

# Understanding Working Memory (2nd edition)

Tracy Packiam Alloway and Ross G. Alloway

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The publication of a new book in the field of working memory is timely, as there are few topics currently eliciting greater interest for practitioners working with children and adolescents with neurodevelopmental problems. Long identified as a key construct in cognitive psychology due to its relationship to intelligence, cognitive development and real world skills, much recent interest has been stirred by claims that specific interventions can directly enhance working memory functioning, thereby improving the academic and general outcome of children with developmental disorders.

Authored by Tracy Alloway, a psychologist with a history of research in the field, and Ross Alloway, a research scholar and developer of the Jungle Memory intervention, *Understanding Working Memory* is a revision of the first author's *Improving Working Memory* (Packiam Alloway, 2010). The revised work aims to introduce to practitioners the nature of working memory and its relationship with specific developmental conditions. An introductory chapter provides a brief overview of the concept of working memory, its relationship with intelligence and learning, and the importance of identifying deficits in working memory. A second chapter examines the assessment of working memory, with a focus on Alloway's Automated Working Memory Assessment and discussion of working memory measures on intelligence batteries. The following six chapters describe working memory problems proposed to accompany reading difficulties, mathematics difficulties, developmental coordination disorder, ADHD, autistic spectrum disorder, and anxiety disorders. A final chapter briefly describes strategies for encouraging learning in students with working memory difficulties.

Generally, the book provides a broad introduction to working memory in accessible, non-technical language. It is likely to appeal to teachers and health professionals approaching the topic of working memory for the first time, and its strength lies in the descriptive case examples that bring to life learning difficulties faced by children with diverse developmental cognitive disorders.

For educational and developmental psychologists, the book may cover familiar ground, and its discussion of the various disorders will be noted to be somewhat limited in scope and detail. It should be emphasised that this book does not strive to present a contemporary scientific account of the theoretical framework of working memory, cognitive and neurobiological dysfunction thought to underlie each of the disorders discussed, the relation of these deficits to working memory, or a systematic review of the methods of assessing working memory. The authors also do not seek to provide a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of proposed interventions for working memory, which is a topic of considerable controversy: there is ongoing debate over the evidence of the effectiveness of working memory interventions, with

theoretical critiques (e.g., Shipstead, Redick, & Engle, 2012) and meta-analytic reviews (Melby-Lervåg & Hulme, 2013) both challenging simplistic views of the utility of such interventions.

Overall, *Understanding Working Memory* provides a readable, general introduction to the nature of working memory and its hypothesised impact upon several common developmental disorders.

**Associate Professor Tim Hannan**

*School of Psychology, Charles Sturt University, Australia*

## References

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# The Routledge Handbook of Attachment

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These three volumes on attachment from Holmes and Farnfield offer a major new synthesis of information and resources applicable to both research and clinical practice. Holmes and Farnfield edit, organise, and collate recent developments from a substantial group of scientific practitioners from this field, based mainly in the United Kingdom and Europe. Attachment literature has been subject to frequent academic reflection and debate since the 1960s. However, from a practitioner perspective, many attachment-related resources have been very difficult to apply, being highly theoretical or offering highly specialised and relatively inaccessible assessment tools and materials.

Holmes and Farnfields' efforts are a welcome addition, which not only build on previous efforts (e.g., Cassidy & Shaver, 2008), but also provide an organised overview of substantial contemporary developments in the field of attachment. Their stated purpose is to help practitioners respond to growing evidence about, and heightened awareness of, the impact of attachment on children's wellbeing. They aim to address the need for more accessible information to guide quality practice in child welfare and protection, and adult-child interaction support. As such, the volumes provide guidance for psychologists wishing to update their knowledge of attachment literature or to expand their evidence-based practice in assessments, interventions, and their evaluation.

The three Holmes and Farnfield edited volumes are clearly organised to direct readers to content appropriate to their interests and needs through several different strategies. First, as their titles suggest, each of the volumes focuses on either, theory, assess-

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Please note: This review is about the three volume series with this collective title.