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## **The Internet is changing our memory**

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1107/110718-memory.html>

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**18th July, 2011**

# THE ARTICLE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1107/110718-memory.html>

New research suggests the Internet is changing our memory. Researchers from Colombia University presented people with different questions and found many began to think of computers. Lead researcher Dr Betsy Sparrow said that when test participants knew the answers would be available on a computer, they did less well on the memory tests. She said we use the Internet as a new "transactive memory". We rely on this to do the remembering for us. It's similar to our personal data being backed up on a hard disk. The Internet acts as a huge storage device for all the world's knowledge, that is there when we need it. Dr Sparrow said computers were not making us less intelligent. "I don't think Google is making us stupid. We're just changing the way that we're remembering things," she said.

Dr Sparrow believes we are becoming very good at remembering where we keep information in different folders on our computers. She said: "This suggests that for the things we can find online, we tend to keep it online as far as memory is concerned - we keep it externally stored." She explained that because we are remembering the location of the information, rather than the information itself, we are becoming better at organising huge quantities of data and facts in a more accessible way. She also said the way we use technology is changing our need to remember things, saying: "If you can find stuff online even while you're walking down the street these days, then the skill to have, the thing to remember is where to go to find the information."

# WARM-UPS

**1. MEMORY:** Walk around the class and talk to other students about memory. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

*research / our memory / questions / participants / Internet / rely on / storage / stupid / remembering / folders / find things online / location / technology / these days / skill*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. COMPUTERS:** How have they changed life? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you wrote. Change and share again.

	Good things	Bad things
Studying		
Leisure		
Hobbies		
Personal information		
Travel		
Money		

**4. INTERNET:** Students A **strongly** believe the Internet makes us more intelligent; Students B **strongly** believe it doesn't. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

**5. ONLINE:** What's most important for you? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- e-mail
- storing data
- gaming
- downloading
- social networking
- chat
- search
- shopping

**6. DATA:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'data'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1107/110718-memory.html>

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. The Internet is changing how we remember the past.                    | T / F |
| b. People doing a test did less well when they knew answers were online. | T / F |
| c. There is a new kind of memory called "transitional memory".           | T / F |
| d. A researcher says Google is making us more stupid.                    | T / F |
| e. The researcher said folders help us remember where we put data.       | T / F |
| f. The researcher said we remember the info location and not the info.   | T / F |
| g. She said we are getting better at organizing huge amounts of info.    | T / F |
| h. The researcher said we need to store memories of streets.             | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article.

- |                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. suggests    | a. depend          |
| 2. different   | b. talent          |
| 3. rely        | c. enormous        |
| 4. huge        | d. thinks          |
| 5. intelligent | e. things          |
| 6. believes    | f. proposes        |
| 7. tend to     | g. a variety       |
| 8. quantities  | h. have a habit of |
| 9. stuff       | i. clever          |
| 10. skill      | j. amounts         |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Researchers from                    | a. on the memory tests        |
| 2. participants knew the answers would | b. find the information       |
| 3. they did less well                  | c. we keep information        |
| 4. personal data being backed          | d. be available on a computer |
| 5. I don't think Google is             | e. it online                  |
| 6. good at remembering where           | f. of data and facts          |
| 7. we tend to keep                     | g. Colombia University        |
| 8. organising huge quantities          | h. stuff online               |
| 9. you can find                        | i. making us stupid           |
| 10. where to go to                     | j. up on a hard disk          |

# WHILE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1107/110718-memory.html>

**GAP FILL:** Put the words into the gaps in the text.

New research (1) \_\_\_\_\_ the Internet is changing our memory. Researchers from Columbia University presented people with different questions and found many (2) \_\_\_\_\_ to think of computers. Lead researcher Dr Betsy Sparrow said that when test participants knew the answers would be (3) \_\_\_\_\_ on a computer, they did less well on the memory tests. She said we use the Internet as a new "transactive memory". We (4) \_\_\_\_\_ on this to do the remembering for us. It's similar to our personal (5) \_\_\_\_\_ being backed up on a hard disk. The Internet acts as a huge storage (6) \_\_\_\_\_ for all the world's knowledge, that is there when we need it. Dr Sparrow said computers were not making us (7) \_\_\_\_\_ intelligent. "I don't think Google is making us (8) \_\_\_\_\_. We're just changing the way that we're remembering things," she said.

*device*

*rely*

*began*

*less*

*suggests*

*data*

*stupid*

*available*

Dr Sparrow believes we are (9) \_\_\_\_\_ very good at remembering where we keep information in different (10) \_\_\_\_\_ on our computers. She said: "This suggests that for the things we can find online, we tend to keep it online as (11) \_\_\_\_\_ as memory is concerned - we keep it externally stored." She explained that because we are remembering the (12) \_\_\_\_\_ of the information, rather than the information itself, we are becoming better at organising (13) \_\_\_\_\_ quantities of data and facts in a more accessible way. She also said the way we use technology is changing our (14) \_\_\_\_\_ to remember things, saying: "If you can find stuff online even while you're walking down the (15) \_\_\_\_\_ these days, then the skill to have, the thing to remember is where to go to (16) \_\_\_\_\_ the information."

*huge*

*street*

*folders*

*becoming*

*find*

*location*

*need*

*far*

## **LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps**

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1107/110718-memory.html>

New research suggests the Internet is changing our memory. Researchers from Columbia University presented \_\_\_\_\_ and found many began to think of computers. Lead researcher Dr Betsy Sparrow said that \_\_\_\_\_ the answers would be available on a computer, they did less well on the memory tests. She said we use the Internet as a \_\_\_\_\_. We rely on this to do the remembering for us. It's similar to our \_\_\_\_\_ up on a hard disk. The Internet acts as \_\_\_\_\_ all the world's knowledge, that is there when we need it. Dr Sparrow said computers were not making us less intelligent. "I don't think Google is making us stupid. We're \_\_\_\_\_ that we're remembering things," she said.

Dr Sparrow \_\_\_\_\_ good at remembering where we keep information in different folders on our computers. She said: "This suggests that for the things we can find online, \_\_\_\_\_ far as memory is concerned - we keep it externally stored." She explained that because we are remembering the \_\_\_\_\_, rather than the information itself, we are becoming better at organising huge \_\_\_\_\_ in a more accessible way. She also said the way we use technology is \_\_\_\_\_ things, saying: "If you can find stuff online even while you're walking down the street these days, then the skill to have, \_\_\_\_\_ is where to go to find the information."

# AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1107/110718-memory.html>

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'Internet' and 'memory'.

<b>Internet</b>	<b>memory</b>
-----------------	---------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• suggests</li><li>• questions</li><li>• answers</li><li>• rely</li><li>• device</li><li>• stupid</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• folders</li><li>• tend</li><li>• externally</li><li>• huge</li><li>• stuff</li><li>• skill</li></ul>
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# STUDENT MEMORY SURVEY

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1107/110718-memory.html>

Write five GOOD questions about memory in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

## MEMORY DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'memory'?
- c) How is your memory?
- d) What techniques do you use to remember things?
- e) How would life be different if you had a better memory?
- f) Do you think the Internet is changing our memory?
- g) Is there a relationship between computers and your memory?
- h) Do you think computers are making us less or more intelligent?
- i) How can computers aid our memory?
- j) Are computers having a negative impact on children?

*The Internet is changing our memory - 18th July, 2011*  
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## MEMORY DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Are you good at remembering where you keep information?
- c) Do you remember passwords or let your computer remember them?
- d) How forgetful are you?
- e) Do you think you have too much information online?
- f) Are computers changing our need to remember things?
- g) Have you ever forgot a password?
- h) What do you think of the research in this article?
- i) Would you need to remember more things if you didn't have a computer?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Dr Betsy Sparrow?

# LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1107/110718-memory.html>

New research suggests the Internet is changing our memory. Researchers from Columbia University (1) \_\_\_\_ people with different questions and found many began to think of computers. (2) \_\_\_\_ researcher Dr Betsy Sparrow said that when test participants knew the answers would (3) \_\_\_\_ available on a computer, they did less well on the memory tests. She said we use the Internet as a new "transactive memory". We rely (4) \_\_\_\_ this to do the remembering for us. It's similar to our personal data being backed up on a hard disk. The Internet acts (5) \_\_\_\_ a huge storage device for all the world's knowledge, that is there when we need it. Dr Sparrow said computers were not making us less (6) \_\_\_\_\_. "I don't think Google is making us stupid. We're just changing the way that we're remembering things," she said.

Dr Sparrow believes we are becoming very good at remembering where we keep information in different (7) \_\_\_\_ on our computers. She said: "This suggests that for the things we can find online, we tend (8) \_\_\_\_ keep it online as far as memory (9) \_\_\_\_ concerned - we keep it externally stored." She explained that because we are remembering the location of the information, (10) \_\_\_\_ than the information itself, we are becoming better at organising huge quantities of data and facts in a more (11) \_\_\_\_ way. She also said the way we use technology is changing our need to remember things, saying: "If you can find stuff online even while you're walking down the street (12) \_\_\_\_ days, then the skill to have, the thing to remember is where to go to find the information."

## Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- |     |                |                |                  |                 |
|-----|----------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1.  | (a) presenter  | (b) presenters | (c) presentation | (d) presented   |
| 2.  | (a) Iron       | (b) Steel      | (c) Lead         | (d) Leader      |
| 3.  | (a) have       | (b) be         | (c) do           | (d) give        |
| 4.  | (a) on         | (b) in         | (c) to           | (d) at          |
| 5.  | (a) was        | (b) has        | (c) as           | (d) is          |
| 6.  | (a) normal     | (b) stupid     | (c) average      | (d) intelligent |
| 7.  | (a) files      | (b) folders    | (c) documents    | (d) PDFs        |
| 8.  | (a) to         | (b) for        | (c) from         | (d) at          |
| 9.  | (a) be         | (b) is         | (c) are          | (d) been        |
| 10. | (a) prefer     | (b) instead    | (c) rather       | (d) not         |
| 11. | (a) accessible | (b) access     | (c) accessing    | (d) accesses    |
| 12. | (a) they       | (b) them       | (c) those        | (d) these       |



# HOMework

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find out more about computers and our memory. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. MEMORY:** Make a poster about our memory. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

**4. COMPUTERS:** Write a magazine article about how computers are changing our lives. Include imaginary interviews with people who are for and against it.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

**5. LETTER:** Write a letter to a memory expert. Ask him/her three questions about our memory. Give him/her three opinions on this article. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

# ANSWERS

## TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F      b. T      c. F      d. F      e. T      f. T      g. T      h. F

## SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. suggests    | a. proposes        |
| 2. different   | b. a variety       |
| 3. rely        | c. depend          |
| 4. huge        | d. enormous        |
| 5. intelligent | e. clever          |
| 6. believes    | f. thinks          |
| 7. tend to     | g. have a habit of |
| 8. quantities  | h. amounts         |
| 9. stuff       | i. things          |
| 10. skill      | j. talent          |

## PHRASE MATCH:

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Researchers from                    | a. Columbia University        |
| 2. participants knew the answers would | b. be available on a computer |
| 3. they did less well                  | c. on the memory tests        |
| 4. personal data being backed          | d. up on a hard disk          |
| 5. I don't think Google is             | e. making us stupid           |
| 6. good at remembering where           | f. we keep information        |
| 7. we tend to keep                     | g. stuff online               |
| 8. organising huge quantities          | h. of data and facts          |
| 9. you can find                        | i. it online                  |
| 10. where to go to                     | j. find the information       |

## GAP FILL:

### The Internet is changing our memory

New research (1) **suggests** the Internet is changing our memory. Researchers from Colombia University presented people with different questions and found many (2) **began** to think of computers. Lead researcher Dr Betsy Sparrow said that when test participants knew the answers would be (3) **available** on a computer, they did less well on the memory tests. She said we use the Internet as a new "transactive memory". We (4) **rely** on this to do the remembering for us. It's similar to our personal (5) **data** being backed up on a hard disk. The Internet acts as a huge storage (6) **device** for all the world's knowledge, that is there when we need it. Dr Sparrow said computers were not making us (7) **less** intelligent. "I don't think Google is making us (8) **stupid**. We're just changing the way that we're remembering things," she said.

Dr Sparrow believes we are (9) **becoming** very good at remembering where we keep information in different (10) **folders** on our computers. She said: "This suggests that for the things we can find online, we tend to keep it online as (11) **far** as memory is concerned - we keep it externally stored." She explained that because we are remembering the (12) **location** of the information, rather than the information itself, we are becoming better at organising (13) **huge** quantities of data and facts in a more accessible way. She also said the way we use technology is changing our (14) **need** to remember things, saying: "If you can find stuff online even while you're walking down the (15) **street** these days, then the skill to have, the thing to remember, is where to go to (16) **find** the information."

## LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - d    2 - c    3 - b    4 - a    5 - c    6 - d    7 - b    8 - a    9 - b    10 - c    11 - a    12 - d