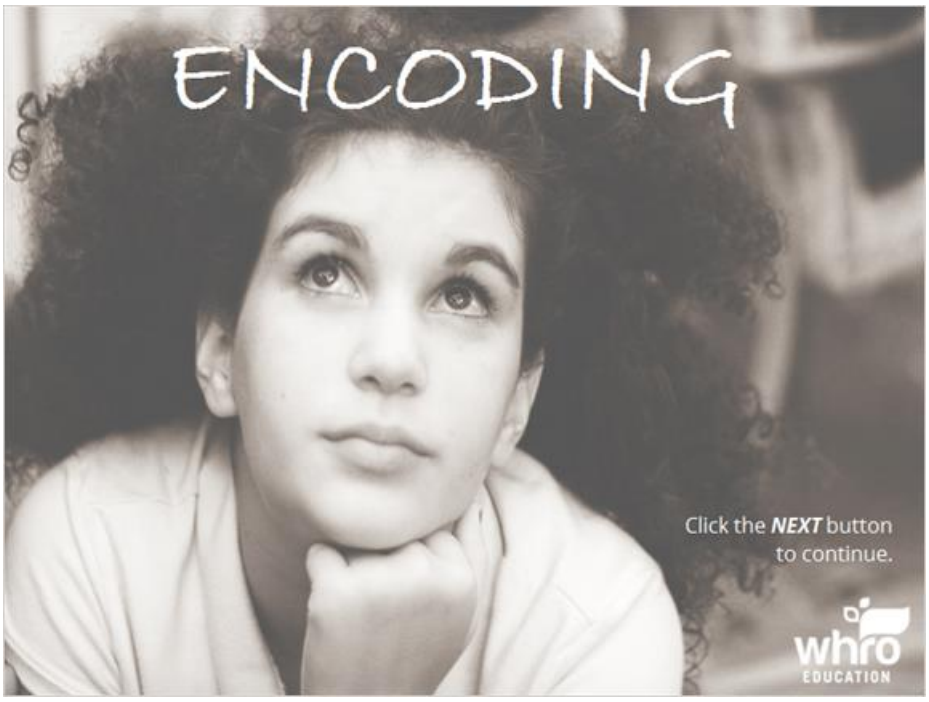
Module 6: Memory
Topic 3 Content: Encoding

Introduction



Encoding can be automatic, effortful, or semantic. Click the ***NEXT*** button to explore the various types of encoding.

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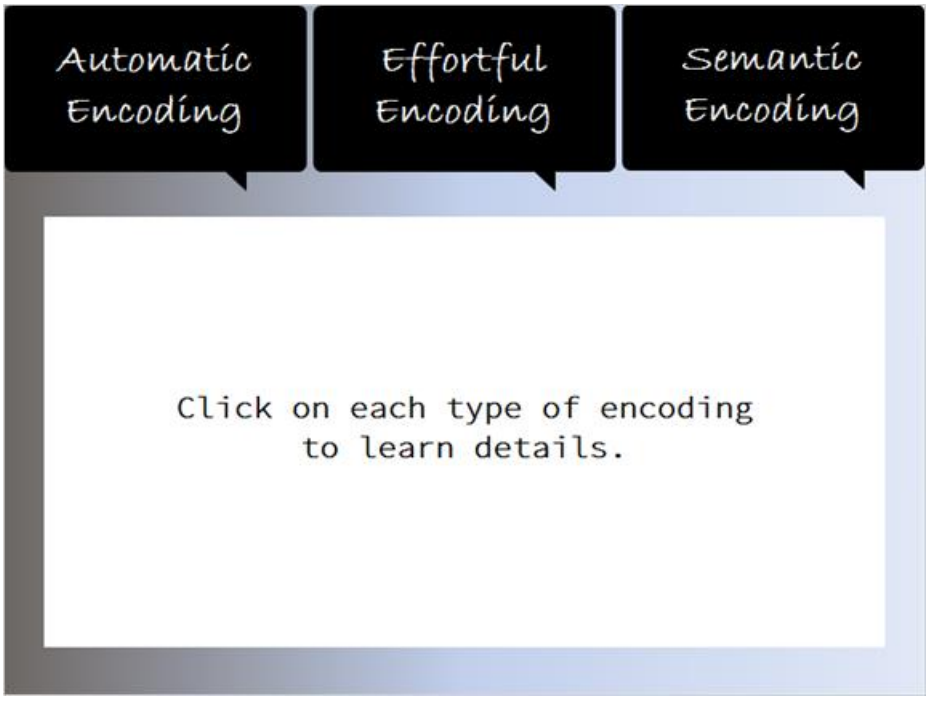
Menu



Click on each type of encoding to learn details.

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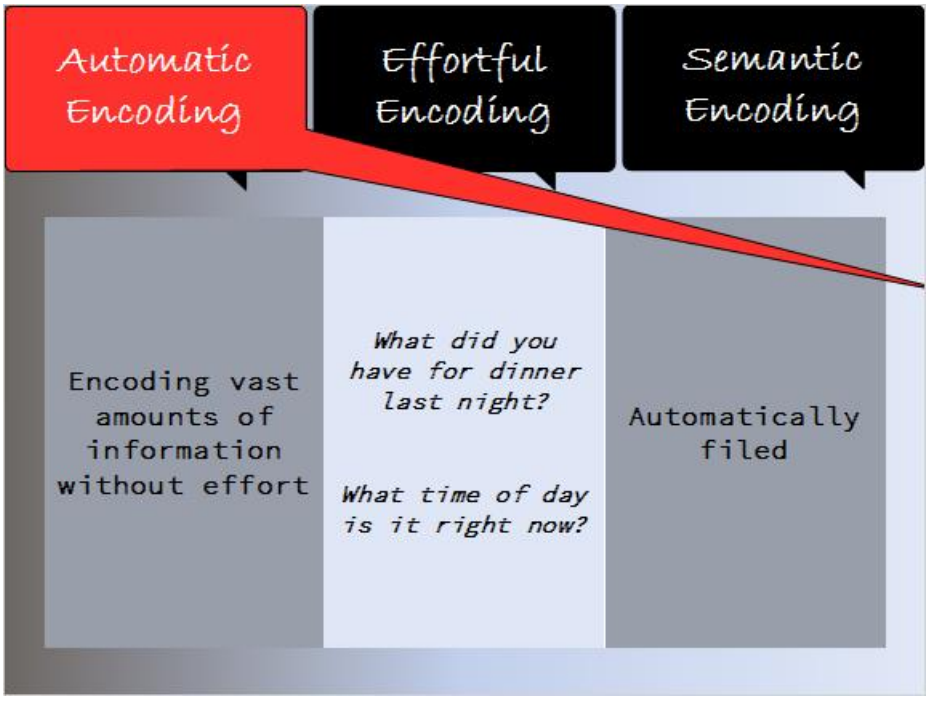
Automatic Encoding

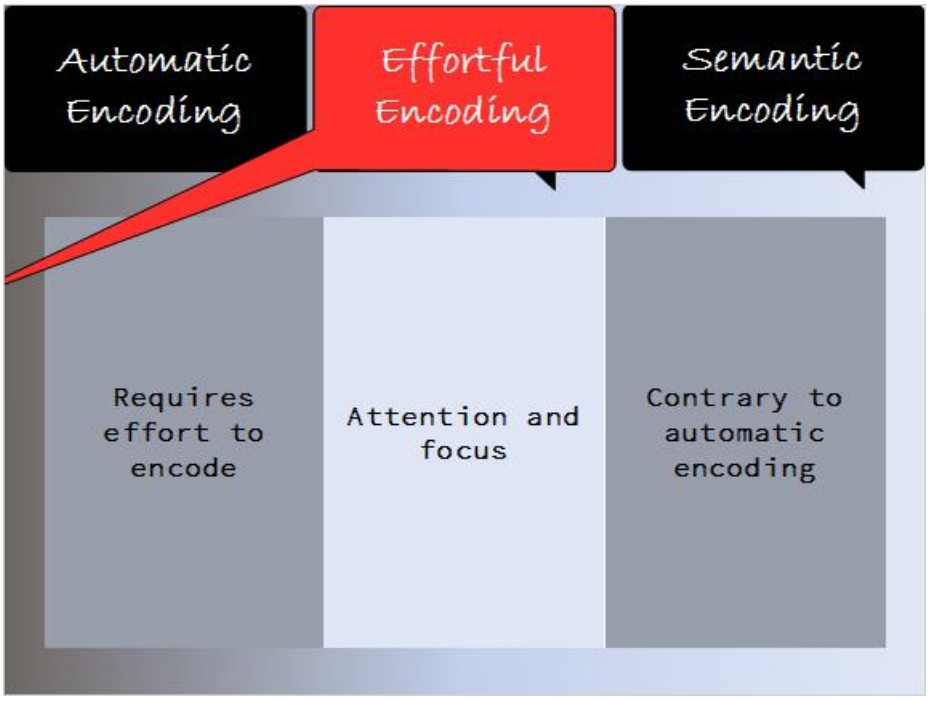


The human mind's ability to encode vast amounts of information without effort is called *automatic encoding*. For example, think about answers to the following questions:

- What did you have for dinner last night?
- What time of day is it right now?

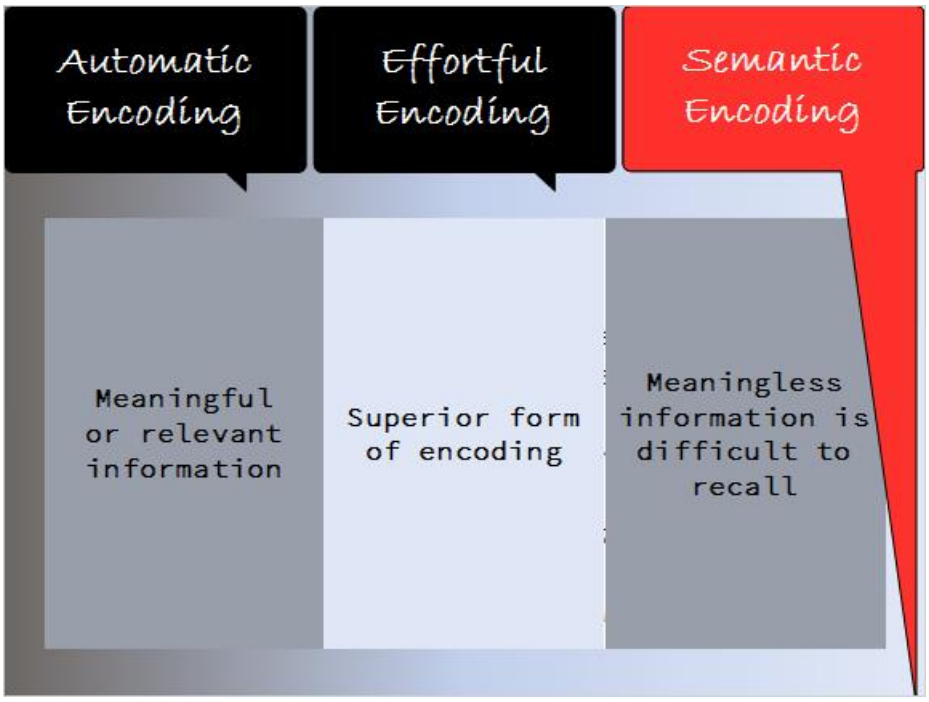
You know answers to these questions because this information was automatically filed away in your brain without effort.

Effortful Encoding



Sometimes information requires effort before you can recall it. When this happens, it is called *effortful encoding*. For example, in order to recall material from your classes, effortful encoding is required, and it involves attention and focus, as opposed to automatic encoding, which does not.

Semantic Encoding



Take a moment to think about what is being described in the following paragraph:
They come in many colors and designs. They are used for a variety of occasions. Children especially love them. You buy them at a store and prepare them yourself. You can purchase them to take home. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes too. If you don't anchor them, they will be lost. If you get them prepared at a store, they will only last a short while.

When information is meaningful or relates to past experiences, you can recall it more easily than you would with shallow processing. This is called *semantic encoding*. Studies even show that semantic encoding is superior to other forms of encoding, like visual or auditory encoding. If information has little meaning, it can prove difficult to recall.

What do you recall about the text? If you had known before reading the paragraph that the context of it was about balloons, would that have help you recall more details?