

# What does the word COGNITION mean?

Cognition refers to thinking skills, the intellectual skills that allow you to perceive, acquire, understand and respond to information. This includes the abilities to pay attention, remember, process

information, solve problems, organize and reorganize information, communicate and act upon information. All these abilities work in a close, interdependent fashion to allow you to function in your environment. Cognitive skills are different from academic skills. Academic skills include knowledge about different subjects like literature, math and history. Cognitive skills refer to the mental capabilities you need to learn academic subject matter, and more generally to function in daily life. Cognitive

skills are the underlying skills that must be in place for you to think, read, understand, remember, plan and organize.

Let's take an example. If you are given a doctor's appointment, you need to pay attention to the secretary, understand what has been said or written, think about other appointments you have made so as to avoid a schedule conflict, remember to write down the appointment, and then remember to look at the calendar on the designated day. You also have to be able to plan how you will get to the appointment and then organize yourself to make sure you are there on time. You may even want to make notes about the things you will need to discuss at the appointment. So, to get to the doctor's appointment you need many cognitive skills: attention, language comprehension, memory, organization and planning. It can be hard to get to the appointment if these skills are not working well. Even if you are emotionally ready and willing to have the appointment, if you do not remember it you will miss it.

## Some facts about cognition:

- ◆ Cognitive skills are different from academic skills
- ◆ Cognitive skills are the mental capabilities or underlying skills you need to process and learn information, to think, remember, read, understand and solve problems.
- ◆ Cognitive skills develop and change over time.
- ◆ We are born with certain cognitive capabilities - we may be better at some skills than others, but we can improve the weaker skills.
- ◆ Cognitive skills can be measured.
- ◆ Cognitive skills can be strengthened and improved.
- ◆ When cognitive skills are strong, learning becomes easier.