

Tips for a Better Memory

All of us have problems recalling a stray fact or name at times, but some of us are so disorganized and forgetful that our brains sometimes seem more like a sieve.

No need to panic. Psychologists at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston have developed an innovative program called Memory 101 that's gaining attention from researchers around the nation. Want to turbo-charge your memory -- or least get your engine running smoothly? Here are tips from Memory 101 psychologists Cheryl Weinstein and Winifred Sachs, as well as from clinical memory programs around the country:

Make a memory notebook.

This is an 8-by-10 notebook with a calendar that will help you plan the minutiae of your life. Fill it with your to-do lists for the day, week, and month. Your notebook can become a portable filing cabinet for phone numbers, addresses, birthdays, medical information, phone messages, inspirational thoughts, bridge-playing strategies -- you name it. Carry it with you, or carry a small notepad to jot down information that you later transfer into your notebook. The act of writing something down reinforces it in your memory. And make sure to look at your notebook several times a day.

Talk aloud to yourself.

(I do this one quite often, not for memory, but just do it) Say: "I'm walking up the stairs to get my glasses. I'm putting my parking ticket in my pocket so I can get it validated. I'm going to the store to buy milk and eggs." Be careful of what you say in the store. If a great idea strikes while you're in the shower, rehearse it out loud to help remember it. Consider carrying a tape recorder to record things you need to remember.

Post reminder signs

in your house, office, and car: "Remember to buy stamps!" "Remember to take out the garbage on Thursday!"

Get in the habit of keeping items where you will need them

keys by the front door, umbrella in the sleeve of your coat, eyedrops in the drawer of your nightstand, and so on. Record these locations in your memory notebook.

Minimize distractions. Do one thing at a time.

Turn off the television or radio when you're talking with someone. At a restaurant, try to face the wall so you can more easily focus on the conversation at your table.

Bundle items from your to-do list.

Examples: Always clean your glasses at the sink after you brush your teeth; always change the batteries in your home smoke detectors whenever you change the clocks for daylight-saving time.

Use mnemonic tricks

acronyms, rhymes, and so on. When tightening or loosening lids, remember "righty-tighty, lefty-loosey." To recall the Great Lakes, remember "HOMES" (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior.)

Slow down.

Our ability to store and recall memory slows slightly with age. Ask friends, relatives, and even doctors to speak more slowly. (This is a must for seniors)

Take care of your body to take care of your mind. Certain medications, poor nutrition, and even small deficiencies in sleep may interfere with memory.

Exercise your mind. Reading, playing the piano, watching shows like, **JEOPARDY &**

WHEEL OF FORTUNE, playing cards or chess -- all these activities help keep your brain sharp and active.

Understand your own style of learning. Most people are visual learners, remembering best what they see. They benefit the most from memory notebooks and signs. Others are auditory learners, remembering best what they hear. They benefit from talking out loud or using a tape recorder. A few people are kinesthetic learners, remembering best what they experience. They will benefit most from writing things down or acting them out. Knowing your strength will help your memory run at peak efficiency. To enhance your memory, try using all three learning modes.

For more about your Memory and how it works see <http://allpsych.com/psychology101/memory.html>