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The Pretesting Effect: Exploring the Impact of Feedback and Final Test Timing

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Abstract

The pretesting effect suggests that attempting and failing to guess unknown information can improve memory compared to errorless study. A key question is when it is the best moment to give feedback after testing. In this study, we explored two factors: (1) the timing of feedback after unsuccessful pretest, provided immediately or after 24 (Experiment 1) and 48 hours (Experiment 2); and (2) the timing of the final test after feedback, immediately or after 24 hours (Experiment 1). We assessed their impact on recall accuracy, comparing with an errorless (read-only) learning condition. Results showed superior accuracy for pretesting than read-only condition; for immediate feedback than delayed; and for immediate test than delayed. Furthermore, although smaller, there was still pretesting effect after 24 and 48 hours of feedback delay. This flexibility in timing could be particularly useful in educational settings where logistical constraints may force a delay in feedback or test.