

# THE ONE ABOUT ASKING WHY

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## THE STUDY

If we want students to remember key facts, should we a) simply tell them the information, b) tell them the information plus an explanation of why it is true or c) tell them the information and have them think about why this might be the case?

In order to answer this question researchers placed students in one of three groups. Some read a list of sentences, such as “The hungry man got in his car”. Others read these sentences along with an explanation afterwards (i.e. “The hungry man got in his car to go to the restaurant”). Finally, the rest of the students read the sentences and then had to answer a question “Why would he do that?”.

## THE MAIN FINDINGS

Students who had **just read the list of sentences** recalled, on average, **37%** of them correctly.

Those who had the **sentence and an explanation** recalled **35%** of them correctly.

However, those who had **seen the sentence** and had had to come up with **their own explanation** (i.e. asking “**why would he do that?**”) were able to recall an impressive **71%** of the sentences.

