

TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY

1. **A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY:** If you view yourself as having a poor memory then you probably will have a poor memory. It will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Tell yourself that you have a good memory and that it is improving every day. Focus on success.
2. **ORGANIZE:** Find a central location to place the things that you use in your daily routine. Keys, calendar, wallets and purses can all be placed in your “memory spot”. Being organized enhances your memory and decreases stress. Utilize a calendar to organize activities. If you make lists, centralize them in one location.
3. **FOCUS:** Pay attention to your attention. Form a mental picture of the grocery items that you need, write them down, or use a tape recorder to jog your memory. Take the time necessary to rehearse the information immediately after hearing it in your mind.
4. **RELAX:** Memory will be more efficient if you take the time needed to store and recall the information. Don’t panic if you can’t immediately recall something. Take your time, relax, and allow it to come to you rather than beating yourself up in the process of forcing it. Memory always works better when we are well rested.
5. **LIMIT DISTRACTIONS:** Find a quiet place, limit distractions and allow your memory to work for you.
6. **CATEGORIZE:** Placing information into categories makes it easier to remember and simplifies the encoding retrieval processes.
7. **ATTACH IT:** It’s always easier to remember things if they carry some significant meaning. Try to decide why what you want to remember is important. Ask yourself how this applies to you and how it might impact your life later on. Attach the items to be remembered to an emotion.
8. **PREPARATORY SETS:** Prepare your mind in the same way an athlete prepares prior to engaging in sports. For example, if you have to give a presentation, do a mental warm-up before presenting. In your mind rehearse everything that will be involved in making the presentation. Close your eyes and envision what the room will look like and do a mental inventory of the materials you will need and questions that may be asked of you.
9. **USE HUMOR:** When humor is attached to the item to be remembered, it is both entertaining and more easily recalled. Humor will also serve to help you relax, stay positive and to become less burdened with stress and tension.
10. **USE IT OR LOSE IT:** Memory is improved through practice. Doing puzzles, reading, or learning something new all serve to enhance your memory and aid in your confidence about it. Find a way to teach others. By teaching you are enhancing your own memories.

11. **MEMORY PROSTHETICS:** There are many external aids that can help your memory. Utilizing a calendar to guide you through your daily activities creates self-reliance and thus confidence and allows you to plan ahead and free up space in your mind for more pressing memories. Use one calendar to chronicle appointments, daily events, reminders, responsibilities and goals. Write down anything that is important to you. Keep this calendar accessible in a central location and carry it with you. Leave yourself organized notes and/or carry a small recording device or Palm Pilot. Send yourself e-mails or set your computer up to prompt you to remember important dates such as anniversaries or birthdays. Get a watch with an alarm function to remind you of appointments throughout the day. Incorporate these external aids into your daily routine and free your memory for more important things.

12. **MIND – BODY CONNECTION:** It is essential that you take proper care of your body if your memory is to function at its fullest potential. Diet and exercise are an essential part of keeping your memory working for you. A well-balanced, healthy diet will provide your mind with the fuel it needs to function at its fullest potential. Exercise relieves stress, enhances blood flow, and provides needed nutrients to the brain. Avoidance of indulgence in too much alcohol, caffeine or other drugs will also enhance your memory.

13. **COME IN THROUGH THE BACK DOOR:** Everyone experiences blocks to their memory at times. Sometimes the more we try to recall something the further away it gets. This process is fueled by frustration and negative self-talk. Replace any negative self-talk with positive affirmations and if you do so long enough it will become a habit. Avoid frustration by talking around the item to be recalled. But remember that the human brain contains billions of nerve cells that are intricately connected to form memories. It is normal that we are sometimes unable to access a single pathway within this enormous map of neural cells. Patience is a virtue and sometimes we just have to let it go and gently embrace our imperfect human nature.

14. **TIME IS ON YOUR SIDE:** Our brain uses the element of time to chunk memories together which is known as episodic memory. When you have difficulty remembering something, try to reconstruct the time frame associated with that memory. By doing so, you are tapping into the general location within your brain where that memory is stored. For example, if you want to remember what you got for your birthday last year, reconstruct that timeframe in your mind. Picture where you were, what you were wearing, how the day began and whom you were with. Reconstruct the events of that day and as you do so associated memories will gradually surface into your awareness.

15. **CHUNK IT:** Chunking is essentially conceptual association. It involves coding small portions of data into a larger, meaningful concept and later deconstructing the individual components of data back to its original form. The data is coded, stored, retrieved and decoded. A good example of this was your Social Security number. Many of us remember three chunks of numbers as it is easier to do so than to remember nine individual numbers. Start with the main premise of the article that you are trying to

remember. Then associate related things back to the main premise by visualizing a representation of each.

16. CREATIVITY AND FLEXIBILITY: Always ask yourself the simple question: what is another way I can look at this situation? Rigid thinking is often a precursor to poor memory. Examine the problem at hand. Turn it over and look at it from all angles. Put it down and do the same later. Examining things from different perspectives forms more reliable memory associations.

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