The Influence of Testing and Content Presentation Method on Mandatory Federal Training

by

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Abstract

A substantial amount of evidence exists suggesting that including tests as part of learning events can promote greater long-term retention (known as the “testing effect”). In the current study, the testing effect was analyzed in the context of mandatory federal legal training. The classic information processing perspective provided a theoretical backdrop for the experimental design. Participants ($N = 383$) received specialized training content through one of three modalities (text-, audio-, or video-based). Additionally, instructional style (test vs. no-test) was manipulated in conjunction with content presentation method. It was predicted that participants would perform better on the final assessment in conditions employing testing as an instructional tool, and that no differences would emerge in performance according to presentation method. No overall main effects of testing or presentation method emerged. However, participants scored better on lower-order items in the text-based presentation, and increased scores on the higher-order questions were linked with video-based presentation. Additionally, in both lower- and higher-order sets of questions, participants scored better if they had previously viewed the content in past training events. Implications and recommendations are discussed subsequently.