

# Memory

## Coping with Memory Problems

Memory is the ability to store information and recall it at a later time. It allows us to remember what we have done in the past and helps us to plan for the future. Memory also allows us to build relationships based on memory of past experiences and conversations.

### Common memory problems can include:

- Losing things
- Forgetting important dates or appointments
- Forgetting names
- Difficulty learning new things
- Repeating yourself

## Memory Aids

Memory aids can help you to cope with memory problems. You can get help from a carer or family member to use the following strategies.

Memory aids can fall into two different groups:

- Internal memory aids require you to use strategies in your mind. These strategies can help you to better store and recall information.
- External memory aids are things that you can physically touch, for example, an alarm clock or a calendar. They can also include changes to the environment or your lifestyle.

## Internal Memory Aids

### Visual Imagery

To help you remember things, create pictures in your mind. For example, to remember the name Angela Brown, imagine an angel, and the colour of her hair which is brown.

### Association

Make a connection between things you are trying to remember, and something familiar to you. For example, when shopping; plan to have a coffee next door to the pharmacy so it reminds you to get your medication.

### First-Letter Cues

Use the first letter from each item you need to remember to create a word, for example S.O.M.E. could help you to remember sugar, oranges, milk and eggs at the shops.

### Repetition

Repeat the information in your mind 5-10 times.

## Observation

Pay attention and notice things around you to help your memory, For example, remember an address by observing that it is the next turn after a church.

## Rhymes

For example, 30 days has September, April June and November...

## Categorise

Put information into meaningful groups. For example, if you need to pack your bag for a trip away, group items such as clothing, food, and medicines.

## Stories

Create a story involving the information to be remembered.

## Learning new information

One technique that can be used is the **PQRST** method.

**Preview:** Read over the article quickly.

**Question:** What is the point or purpose of the article? What do you need to learn from this article?

**Read:** Read over the article again. You can use a highlighter or pencil to underline the important points.

**State:** Tell yourself again what the main points are.

**Test:** Test yourself, have you understood and learned what you needed to?

## Names & Faces

Use the name in conversation, take note of distinctive physical features (e.g. he has eyebrows like John Howard) and remember something about their personality (e.g. friendliness, confidence, intelligence).

## External Memory Aids

### Notebooks

- Carry a notebook and pen with you everywhere.
- Keep entries short and look at them regularly.
- Highlight important entries using colours.
- Divide your notebook into different sections and include names, addresses, things to do, appointments etc.

### Calendars and Diaries

- Write down all upcoming events and things that have to be done.
- Keep your calendar or diary in a handy place and make sure to check it every morning and night.
- Use the calendar function on your computer if you prefer.
- Write their name down in your diary.

### Mobile phones, electronic organisers, watches

- Like your diary, these are best carried everywhere you go.
- Set the alarm to remind you of a task or event.

## Lists

Write out lists of things to do, e.g. questions to ask your doctor, jobs to do around the house, bills you have to pay, and shopping.

## Post-it notes

Put notes where they will remind you of the things, e.g. put a note on the bench reminding you to phone a friend on their birthday.

## Medication

Ask your pharmacist about using a medicines organiser such as a Webster pack or dosette box.

## Time Management, Habits and Routines

- Keep your routine simple and do not plan too much each day.
- Stick to a weekly routine, for instance, do your shopping or washing on the same day.
- Have a weekly or fortnightly menu to help with shopping.

## Storing and Labelling

- Decide on a special place for important items (e.g. keys) and always put them back in the same place.
- Label cupboards or shelves as a reminder of where things are kept.
- Label perishable food with the date of when it was opened.

## Pictures

Take photos of important events and keep photo albums. A family member or friend might help you label your photos.

## Keep it Simple

- Reduce the amount of 'things' you have to deal with.
- Put up a sign saying 'NO JUNK MAIL' on your mail box.
- A family member or friend might help you sort out things that you no longer need at home.

## Have a plan that works for you

- For example, if you have library books to return, put them near the front door where you will see them on your way out.
- Arrange for a family member or close friend to phone you to remind you about an important event.

## Tips for family members and carers

One of the difficult things about remembering is getting the information into memory in the first place. The following tips might help when giving information to a person with memory problems.

- Make information simple.
- Reduce the amount of information that has to be remembered.
- Make sure the information has been understood by having the person repeat it back to you.
- Ask the person if they would like to write the information down, or for you to write it down for them.
- Make sure the person is paying attention. Is the TV or radio a distraction? Are you telling them important

information in a crowded or busy place?

- Choose the best time of day to learn new information, for example, some people might be more alert in the mornings when they are less tired.

## Further Information

There is a lot more information on ways to cope with memory problems that has not been included in this factsheet. If you feel that you need further help please speak with your general practitioner or occupational therapist.

Other organisations and websites which might be useful:

**Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service (ABIOS)** - Provides information, resources, support.

Ph: (07) 3406 2311

Email: [abios@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:abios@health.qld.gov.au)

[www.health.qld.gov.au/abios](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/abios)

**Synapse** (formerly the Brain Injury Association of Queensland):

Ph: (07) 3137 7400 in Brisbane, or free call 1800 67 3074 if you are outside Brisbane.

<http://synapse.org.au/>

**Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services (CRS)** - A government support service for return to work.

Ph: 1800 277 277

[www.crsaustralia.gov.au](http://www.crsaustralia.gov.au)

**LifeTec Queensland** - Provides information and education on assistive technology.

Ph: 1300 885 886

[www.lifetec.org.au](http://www.lifetec.org.au)

**Please contact your therapist if you have any queries or concerns.**

**Therapist:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone: (07) 3646 7100**