

7 Simple Things You Can Do to Improve Short Term Memory

Heading to the grocery store and then coming home to find out that you forgot an important item? Do you struggle with remembering names, addresses, and phone numbers?

You are not alone. We all have been there plenty!

But what would happen if a doctor or nurse forgets to administer the proper drug to a patient in critical care? It could be a mistake that could cost them their career. There were incidents where people forgot to turn off their stove while cooking and this led to a huge fire in their house.

Forgetting information can sometimes be annoying, while other times it can have some serious impact on our lives. And in today's fast-paced world, our brains are constantly processing information, so we are more likely to forget things. If you want to avoid such habit of forgetfulness, it is essential to improve your short-term memory.

So what is short-term memory? Our brain has two types of memory – short-term and long-term. Any information that enters the mind is first stored in short-term memory. Here, the information only lasts for a limited time, ranging widely from a few seconds to about a minute.

From here, it moves on to the long-term memory depending on different factors. Some factors that shift information from the short-term to long-term memory are:

- Consciously making an attempt to remember or memories something
- Repeating the information mentally or verbally for a long time
- Information that the brain feels important is more likely to move to the long-term memory

So the short-term memory is the mechanism of the brain where it stores new information for a short time in limited quantity. It plays a significant role in what we eventually remember or forget.

Short term memory can only accommodate a limited amount of information. It means that when new information enters, it displaces some older information. The displaced information is forgotten if it doesn't move to long-term memory.

It is important to mention here that short term memory plays a critical role in your life. It affects your attentiveness and your ability to remember or forget information.

So keeping these things in mind, let's take a look at 7 ways to improve your short-term memory.

1. Categorize Information

Divide information into similar categories to remember it. Let's take an example of remembering a nine-digit phone number. If you try to remember the whole number into one go, it becomes difficult, and you might mix up the numbers. But if you divide the number in groups of three, it will become easy to remember.

Now let's say you want to remember a list of items to get from the grocery store. Divide these items into categories like fruits, canned or packaged foods, tools, and so on. This way, it will become easy to remember what items are in each category. This technique of categorizing items is also called "Chunking".

2. Repeat the Information (Loudly If Possible)

Repeating any information verbally for a few times makes it more likely to shift to long-term memory. So, when any piece of information is quickly moved to the long-term, it leaves an empty space in the short-term for new information to enter.

The idea behind this technique is to always have space for new information in short-term memory. In this method, your focus should be to avoid overcrowding the short term memory.

Even if it's not possible to verbally repeat the information, you can do it mentally. If you practice this technique regularly, then you will get better at it. Eventually, you will develop a tendency of quickly shifting important information to long-term memory.

3. Practice Memory Exercises

A lot of people have developed extraordinary memories through regular practice and training. There are many "memory experts" who demonstrate their skills by performing feats, such as remembering a list of very long items in the same order by hearing it just once.

You may not aspire to be a memory expert yourself, but practicing simple memory exercises can help you improve your short-term memory. There are different exercises designed to help you remember lists, numbers, shapes, structures, and so on. And these are not very difficult or complicated techniques either.

4. Maintain a Healthy Sleep Routine

The only time our mind is at rest is when we are sleeping. Well, it would be technically incorrect to say that the mind is at rest when we sleep. Even then, the brain is performing different processes, like breathing, for example. But when we sleep, it's the only state when our brain doesn't actively absorb and process information.

Studies have shown that adequate sleep improves various functions of the brain.^[1] The same is true for our memory. A tired brain is terrible at storing and processing information. That is

why if you want to improve your short-term memory, then you must have a healthy sleep routine.

5. Meditate

The important aspects of meditation are learning to control one's thoughts and becoming aware of one's surroundings. It also helps to empty the brain from negative or unimportant thoughts. So, practicing meditation will help you filter out what's important and what's not. Once you weed out all unnecessary information from your brain, the important information becomes easy to store.

Often, meditation is pictured as sitting in a straight pose with folded legs and outstretched arms. However, meditation is not just about the posture, it's a technique that can be applied anywhere and at any time.

6. Practice Memory Association

Memory association is a technique that even memory experts practice. The concept behind it is to create some sort of relationship between different information so that remembering one piece of information will also remind you of others.

If you want to remember someone's name, you link it in your memory with another person that you know who has the same (or similar) name.

Or if you want to remember someone's address, you associate it in your mind with the nearest location from that address that you are familiar with. In fact, our brain does this subconsciously many times.

Many people remember directions to certain places by remembering landmarks. If the entire route is difficult or confusing to remember, then focusing on specific landmarks on the way will make it easier. So the basic concept of memory association is to link information that is difficult to remember with those that are easy to remember.

7. Read, Write, Speak, and Listen

Most information that our brain receives is in some form of language. Messages, lectures, conversations, and many other daily aspects of our lives make use of language.

When we read, write, speak or listen, we process the information we are receiving. The more we indulge in these activities, the faster our brain starts processing it.