

Tips for Optimal Memory

**Research has shown that the healthier we are overall,
the healthier our memory will be.**

- 1. Physical Exercise:** Regular exercise improves the circulation of blood to the brain. This increase in cerebral blood flow gives the brain more oxygen and other nutrients the brain uses as “food.” Physical activity also reduces the risk for other disorders that lead to memory loss such as stroke, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Exercise may enhance the effects of helpful brain chemicals and protect brain cells. Activities like walking, bicycling, and swimming can increase heart and breathing rates, lower blood pressure, raise good cholesterol levels, and regulate weight.
- Make exercise a priority in your life & set reasonable goals.
 - Start with a low level and increase to vigorous daily exercise.
 - Make it fun: exercise with a buddy and do the sport you enjoy.
 - Go for walks, hikes, bike rides, or long swims.

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN ANY EXERISE PROGRAM, PLEASE CONSULT
WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER FIRST.**

- 2. Healthy Diet:** If you need to follow a special diet for health reasons, do it! (i.e. diabetic, renal, cardiac)
- Current dietary guidelines suggest a varied diet that is low in animal fat and high in fruits, whole grains, vegetables, and protein. The fruits and vegetables are an important source of antioxidants that may counteract free radicals. The best fat for the brain is omega 3 fatty acids, which are

found in cold water-fatty fish, deep green leafy vegetables, and some grains, nuts, and seeds.

Other sources of essential fatty acids are omega 6 fatty acids found in cooking oils, nuts, seeds, and cereal.

- Eat often; try 5-6 smaller meals during the day to maintain a healthy blood sugar level and more efficient absorption of nutrients.
- Drink often; 36 to 64 oz. of water daily for proper hydration of all body tissues.
- Take a good multivitamin.
- Take care with caffeine & sugar – both are stimulants that increases awareness and ability to respond. In low doses it can help improve focus and aids in learning new thing; at higher doses it over stimulates and interferes with attention and focus.
- Be skeptical about supplements – be they herbal, natural, alternative – they are still drugs. It is an unregulated industry and not scientifically supported. Better to discuss their use with your Health Care Provider before using.

FOODS FOR BETTER MEMORY

SOURCES OF B12

- Milk products
- Meat
- Poultry
- Fish
- Spinach

SOURCES OF FOLATE

- Leafy green vegetables (like spinach)
- Dry beans and peas
- Fortified cereals
- Grain products
- Tomatoes
- Oranges
- Chickpeas
- Beets
- Soybeans
- Fish
- Eggs

SOURCES OF VITAMIN E

- Vegetable oil
- Whole grain
- Green leafy vegetables
- Sweet potatoes
- Avocados

OTHER SOURCES OF ANTIOXIDANTS

- Blueberries
- Sweet potatoes
- Pomegranates
- Carrots

SOURCES OF POLYUNSATURATED OMEGA -3 OILS

- Fish
- Walnuts
- Flaxseed
- Canola

3. **Get Enough Sleep:** Sleep is necessary for memory consolidation.

Recent studies now suggest that people who sleep “seven” hours per night live the longest and function well during awake hours. Fatigue directly interferes with attention and has been associated with impaired performance on tests, problem solving, judgment, memory, confusion, and depression. Practicing good “sleep hygiene” may help; here are some tips from the National Sleep Foundation:

- Consume less caffeine or no caffeine, and avoid alcohol.
- Drink fewer fluids before going to sleep.
- Avoid heavy meals close to bedtime.
- Avoid nicotine.
- Exercise regularly, but do so in the daytime and not too close to bedtime.
- Try a relaxing routine, like soaking in hot water (a hot tub or bath) before bedtime.
- Establish a regular bedtime and wake-time schedule.

4. Reduce Stress:

- Start a hobby
- Yoga, Tai Chi, massage, or reflexology
- Pray or mediate
- Talk
- Maintaining a positive attitude – use hope, courage, self-acceptance
- Contact the Kaiser Behavioral Health Education Department for a variety of classes that address Mind, Body, Spirit and Stress Management.

5. Socialize and have fun: Laughter is the ‘best medicine’ as it activates multiple regions in the brain vital to learning and creativity. Social support can improve the cognitive performance of older people. Researchers have found that the higher one’s level of social interaction, the better their mental functioning.

6. Mental Activity: Researchers have found that adults who report engaging in mentally stimulating activities are less likely to develop memory disorders and are more likely to age optimally. Mental stimulation appears to improve attention ability as well as intellectual processing speed and flexibility, which can slow with aging. Pursuits such as games, hobbies, and social gatherings are all ways we can give our brains a good dose of activity and boost our memory power. The activity can be virtually anything, as long as it’s:

1) New, 2) Challenging, and 3) Fun!

7. Neurobics: A neurobic exercise is one in which you use your senses in a different way than you are used to. A neurobic activity should do one or more of the following:

- Involve one or more of your senses in a new context.
- Involve your full attention, at least briefly.
- Break your routine in some significant way.

Here are some examples of Neurobic exercises:

- 1. Switch Sides** to recruit seldom used connections in your brain. Use your non-dominant hand for routine activities such as brushing your teeth, using the PC mouse, or buttoning your shirt one-handed.
- 2. Change the Scenery** to remap the visual and spatial networks in your brain. Rearranging a room or the items in your kitchen cabinets or dresser drawers, or taking a new route to work.
- 3. Make Hand Signals:** Learning to spell using the manual alphabet will work out your motor and visual cortex at the same time. You can find illustrations of the 26 hand positions alongside the definition of “manual alphabet” in some dictionaries or on-line.
- 4. Do It Blindfolded:** Try familiar activities with your eyes closed. Sort coins using only your sense of touch. Savor a bowl of blueberries, focusing on your senses of smell and taste. Why blueberries? Because they contain compounds that bridge the communication gap between aging nerve cells.
- 5. Puzzle It Out:** Crosswords are great for sharpening language skills, but working on your spatial intelligence with a jigsaw puzzle is more likely to activate new pathways in your brain.
- 6. Share Story Time:** Both reading out loud and listening promote the interaction of your brain’s left and right hemispheres and activate seldom

used pathways. Reading silently activates a much smaller part of your mental real estate, as does watching TV.

7. **Catch a Whiff:** Smell is the only sense that connects directly to a part of the brain called the limbic system, which is involved in processing emotions and storing memories. Listening to music while burning a scented candle will build brain connections by combining two senses – hearing and smell – that don’t ordinarily collaborate.
8. **Report the News:** Describing things to others is an excellent way to improve your visual memory. Notice one new thing every day and then tell someone about it later. This will help you improve both attention and memory skills.
9. **Take a Walk:** Older adults who start a regular walking program improve significantly on tests of high-level “executive” functions such as planning, scheduling, and task coordination. Studies that have combined strength training, such as lifting weights, with aerobic activity have yielded even greater improvement in cognitive function.

Use mnemonic devices to make memorization easier

Mnemonics (the initial “m” is silent) are clues of any kind that help us remember something, usually by helping us associate the information we want to remember with a visual image, a sentence, or a word.

Mnemonic device	Example
Visual image – Associate a visual image with a word or name to help you remember them better. Positive, pleasant images that are vivid, colorful, and three-dimensional will be easier to remember.	To remember the name of Rosa Parks and what she’s known for, picture a woman sitting on a park bench surrounded by roses, waiting as her bus pulls up.
Acrostic (or sentence) – Make up a sentence in which the first letter of each word is part of or represents the initial of what you want to remember.	The sentence “Every good boy does fine” to memorize the lines of the treble clef, representing the notes E, G, B, D, and F.

Acronym – An acronym is a word that is made up by taking the first letters of all the key words or ideas you need to remember and creating a new word out of them.	The word “HOMES” to remember the names of the Great Lakes: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior.
Rhymes and alliteration – Rhymes, alliteration (a repeating sound or syllable), and even jokes are a memorable way to remember more mundane facts and figures.	The rhyme “Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November” to remember the months of the year with only 30 days in them.
Chunking – Chunking breaks a long list of numbers or other types of information into smaller, more manageable chunks.	Remembering a 10-digit phone number by breaking it down into three sets of numbers: 555-867-5309 (as opposed to 5558675309).
Method of loci – Imagine placing the items you want to remember along a route you know well or in specific locations in a familiar room or building.	For a shopping list, imagine bananas in the entryway to your home, a puddle of milk in the middle of the sofa, eggs going up the stairs, and bread on your bed.

Brain Games Training

Training your brain with brain games is a fun way to improve your concentration, memory, and other brain skills. To keep your brain in top shape, play for at least a few minutes each day.

Brain games exercise many different mental abilities, including processing speed, reaction time, problem solving, attention span, verbal fluency, logical reasoning, task switching, spatial orientation, information processing, quantitative reasoning, and face-name recall. These skills are obviously valuable at school, at work, and in everyday life.

Memory Improvement Group Games for Adults

- Trivial Pursuit or any other trivia board game
- Card Games – Anticipating other players’ moves and strategizing one’s own are ways to improve memory.
- Big Brain Academy – A game on the handheld Nintendo DS, “Big brain Academy” offers puzzles and games in five categories: think, memorize, analyze, compute, and identify. Up to 8 players can compete against each other.

- Sudoku, crosswords, cryptic crosswords, and word searches – Find them in the daily newspaper or buy a puzzle book full of them. Versions are also available on-line.
- Brain Age – A Nintendo DS game, Brain Age has a variety of puzzles and games to improve memory, including memory, number memory, word scramble, and math recall. Wii – Nintendo
- Mybraintrainer.com – A website featuring short individual exercises, including memory improvement exercises, to work different parts of the brain. Although there are some free features on the website, mybraintrainer.com requires a paid membership.
- Wii – Nintendo
- Brain game websites:

➤ Lumosity: www.lumosity.com

➤ AARP: <https://stayingsharp.aarp.org/games?intcmp=AE-HEA-BH-TERTNAV-BG>

Brain game websites - continued:

➤ www.gamesforthebrain.com

➤ Happy Neuron: www.happy-neuron.com

➤ www.mybraintrainer.com

WHY WE NEED MEMORY TOOLS

1. Memory tools get us to pay attention to things we need to remember!
2. Memory tools help us remember the things we need to remember but not memorize.
3. Memory tools help us control information.
4. Memory tools get us organized.
5. Memory tools help us feel better.
 - Forget less
 - More productive and effective
 - Boost our self-esteem

THE BEST TOOLS FOR REMEMBERING WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

1. SCHEDULERS

- Daily Planner
- Calendars
- Cell phones
- Electronic/computerized personal data assistants (Palm Pilots)
- Digital voice-memo recorders

2. TO-DO LIST

- Tasks to do over a certain period of time
- Errands
- Phone calls
- Purchases

3. A FORGET-ME-NOT SPOT

- Drawer, desk, or nook

4. ADDRESS BOOKS AS LOCATOR LOGS

- Use an address book, record each item and “its address.” Ex: ‘K’ for Keys, house key and where it is located; ‘P’ for PIN code

5. MEDICATION BOXES/ORGANIZERS

6. TICKLER FILES

- Maintains information that you will need in the future like tickets, school schedules, lab work

7. NOTES

- Keep a package of sticky notes in your 'forget-me-not' spot. When you remember something that you must do, jot it down and stick it to the door - you are sure to see it as you are leaving.

8. HUMAN RESOURCES

- It's okay to have other people remember things for you.