

Memory Strategies

Let's talk about how we learn things. Generally, every person learns a new piece of information in three main ways: hearing it, seeing it or doing it.

The three main types of learners are *auditory*, *visual* and *kinesthetic*. Or, as some like to say, hearers, seers and meddlers. Of course, one person may use a combination of the three to learn something new, but every person has their own preferred way of learning for different tasks.

Once you discover how best you learn certain pieces of information, for instance, how best you learn and remember names, you can maximize that ability by ensuring you always learn a name the same way. Remember, if you don't learn it, you can't remember it!



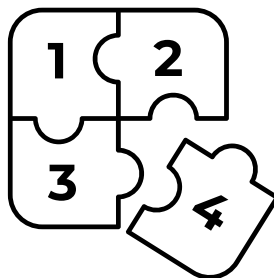
Types of Learners



Auditory
Do you need to hear it?



Visual
Do you need to see it?



Kinesthetic
Do you need to "do" it?

What Type of Learner Am I?

Finish this sentence:

Whenever I buy something new that needs to be put together, I usually....

- Read the directions from beginning to end before starting.
- Read aloud or have someone read the directions aloud to me.
- Leave the directions and begin assembling immediately.

If you chose the first response, you are probably a visual learner – you need to see it. If you chose the second option, you are probably an auditory learner – you need to hear it. The third option indicates you are a kinesthetic learner – you need to do it.

Now, I know many of you read the last type and saw shades of someone you know, putting together a BBQ grill without looking at the instructions and laughed. But it is an actual, bona fide way that some people have to approach tasks because of their learning style.

Auditory Learner

Hearing is the primary way of learning new information

Usually leads the conversation

Learns words to songs easily

Dislikes writing

May not be able to read body language

Visual Learner

Seeing is the primary way of learning new information

Watches the face of those talking

May need to write directions down to follow them

Understands body language easily

May have trouble remembering names

Kinesthetic Learner

“Doing” is the primary way of learning new information

Likes to touch and feel things

Has trouble standing still or sitting still

Needs to experience something “hands on” to learn how to do it

The best learner...

- Blends the three types to maximize performance.



Strategies to Help Remember

- Concentration
- Association
- Repetition
- Relaxation

Tying a string around a finger may work for some but it is probably not an effective strategy for most people. Concentration, association, repetition and relaxation may be ways to help you remember almost anything from names to where you left your keys to reciting Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. You may need to blend two or more of these strategies to be effective. You will have to try different methods and see which works best for you.

Many people may see these things as crutches and not good for your memory. However, research shows these to be proven, effective means by which you may improve your memory. So, we will call them strategies. It is important to accentuate any and all methods by which you are able to better remember information! While some change may be expected as you age, that doesn't mean you can't do something about it – you can be proactive in using some strategies and lifestyle adaptations.

Concentration:

- Attention
- Focus
- Priority
- Effort



One of the simplest ways to improve memory is to realize the importance of focusing your attention on what you really want to remember. Coincidentally, lack of attention and concentration is one of the main reasons that information is forgotten.

Concentration is important in gathering information from your sensory memory. Have you ever had the experience of hearing someone's name at the beginning of a phone call and not being able to remember it by the end of the conversation? It is often hard to concentrate on more than one thing at a time. Concentration involves paying attention to what is going on or what is being done, giving priority to what you want to remember and making an effort to remember. Without these three elements you will not be able to concentrate on something enough to remember it.

Association

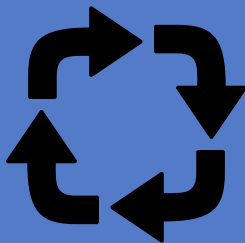
- Elaboration
- Visualization
- Organization
- Links
- Cues



Association is another important memory technique that uses cues or prompts to connect two memories. Much association of new information is done unconsciously, but you can make a conscious effort to associate something you want to remember with something you already know. Elaboration is seeking the prompts that will help get to a memory – it is linking items together to find a memory. When you are trying to remember where you placed your car keys, do you picture the room where you would most likely have put them? Visualization can be quite an effective strategy. Also, organization may be helpful if like items are stored together. Links or cues may also help with association. Remembering your new neighbor's name – Marsha. Since Marsha has white hair, you might think about marshmallows. They are white like her hair and the first part of the word is her name.

Repetition

- Order
- Lists
- Notes
- Rehearsal



Repetition uses external strategies to remind you. How many of us use one or more strategies like keeping a list, writing notes, keeping something in the same place or keeping a calendar? When you use these memory tools, you don't have to worry about keeping track of things in your memory. Rehearsal literally means going through something again. Repeating something to yourself over and over again or practicing something several times to make sure that you are able to do it correctly. Another form of repetition is called "rote." Many of you probably don't give a second thought to reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. This is because you have repeated it or rehearsed it so much that you don't even think about it.

Relaxation

- Augments all the other strategies
- Consolidation



Relaxation is a technique for remembering but it is also an acquired skill that will help you concentrate better, associate better and practice repetition better. It will also help your overall day-to-day activities. Relaxation will help free your mind and allow your brain to sort through what is and is not important to you. After you relax, you may be able to recall the name of the song you heard earlier in the day or the punch line to the funny joke you wanted to tell your friend. In some cases, relaxation may be as simple as moving to a room or locale with no other distractions or noises and collecting your thoughts. Find a relaxation technique that works for you and try to employ it on a daily basis.