

Tips for Improving Memory

Many people believe that as you get older you begin to lose your memory. However, your memory is like a muscle, the more it is used, the better it gets. The more it is neglected, the worse it gets.

Your memory works by making links between information. By cultivating your mind, continuing your education throughout life, keeping your mind open to new experiences, and keeping your imagination working, your memory can get better as you get older.

People learn in different ways and the way in which you learn often determines subjects that draw your interest. There are 3 main learning styles:

Visual – 65% of the population who learn most effectively to written information, notes, diagrams and pictures.

Auditory – 30% of the population who relate most effectively to the spoken word.

Kinaesthetic – 5% of the population who learn effectively through touch and movement and space and learn skills by imitation and practice.

The first process of memory is attention. We make choices (conscious and unconscious) regarding the stimuli we will attend. Below are some suggestions to help focus attention.

Encoding: translate incoming information into a mental representation in order to recall it most easily by drawing on visual cues. Encoding language and numbers in striking images makes them easier to recall.

- Use positive, pleasant images since the brain often blocks out unpleasant ones.
- Associate the desired memory to vivid, colorful, sense-laden images
- Use all your senses to code: sounds, smells, tastes, touch, movements and feelings create more vivid pictures.
- Exaggerate the size of important parts of the image.
- Use humor! Funny or peculiar images are easier to remember.
- Also, rude rhymes are very difficult to forget!

Storage: the process of holding information in your memory. Repeating the information can help if it's repeated enough times. You may be able to learn a telephone number more quickly by relating it to dates of your friend's birthday, numbers on a license plate or some other familiar number pattern.

Pay attention and intend to remember: eliminate distractions and think of a reason why you want to learn/remember the information.

Analyze how to remember each fact/concept: relate new material to facts and concepts you already know. Intentional associates improve learning retention. You meet someone named Joan, visualize Joan of Arc to help remember her name.

Organize the information: The human brain appears to be able to hold only seven chunks of information in immediate memory, so break up material into categories or units. Half the brain thinks in words and the other half in pictures; use both parts of your brain. Create a visualize picture of the information to clarify it in your mind.