

HOW FAST DO STUDENTS FORGET WHAT THEY LEARN IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR?

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ABSTRACT

The memory decay curve for knowledge acquired in an undergraduate consumer behavior course is explored using Rasch measurement of longitudinal data. The final exam in consumer behavior was used as the original learning measure and a subset of the final, administered later in a capstone course, was used as the retention measure. The retention intervals studied ranged from 8 to 101 weeks. Rasch measurement, a member of the item response theory (IRT) family of models, offered two advantages in the

present research: interval measurement and the ability to easily equate tests.

The findings indicate that the gains in knowledge achieved by the higher performing students diminish faster than the gains achieved by the lower performing students, such that the variance in retention scores is lower than the variance original learning. Most of the knowledge gained in the course was found to be lost within two years. The findings can also be summarized with the heuristic that the half-life of the consumer behavior knowledge learned in the course is approximately 21 weeks.