Miller**, for instance, utilised meaningless words, numbers, and objects to test participants' recall, which does not accurately reflect how memory is typically used in real-world contexts.

In everyday life, memory often carries much more personal significance, such as remembering people's birthdays or recalling daily activities.

Therefore, as the experimental tasks often lack mundane realism, the results may only generalised with caution to real-world scenarios.

Duration

A **limitation** of the methodology used by Peterson & Peterson is that the task may not have been measuring trace decay but instead displacement, lowering the construct validity of the research.

The participants were asked to engage in a distraction task of counting backwards in 3s or 4s. This complex task could have overwritten the trigrams and resulted in displacement rather than solely preventing rehearsal.

Reitman (1974) found that the duration of STM is longer, when conducting a study using auditory tones instead of counting backwards in numbers to prevent displacement.

This suggests that the validity of the results from Peterson & Peterson were compromised.

A **limitation** of **Peterson & Peterson** is that the results have questionable ecological validity. The stimulus material, of the consonant trigram, used in the task was highly artificial and therefore lacked in mundane realism. Memorising trigrams does not reflect real-life examples of memory.

In real-life settings, people are often required to remember personal events and birthdays, which hold greater personal significance than nonsensical syllables.

However, it is worth noting that in certain everyday situations, we do need to remember meaningless information like phone numbers, car registration numbers and postcodes. In these instances, the trigram task may be representative of real-life memory demands.

A **strength** of **Bahrick's** results is that they have higher ecological validity compared to Peterson & Peterson's research on duration.

This is because participants' memory was tested on their own high school classmates, which increases mundane realism and enhances the generalisability of the results to other settings.

However, this approach also introduces confounding variables. For instance, some participants may have frequently looked at their yearbooks, while others did not. This compromises the internal validity of the results, as the frequency of looking at year books may have confounded the results.

Therefore, it can be argued that Bahrick's research demonstrates high ecological validity but low internal validity. These considerations should be noted when generalising the findings.

The Multi-Store Model of Memory

How does memory work?

A **strength** of the multi-store model (MSM) is the supportive research derived from the case study of HM.

HM experienced severe damage to his LTM, as evidenced by his inability to recall information such as repeatedly reading the same magazine without remembering it. However, his STM remained intact, for example he performed well on tests of immediate digit span.

This supports the existence of separate and independent memory stores for STM and LTM, increasing the validity of the model.

However, the case study also highlights a limitation of the model as it claimed that LTM was one unitary store. HM found that he could make new procedural LTM but not new episodic and semantic memories. Therefore, the one case study both supports and challenges different components of the model.

A **strength** of the multi-store model (MSM) is the supportive evidence from brain scans, indicating that short-term memory (STM) and long-term memory (LTM) are distinct memory stores.

Beardsley (1997) discovered that the prefrontal cortex exhibits activity during STM tasks, such as decision-making, but not during LTM tasks. Similarly, **Squire (1992)** found that the hippocampus is active when engaging in LTM processes.

These findings provide scientific and objective evidence that different parts of the brain are active during different types of memory usage, supporting the notion of multiple memory stores.

This evidence enhances the validity of the theory.

A **limitation** of the multi-store model (MSM) is the over emphasis on the role of maintenance rehearsal; other researchers have suggested that deeper processing is more important.

Craik and Lockhart (1972) conducted a study in which participants were asked questions about a list of words that involved either shallow or deep processing e.g. shallow processing tasks asked if the word was printed in capitals, while deep processing asked if the word fitted within a sentence. They found that participants remembered more words when they engaged in deeper processing.

This alternative explanation for the formation of LTM was developed into the Levels of Processing theory.

This challenges the core concept of maintenance rehearsal in the MSM, suggesting deep processing is more important than the maintenance rehearsal.

A **limitation** of the multi-store model (MSM) is that it is an oversimplified explanation of memory.

More recent research by **Baddeley & Hitch** has shown that the STM store is made of multiple components. They proposed the Working Memory Model which suggests that STM is made up of several components including the central executive, phonological loop, visuo-spatial sketchpad and episodic buffer.

So, whilst the model has been very influential in sparking a significant body of research, the model itself is now outdated.

In current psychological practice the WMM has replaced the concept of the STM store.

Marie is the current Head of Psychology at a Top 10 School in the UK and also a private tutor. She is a qualified teacher with an MSc Psychology, MBA and LLB (Hons) Law degree. She has authored for the Psychology Review magazine and has presented at A Level student conferences. She loves helping students achieve their potential by creating high quality resources - that work!

For free study advice and more resources visit www.alevelpsychologytutor.co.uk

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