10 Tips to Improve Your Memory and Enhance Your Brain Power

By Deborah Plouffe

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we never forgot a birthday, a phone number, or a website address? Not everyone can recall things easily, but everyone can work toward improving their memory. With a bit of time and practice, most people can learn how to memorize amounts of information that they might have dismissed as impossible to remember. Whether you want to memorize statistics, ace your next exam, or just remember where you left your keys, these simple tips can help you to get started.

We all learn differently, but our individual abilities to memorize all have a few things in common. We tend to learn better when something is repeated several (or many) times. We also tend to remember something better when it is associated with emotion, like witnessing a robbery or winning a prize. The ability to memorize well is partly due to heredity, but mostly the product of training.

Give these ten tips a try and see how your memory will improve!

Tip #1 Rest and Exercise

Memory loss often occurs with age, and in association with injury or disease. However, we can also experience some memory loss when we fail to rest and exercise our brains AND our bodies. A good, uninterrupted sleep for at least seven hours can have an amazing effect on your memory. Think about it. When you are sleepy, you tend to be less alert and miss or ignore things around you. You often pay less attention to details and care less about what is going on.

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Exercising regularly for at least 30 minutes has a beneficial effect as well. Stronger bodies have more energy and tend to get things done, like learning new things. More blood flowing to the brain also translates to more oxygen going into your brain cells, and more waste going out. Think about a time when you were well rested and full of energy and compare it to a time when you were too tired to do anything but lie on the sofa. You probably acted and felt differently—and so did your mind.

Tip #2 You are what you eat!
Our dietary habits directly affect how our brains perform. The simple act of taking the time to have a healthy breakfast can really kick-start your brain’s day! As we age, so do our brain cells. We also have fewer brain cells, and the pathways between them begin to lose their ability to communicate. A few changes to our eating habits can help to slow down this process, however. Fatty foods that clog up our arteries also slow down the flow of oxygen to the brain. A few “good” fats, like the Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish, are good for our brain health, as are Vitamins A, C and E found in some vegetables, fruits and nuts. A change toward eating better will help your memory to improve as well.

Tip #3 Condition your brain to learn
A busy brain is a healthy brain. When we study and learn new things, we activate the learning processes in our brain. If you’re not the scholarly type, you might want to start stimulating your brain by using the opposite hand or leg to accomplish every-day tasks. For example, you could cross your arms or legs differently than you usually do. You could use your other hand or foot to throw or kick a ball or use your computer mouse with your left (or right) hand. You could even write with your none-dominant hand. These exercises may feel uncomfortable or wrong to you, but your brain will be concentrating, exercising and learning.

Tip #4 Teach your brain to solve problems
Concentrating on games, like chess, scrabble or word puzzles, and reading are all great exercises to improve your brain function and help you to memorize better. The next time you are planning a trip or outing, take the time to plan out your route, research to decide which restaurants are best and the best attractions to visit. This forces your brain to recall past experiences and rearrange that knowledge into a new project. This is a great exercise for your brain.
Tip#5  Practice makes perfect
Take a few minutes each day to train your short-term memory. Try to memorize quotes or short sentences you have read, or try to read sentences backwards. Or, study a picture for a few minutes, close the book and write down as many things as you can to describe it. One of our favourite exercises (a bit of a throw back to grade school) is to take a word and rearrange some of the letters to form other smaller words. These may sound simple, but these tasks are excellent brain exercises.

Tip#6  Accentuate the positive
Whenever you are called to memorize anything, face the task with a positive attitude. Remind yourself that you are working toward having a better memory and DON’T let stress inhibit your new-found abilities. We are all aware that having an interest in the topic will vastly enhance your ability to learn more, but even the act of affirming to yourself that you like the topic can have a favourable affect on your brain power. If you repeat your affirmations in the present tense with emotion, you can convince your subconscious mind to believe that you LOVE the subject.

Tip#7  One task at a time is the way to go!
When you are trying to remember something, don’t multi-task. Try not to study and listen to radio or television at the same time; and, for Pete’s sake turn off your email alerts and cell phone when you are focussing on a specific task. You are much more likely to remember what you’ve learned if you give it your full focus and attention. Distractions interrupt your brain’s concentration so badly that it can take as long as half an hour to really get you brain back into what it was doing.

Tip #8 Discover your learning style
Take the time to discover whether you are a visual, auditory, or tactile learner. Once you’ve determined how you learn best, you can discover what learning activities will best stimulate your brain’s ability to retain information. It won’t take very much research, and the effort will certainly pay off.
Tip #9  Visualize for best results

The power of our minds is infinite. Replaying an occurrence in our minds will help us to remember where we put those keys, or even to remember the names of people that we met at a party or networking event. Visualizing can even help to prevent losing things in the first place. Try this little tip. When you are stowing something away, imagine yourself returning to retrieve it later. Visualize yourself opening the cupboard or desk drawer and removing the item. If possible, repeat this visualization more than once and when it is time to find it, you WILL!

Tip #10  Plan to succeed!

Plan to set aside some time each week to do something to stimulate your brain, whether it is walking the dog, visualizing or playing a game. Even if you do just a few small things, you’ll still be ahead of the many people who do nothing at all. Keep in mind that freeing your mind of the junk that you could easily write down, like appointment times, task, contact info and lists, will make more room for your brain to think and remember.

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