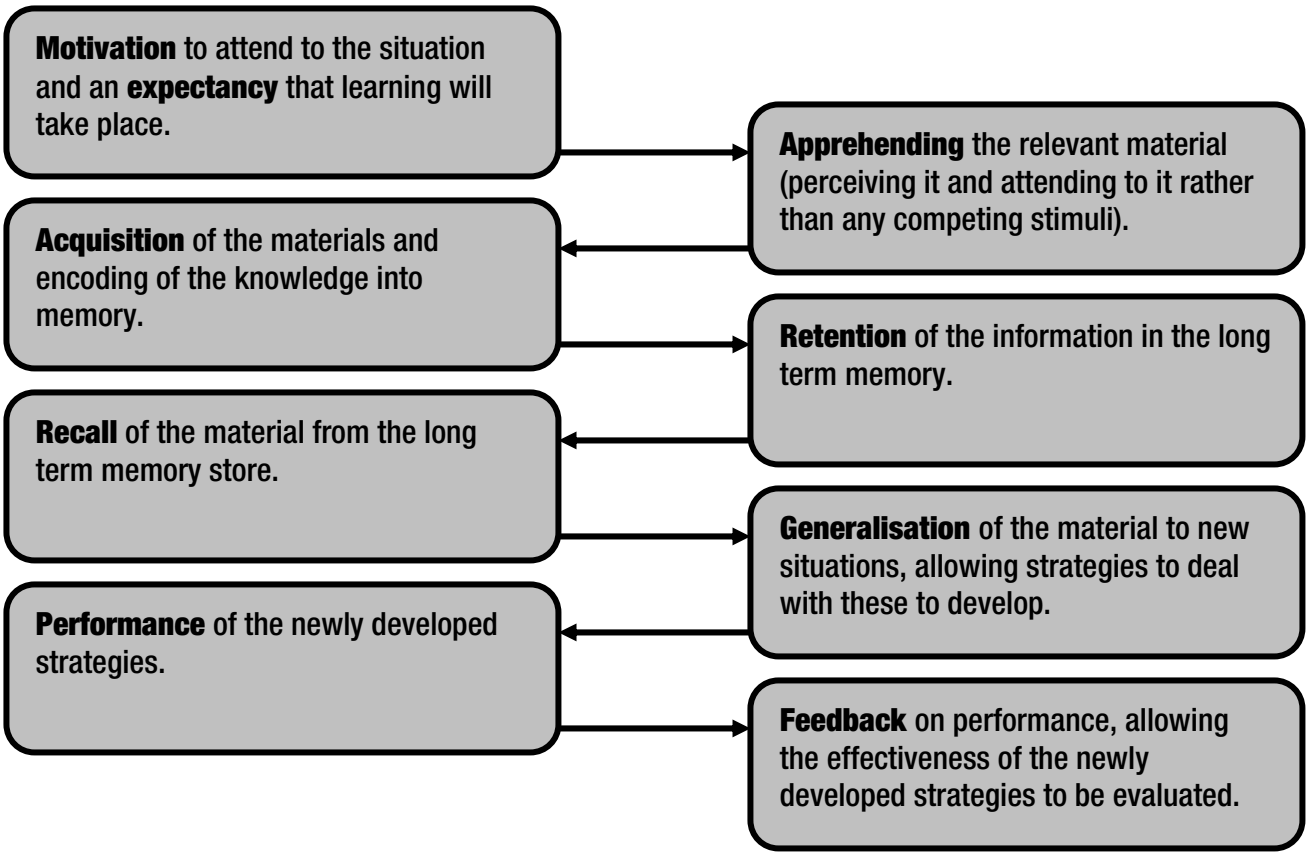
# Creating Resources Using Gagné's Theory

**Gagne's theory of instructional design draws on behaviourist and cognitivist ideas to provide a practical set of guidelines for the creation of learning resources.**

Gagné views learning as (1) acquiring new concepts and then (2) assembling them in the correct sequences with other, previously acquired concepts. The effectiveness with which this happens depends on factors both internal and external to the learner. Planning an effective learning encounter means controlling these factors. Their usual order of occurrence is:




Gagné's framework draws attention to a number of important features of any learning encounter. Insights that could be applied to learning resource design include:

- The learner will only learn what you want if they are **motivated** to learn and are paying **attention** to the right things.
- Learning often involves more than factual recall of information. For Gagné, learning has only taken place once the material has been **applied** effectively in new situations (generalised).
- **Feedback** must be given so the learner can evaluate their own performance. Gagné has this as the final step but feedback might be necessary at several points in the learning process.

Keeping these ideas in mind can significantly increase the effectiveness of a learning resource. In addition to this, Gagné supplies a series of steps that can be used to plan any learning encounter, including those based on learning resources rather than 'traditional' teaching.

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| **Step 1** | The learner is informed of the performance expected of her (e.g. through the presentation of learning objectives). This is crucial as it allows the learner to monitor her own progress. Learning failure often occurs when the learner is unsure of teacher expectations. | |
| **Step 2** | The learner is induced to activate the previously learned concepts and material on which the current learning depends. This could be through presentation of a brief summary but is more effective if done through questioning. | |
| **Step 3** | New material is presented and the learner is provided with cues to help them link new learning with more established concepts in the correct order. It is important not to be too prescriptive as learning is more effective when the learner makes the links herself. | |
| **Step 4** | The learner is given the opportunity to apply the newly acquired material in new situations or in new ways. Ideally this should be geared towards concrete applications initially, as this is easier for the learner. | |
| **Step 5** | The learner is given the opportunity to formulate and state general principles based on the learning they have just acquired. The development of such abstractions allows the learning to be applied in a range of situations with flexibility in future. | |