



HOW YOUR MEMORY WORKS

At the present time, no one is completely sure exactly how your memory works. What is known is that your memory consists of 2 parts: short-term and long-term.

Short-term memory is memory that is only stored for 10-20 seconds. The average person's short-term memory can remember 7 things for 20 seconds. After around 20 seconds, the person begins to forget what he/she has just learned. Short-term memory is used for now and present activities.

Long-term memory is memory that is stored for a long period of time. This allows the individual to recall and retrieve a desired portion of long-term memory for use. This memory stores most of everything you know -- your name, language, vocabulary, childhood, your friends, your ideas, etc. Without long-term memory, everything that we learn we would forget, therefore defeating the purpose of learning anything at all.

Anything new you perceive is stored in short-term memory. In order for short-term memory to become long-term, you must either rehearse or associate the memory in short-term. Once memory is stored in long-term, it then can be recalled for later use. The focus of this page will be targeted on developing your skill on recalling your long-term memory. It has been said that on one forgets a thing in the memory, the problem is with recalling that memory. This page is written to help you develop you skills to improve your recall function.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY

Here are a few basic approaches to improving your memory:

REPETITION. When you're trying to memorize something try repeating it to yourself many times before moving on. The more you go over something new, the easier it will be for your mind to remember it.

RELAXATION. It is important that you are focused and relaxed when trying to learn something new. The less distractions there are and the more calm, rested and focused you are on whatever it is you're trying to learn, the more your mind will be able to recall what you have learned. During a test, most people are usually stressed out and find it hard to remember the stuff they studied the least, but right after the test they can immediately recall the answers they couldn't remember. This is because they are more relaxed and their brains are more able to focus on retrieving the answers. A few suggestions for studying are not to listen to hard music and to try to find a spot where you're comfortable and relaxed. Meditation can also help in relaxation.

MEANING. The more meaningful something is to you, the less likely you'll forget it. When learning something new, try to make it meaningful to you in one way or another. Make up stories or more connections to your past experience to create meaning in something that has none.

RHYMES. It has been tested that something that has a rhyme is easier to remember, because a rhyme is more than a set of words. A rhyme has a tune and a sound value to it, so there's more associations in your memory to its sounds and words, therefore making it easier to remember. If you can, try to make up neat little rhymes for things that are easy to remember. For example, the famous rhyme for spelling with i and e: "i before e except after c; or when sounded like a, as in neighbor and weigh."

PATTERNS. Patterns make things easier to remember and associate with. The more way you can find to organize data and create patterns within them, the easier it will be for you to remember it. A phone number, for example, has a hyphen after the first 3 numbers, so it's easier for you to remember than if it were written with no hyphen. Take the number 58125192226293336404347. How long would it take you to remember this number: Quite a while. But if you were to find a pattern in it, then all you would have to do is remember the pattern and you could reproduce the number in no time. Can you see the pattern? The pattern is: take the 1st number (5) and + 3 and you'll get (8) the + 4 and you'll get (12) and + 3 and you'll get (15) and then + 4 and you'll get (19) and so on. If you find it hard to make up patterns in data, then make up stories or find some ways to increase the number of associations in what you already know in your mind.

ASSOCIATIONS. When learning something new, try making connections to what you already know that makes sense in some way to you. You can associate the shape of Italy with that of a boot. So the next time someone asks you to draw an outline of Italy, you'll be reminded of the boot and will be able to quickly recall the shape of Italy. In trying to remember to spelling of principle and principal is to make this connection between them: "principle is a rule and principal is a pal." Now you will always know which one is the rule and which one is the head of a school. And there's an example of a rhyme. See, it's not that hard at all.

VISUALIZATION. A visual image has a stronger hold in memory than a verbal image. When learning something new, try to associate as many visual images with it as you can. When it's time to recall that information, all you have to do is recall those visual cues or try to imagine yourself back in that situation when you first learned that piece of information.

MNEMONICS. Mnemonics are simply device (visual or verbal) that aid in remembering. All of the examples shown above are examples of mnemonics. All mnemonics really do is add meaning to your memory and help shorten long data. We will show you some more examples of mnemonics that you can apply in the real world to enhance your memory. An easy way to remember the calendar is to use your fist (assuming that your fist conforms to the shape of the average fist of a human being). Take either your left or right fist and start with your leftmost knuckle and say January. Now move to the dip between your 1st and middle finger and say February and so on. Do you notice that each knuckle month has 31 days and the dips have less that 31? For daylight saving times, just remember this, "Spring forward, fall back." In the spring you switch the clock 1 hour ahead and back an hour in the fall. Those are just 2 neat examples of what mnemonics can do for your memory.

ACRONYMS. Acronyms are words that are made up of the first letter of a series of words to act as a cue for remembering the series of words. For example, the letters in the words HOMES stand for the Great Lakes: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior. Or, you can make up a sentence that uses the first letters of the lakes. This is an acrostic. An acrostic for The Great Lakes is: Healthy Old Men Exercise Some. ROY G BIV is an acronym for Red, Orange Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet--the colors of the visible spectrum. An acrostic for that is: "Richard of York Gave Battle In Vain." Those are just a few examples to help you get the idea. Now it's up to you to make up these neat little mnemonics when learning something new.

KEYWORDS. This is simply a utilization of 2 memory techniques proven most useful in learning a foreign vocabulary. Here's how it works. The word for "to go" in French is *aller*. Aller, said in French as "Ah lay," which sounds like alley. Now make up a visual image of something that has to do with an alley. Picture this in your head: if you want to see a fight, go to an alley. Or picture something that sounds just like the French word: I'll lie down before I go. Now the problem is building on your imagination. If you have a superb one, then you'll have no problem.

If you can remember everything on this page, then your memory has already improved. See, it really works!