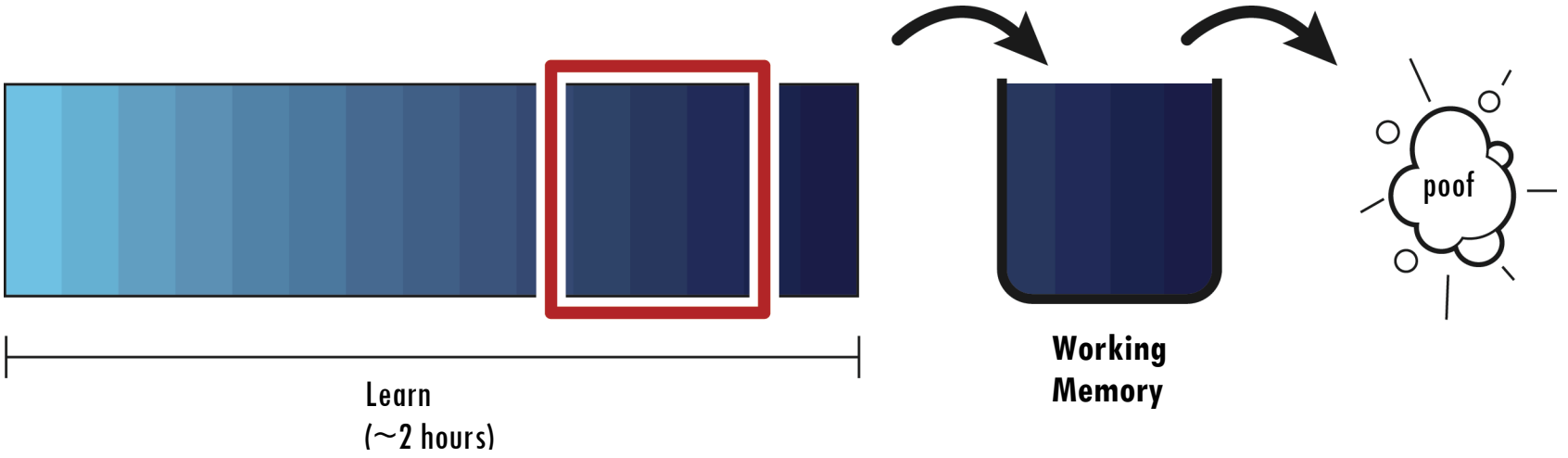
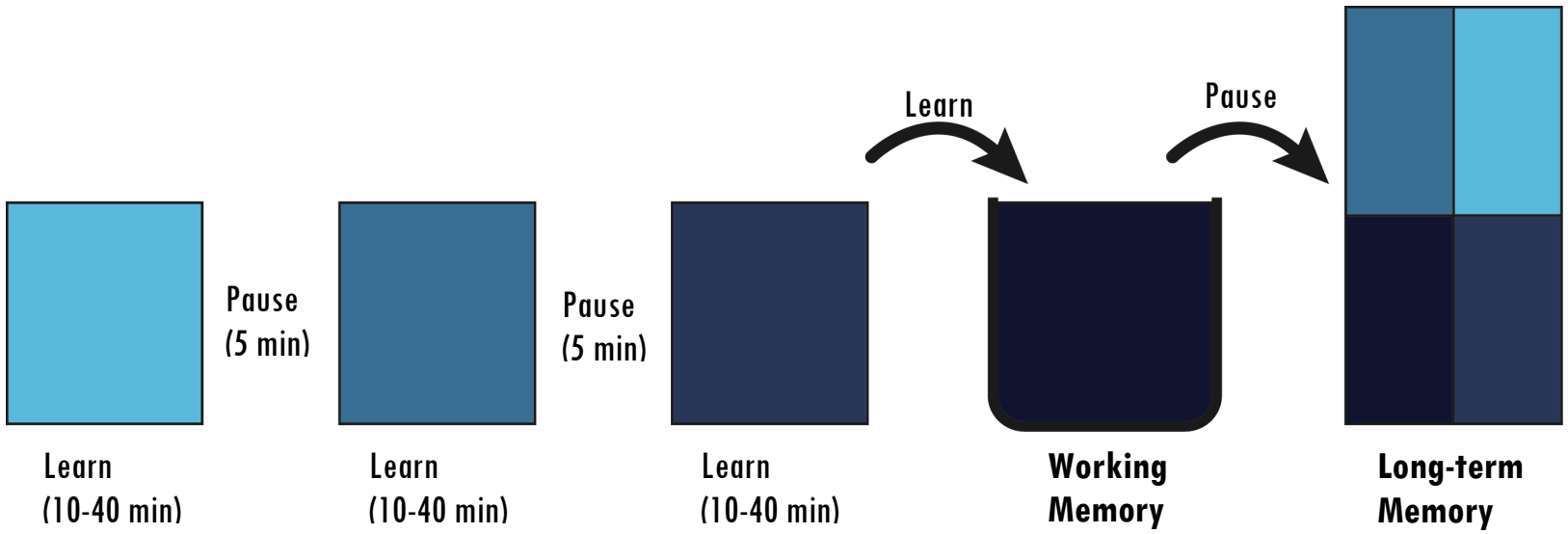
Controlling the Flow of Information

:(**Continuous**



:) Chunking


Pause
(5 min)
Pause
(5 min)
Learn
Pause
Learn
(10-40 min)
Learn
(10-40 min)
Learn
(10-40 min)
Working
Memory
Long-term
Memory

Controlling the Flow of Information

Have you every read your textbook for two hours straight and, at the end, found that you couldn't remember most of it? Your efficiency in learning can be improved by managing your working memory. Working memory is limited and fragile. You can only fit so much into it (about seven or eight ideas), and the contents can be erased easily (by distraction or new information). Your goal is to move information from working memory to long-term memory.

Continuous = Bad

If you're reading a novel for fun, it doesn't matter how long you read for. However, if you are studying your notes or textbook, reading for a long, uninterrupted amount of time will not be effective. When we read continuously for long periods of time, we overload our working memory. New information enters and overwrites old information. Our brains don't know that the information is important, so it does not move it to long-term memory.

Chunking = Good

When you are reading to learn and remember information (studying), you need to read in small "chunks" with pauses between each "chunk". Time spend reading should be between 10 and 40 minutes (but not more), or a small section or subsection of the text. After each small "chunk", spend 5 minutes thinking about what you just read. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What were the important ideas? Details? Examples?
- What would a question on my test/exam look like?
- How does this new information connect to what I've learned previously?

Pausing and thinking about the information in your working memory tells your brain that it's important and gives it a chance to move the information to long term memory.