The Word on Marijuana

Here are some of the key words you need to understand to discuss the drug marijuana and its effects. Review the glossary. Then, fill in the blanks in the article below.

**GLOSSARY**

**Blunt:** slang term for a cigar filled with marijuana

**Cannabinoid Receptors:** sites on the surface of brain cells where the active ingredient in marijuana attaches to produce the drug’s effects

**Cerebellum:** part of the brain involved in body movement

**Cerebral Cortex:** part of the brain involved in higher thinking

**Dopamine:** a brain chemical (or neurotransmitter) that helps nerve cells communicate

**Hemp:** the plant marijuana comes from

**Hippocampus:** part of the brain’s limbic system that helps with learning and memory

**Joint:** slang term for marijuana rolled into a cigarette

**Neurons:** cells in the brain; also found in the spinal cord and other organs

**THC:** tetrahydrocannabinol, the main active ingredient in marijuana

**WHAT IS MARIJUANA?  WHAT DOES IT DO TO THE BRAIN?**

The drug marijuana is the dried, shredded leaves of the ________________ plant. While there are several methods of use, marijuana is often rolled into a cigarette, called a ________________, or stuffed into a hollowed-out cigar, called a ________________, and smoked.

The drug’s effects on the brain are caused by the main active ingredient, tetrahydrocannabinol, or ________________. This chemical attaches to specific receptors in the brain called ________________ receptors. When it binds to these receptors, it interferes with the normal communication between brain cells, or ________________.

Several parts of the brain have a lot of these receptors, including the ________________, which deals with learning and memory; the ________________, which helps with body movement; and the cerebral ________________, which is in charge of higher thinking.

Finally, research shows that THC triggers the release of ________________, a chemical that helps nerve cells communicate.