

# Definition of eidetic imagery

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The word eidetic stems from the Greek word εἰδωτός which means “seen”. It is the extraordinary and vivid memory not limited to visual images only. Eidetic imagery is the ability to recall or see an image, sounds, or objects with the same precision as it was in the original sensory experience (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000).

It is the part of photographic memory that is usually visual in nature. This is the reason why it is often also known as photographic memory. An individual with photographic memory will exactly recall the visual information while the individual with eidetic memory is not limited to recalling the sensory information only. This person usually can recall other aspects of the given event and this include auditory information (Minsky, 1998). Just like any other kind of memory the intensity of the recall depends on various factors.

These factors include the frequency of exposure to the stimulus and its relevance to the person and conscious observation among many others. However, there is usually a general misinterpretation of eidetic imagery. It assumes that there is always constant and total recall of all events. In addition to this having a good memory does not always mean one has eidetic memory. A person with a good memory will often use mnemonic devices.

This includes the division of a visualized idea into enumerable elements in order to retain information. The person who has eidetic memory on the other hand will remember the precise details such as where the stimulus was and how it looked like. They recall the event with greater detail than those with

good memory. There are also individuals with exceptional memory agents. These individuals are many times thought to be eidetic.

A good example is individuals with autism and autism spectrum disorders like Asperger syndrome. They exhibit extraordinary memory such as photographic or eidetic memory (Minsky, 1998). Controversy about eidetic memory Over the past several decades there has been a raging debate concerning the existence of eidetic memory. Currently the consensus in most quarters seems to be that eidetic memory may as well be a myth. In fact, Marvin Minsky, in his book *The Society of Mind*, has it that eidetic memory is an "unfounded myth". This has gone on although there have been various techniques that allege to make developing an eidetic possible.

Whether these techniques are only able to enhance basic memory function and not eidetic memory is a question for another day (Minsky, 1998). Other sources however, state say that controversies surrounding eidetic memory mostly originated from an over-utilization of the term. Eidetic memory also called photographic memory has been over applied to almost any instance of exceptional memory skill. The existence of exceptional memory skills is convincingly well-documented. These memory skills appears to stem from an amalgamation of, learned tactics, and various knowledge bases and personal skills There have been several tests to prove the existence of eidetic memory. These tests also called photographic memory exercises have not proved successful thus far.

In these tests individuals are presented with very detailed images and then they are asked to study them for at least forty seconds. A person is said to

have a perfect recall if they are able to describe more accurately the image after it is removed from their sight. There have been several examples of people with exceptional memory abilities that have been attributed to eidetic memory. The first one comes from the common interpretations of Adrian de Groot's classic experiments. These experiments unveil the extraordinary ability of a chess grand master to memorize intricate positions of chess pieces on the chess board.

The other example is by Charles Stromeyer about his wife Elizabeth. However, the methodology employed in the testing procedure is questionable. The other person who is known to have had eidetic memory is S. V. Shereshevskii. He could memorize long lists of random words and recall them very well after many decades.

He is believed by some people like Kim Peek to be a prodigious savant. Eidetic memory in children: eidetic images are usually generated instinctively in children and by choice in adults. Mental abilities required in compelling nature photographs may be opposite those locking an enduring photographic memory of a phenomenon. Children have better photographic memories but because they do not have an adult's contending mental confusion. A manner of organizing data has to be the key to the superior eidetic memory.

For example, expert players in chess can remake board positions involving two dozen pieces with great accuracy due to their acquaintance with the game. There is a particular reason why children have potentially dysfunctional memories. Visual input is usually left open since it is only through life experiences that a sense of importance for what is to be held in

memory is obtained. According to Steven Rose in his book, *The Making of Memory*, he asserts that the human race improved in situations where a bet that the environment where an individual grew could be nearly identical to that in which he spent his entire adult life. This explains that eidetic memory of childhood enables rules of sensitivity to developed, and smoothly transposes to a more linear form of adult memory at puberty. Studies have found out that young children have clear eidetic memories .

For example some have such a good eidetic memory such that they can count the stripes on a cheshire cat's tail after being shown an illustration from *Alice in Wonderland*. How memory works Imagination is the ability and ingenious power that helps the mind to capture to it self persons, scenes and events of which an individual may read or hear. The extreme form of imagination is what forms the genius by which most professions get their idealizations. It is the act of recalling images or impressions not available presently to an individual's sense. The images that do appear in the mind are usually based in totally on something perceived earlier (Rajamanickam, 2004).

Imagination may include the reconstruction of past experiences but also dedeveloping mental descriptions from partly experienced activities. For example, while a baseball fan was eating popcorn, he missed seeing the batter make the winning hit. Although he did look in time thus seeing the ball clears the fence. In his imagination the fan recreates the whole event even if he did not see the actual action take place. Eidetic memory in adults In adults photographic memory is usually less utilized due to a less perceptive

brain . This is caused by high levels of knowledge learnt during school years and through experience.

In adults eidetic memory fails to be utilized because of the following reasons.

a) Different wiring of the adult mind. During the process of growth, the brain shifts from the right-brain receptive thinking to left-brain sound thinking. This requires utilization of information learnt from the environment rather than depending on the subconscious. This hinders development of the eidetic memory (Roth, 1984).

Developing eidetic memory  
Photographic memory which gives an individual ability to commit to memory pictures in the finest details can be developed through training. This is aimed at opening up the human memory to unlock an individual's nature. Briefly the memory of an eidetic individual operates in the following way. An individual who has an eidetic memory usually provides the projected visual picture on the brains inside screen. The acknowledged image is examined and analyzed. For an individual with eidetic memory operating at the buffer positioned amid the visual channel and other thinking organs.

For common people pictures in buffer region are lightened for a moment then dispersed and transferred further into the brain whereas, for an Eidetic individual pictures are stored and can be recalled thus being analyzed again. When in conscious operation only 10% of the brain is in operation whereas, subconscious activities tally to 90% of the human brains potential. Therefore, for one to develop ability to recall and reanalyze data collected from the finest details of a picture one should develop an imaginative thinking and

imaginative memory. Eidetic therapy which is mostly used to develop imaginative memory and imaginative thinking harmonizes the left hemispheres and right hemisphere making an individual to possess thinking and artistic capabilities. This therapy helps to improve the memory of the specific individual (Simon & Schuster, 1988).

**Conclusion** The human memory is usually photographic at birth but the level of eidetic memory tends to be inversely related to the age of the individual. This is evidenced by the children's ability to recall fine details of any given item. Photographic memory in a child has been found to be developed more than in adults with children being able to retain much more exact eidetic explanations of images than adults. This is because a child's brain usually makes a shift at the age of four. The child's Brain shifts from the right-brain receptive thinking to left-brain sound thinking . This usually shows that the wiring of a young child's brain is different than that of an adult.