

Module 4.10: Ways to Enhance Memory

Most of us suffer from memory failures of one kind or another, and most of us would like to improve our memories so that we don't forget where we put the car keys or, more importantly, the material we need to know for an exam. In this section, we'll look at some ways to help you remember better, and at some strategies for more effective studying.

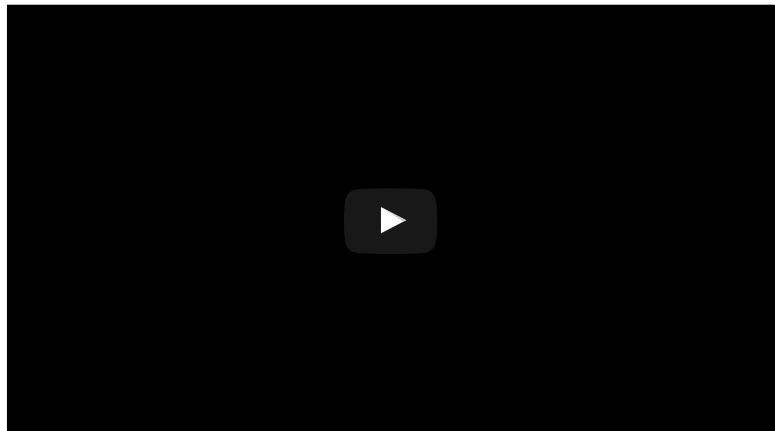
Memory-Enhancing Strategies

What are some everyday ways we can improve our memory, including recall? To help make sure information goes from short-term memory to long-term memory, you can use memory-enhancing strategies.

- **Rehearsal** is the conscious repetition of information to be remembered. Think about how you learned your multiplication tables as a child. You may recall that $6 \times 6 = 36$, $6 \times 7 = 42$, and $6 \times 8 = 48$. Memorizing these facts is rehearsal.
- **Chunking** is when you organize information into manageable bits or chunks. Chunking is useful when trying to remember information like dates and phone numbers. Instead of trying to remember 5205550467, you remember the number as 520-555-0467.
- **Elaborative rehearsal** is a technique in which you think about the meaning of the new information and its relation to knowledge already stored in your memory. For example, in this case, you could remember that 520 is an area code for Arizona and the person you met is from Arizona. This would help you better remember the 520 prefix.
- **Mnemonic devices** are memory aids that help us organize information for encoding. They are especially useful when we want to recall larger bits of information such as steps, stages, phases, and parts of a system. It seems the more vivid or unusual the mnemonic, the easier it is to remember. The key to using any mnemonic successfully is to find a strategy that works for you.

Link to Learning

Watch the video below on a fascinating TED Talks lecture titled "Feats of Memory Anyone Can Do." The lecture is given by Joshua Foer, a science writer who "accidentally" won the U. S. Memory Championships. He explains a mnemonic device called the memory palace.



Some other strategies that are used to improve memory include expressive writing and saying words aloud. Expressive writing helps boost your short-term memory, particularly if you write about a traumatic experience in your life. Masao Yogo and Shuji Fujihara (2008) had participants write for 20-minute intervals several times per month. The participants were instructed to write about a traumatic experience, their best possible future selves, or a trivial topic. The researchers found that this simple writing task increased short-term memory capacity after five weeks, but only for the participants who wrote about traumatic experiences. Psychologists can't explain why this writing task works, but it does.

What if you want to remember items you need to pick up at the store? Simply say them out loud to yourself. A series of studies found that saying a word out loud improves your memory for the word because it increases the word's distinctiveness. Feel silly, saying random grocery

items aloud? This technique works equally well if you just mouth the words. Using these techniques increased participants' memory for the words by more than 10%. These techniques can also be used to help you study.

How to Study Effectively

Based on the information presented in this lesson, here are some strategies and suggestions to help you hone your study techniques (**Table 4.2**). The key with any of these strategies is to figure out what works best for you.

Table 4.2 Study Strategies

Study Technique	Description
Use elaborative rehearsal	Information we process more deeply goes into long-term memory. If we want to remember a piece of information, we should think about it more deeply and link it to other information and memories to make it more meaningful. For example, if we are trying to remember that the hippocampus is involved with memory processing, we might envision a hippopotamus with excellent memory and then we could better remember the hippocampus.
Apply the self-reference effect	Make the material you are trying to memorize personally meaningful to you. Write notes and definitions in your own words. Relate the material to something you have already learned for another class, or think how you can apply the concepts to your own life. When you do this, you are building a web of retrieval cues that will help you access the material when you want to remember it.
Don't forget the forgetting curve	The information you learn drops off rapidly with time. Even if you think you know the material, study it again right before test time to increase the likelihood the information will remain in your memory. Overlearning can help prevent storage decay.

Study Technique	Description
Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse	Review the material over time, in spaced and organized study sessions. Organize and study your notes, and take practice quizzes/exams. Link the new information to other information you already know well.
Be aware of interference	To reduce the likelihood of interference, study during a quiet time without interruptions or distractions (like television or music).
Keep moving	Research suggests that regular aerobic exercise is beneficial for. Aerobic exercise promotes neurogenesis: the growth of new brain cells in the hippocampus, an area of the brain known to play a role in memory and learning.
Get enough sleep	While you are sleeping, your brain is still at work. During sleep the brain organizes and consolidates information to be stored in long-term memory.
Make use of mnemonic devices	Mnemonic devices often help us to remember and recall information. There are different types of mnemonic devices, such as acronyms, acrostics, and jingles. Select the following link to open the Bucks County Community College site that offers some interesting examples of mnemonic devices.

Check Your Knowledge

As you read your assignment for this lesson, pay close attention to the [key terms and phrases](#) listed throughout the chapter. These terms and concepts are important to your understanding of the information provided in the lesson.

Module 4.10 Flashcards

Click on the notecard to reveal the definition.

RESET

Chunking

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