

PARENTS

Developing Memory Skills

What does memory skills mean?

The ability to remember what we hear is essential in order to understand and learn. Memory activities often overlap with activities for understanding. When developing memory skills it's best to use a combination of activities (exercising the memory) and strategies (compensating for the poor memory).

There are 3 types of memory:

- **Auditory Memory** - Learners find it easier to take in new information through the spoken word. This is usually the method of remembering that pupils with SEN struggle with the most.
- **Visual Memory** - Learners find it easier to take in new information through pictures, diagrams, charts, films, etc.
- **Kinaesthetic Memory** - Learners find it easier to take in new information through copying demonstrations and getting physically involved

Strategies to Help Improve Memory

When developing memory skills it's best to use a combination of activities (exercising the memory) and strategies (compensating for the poor memory). It's also best to use all types of memory and not just rely on auditory.

For the parent:

- Ensure that the learner is looking, listening and attending before giving instructions.
- Back up auditory information with visual information (pictures, objects, gestures etc.).
- Use short simple sentences, be aware of the vocabulary you use and avoid unnecessary language.

Strategies to teach your child:

- **Working with the information:** write it out, say it, draw it, colour it in, discuss it.
- **Understanding:** MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER: You can only remember and use vocabulary or information/instructions that you understand. Find ways to monitor your understanding. Get in the habit of saying to yourself, "*Do I understand this?*" You are less likely to remember something that does not seem logical or is something that you would not agree with. Explain new information/instructions to another student who is having difficulty; if you teach someone else, you reinforce your own knowledge.
- **Think in Pictures, Colours, and Shapes.**
Pictures/images are more memorable than abstract ideas, and that is why pictures are so important. Practice colourful thinking! Associate your own mental pictures to school subject content. In your class and text notes use colour to highlight headings and other key ideas. Use shapes to help you organise ideas i.e. draw a small circle on all the books you need for a certain subject, put a small circle next to this subject on your timetable.
- **Mnemonics:** These ways of making associations can be extremely powerful. At the same time, if overused, you can spend too much time on generating and learning the mnemonics, so use them economically. Types of Mnemonics:
 - Rhymes,
 - Acronyms,

- Using the beginning letters of a set of information to build a sentence (eg for these strategies; **Walking Under The Mountain Ridge**.)
- **Repetition:** Write it out, say it, draw it, colour it in, discuss it. The more times you go over something, the better your memory will be of that information. However, each time you go through something, try to find a different angle so that you are not just repeating exactly the same activity. By varying your approach, you will create more connections in long-term memory.
- **VISUALISE IT:** If given an instruction or new piece of information try picturing it in your head.

Activities to Help Improve Memory

- **Favourites:** My name is _____ and I like _____ (favourite food/film/TV etc.). This can be played as a round-the-group memory game e.g. This is Sadie and she likes football, this is Kulvinder, he likes crisps, my name is _____ and I like _____.
- **Alliteration Memory:** My name is 'Clever Connie'. (Each person chooses a word beginning with the same sound as his or her name). As above, play round the group as memory game.
- **Shopping Game:** I went shopping..... 'I went shopping and I bought an apple', next person carries on with 'I went shopping and I bought an apple and some chocolate etc.' Each person says what everyone before them has said before adding an item of their own.
 - **Variations on 'I went shopping' :**
 - I went on holiday and in my suitcase I put.....
 - I made a sandwich and in it I put.....
 - I made a horrible sandwich and in it I put...(e.g. spiders, worms, mud etc.)
 - I went to a sports shop and I bought....
 - I went to the beach and I saw....
- **Remember the Story:** Read a short story to your child and tell them to listen very carefully. Your child/children can take turns at re-telling the story. Then ask some simple specific questions about the content of the story. Read the story again if your children have difficulties recalling the details.
- **Visualisation game:** Group members each name an animal and picture it in their head to recall next session. Next session, following recall, they picture the animal with an item of clothing on. Subsequent sessions may be the animal eating a particular piece of food and travelling in a particular vehicle. Recall all the things about the animal each time. This activity helps link tasks across sessions.
- **Magic goggles / glasses:** Everyone take it in turns to put on a pair of 'magic' goggles or glasses and imagine that they can see through the glasses to an imaginary place. They must describe to everyone else what they can see in that place. The others take turns at guessing what the place is e.g. 'I can see a cash register, some sweets, a carrot, and a trolley' (the supermarket).
- Any suitable **short story books**. Write some questions for each story to encourage practice of strategies, i.e. listening for/noting key information, checking understanding, and visualisation.