Tips to Help You Remember Better

1. **Make sure your powers of concentration are OK.** Memory trouble is often caused by, or mistaken for, problems with attention and concentration. If a person is not paying full attention up front, the information is unlikely to make it into memory. The difficulties you have been experiencing with memory may in fact be a problem with attention.

2. **Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse!** The more you recite something you want to remember, the more you will drive it deep into memory storage. This requires active mental work on your part but it will pay rich dividends.

3. **Keep and use a memory notebook.** This may be nothing fancier than a cheap pocket notepad on which you write things to do, appointments, tasks and other information you want to be sure to remember. Refer to it often.

4. **Use other environmental cues.** These include checklists and sticky pad sheets posted on your desk and wherever else you need them. Writing notes on calendars is another example. The bottom line is…write it down and pin it up!

5. **Pair new stuff with old and familiar concepts.** What this means is to pair the item or bit of information you want to remember with something easy that you can visualize, like you favorite dessert. This way, for example, when you think of ice cream later on, you’ll be more apt to remember the item.

6. **Turn the thing you want to remember in to a mental image.** This is like the last tip except you don’t pair what you want to remember with anything, you simply turn it into and interesting mental image, or picture, in your mind’s eye. Maybe a dental appointment at 11am becomes a visual image of two teeth side-by-side. This tip is also good for remembering things like grocery lists.

7. **Use other kinds of cues.** Sometimes recall will be better if you memorize the first letter of the word or name and use this letter as a stepping stone to recall the rest of the item. Another strategy is to make up a story for a list of unrelated items, the crazier the better! Your story will act like a thread to weave the items together.

8. **Show and tell.** If someone is giving you information in one form, say in words, and there is also an option to receive it in nonverbal form, say a diagram, take it in both forms. A good example is directions to someone’s house. Have the person both tell you how to get there, and show you how to get there by drawing a map. If you are reading a book, study both the text and the charts or figures.

9. **Group information into logical categories.** Another term from this strategy is “chunking”. It simplifies the process of storing information in memory. For example, a mental grocery list of bananas, carrots, oranges, and potatoes can be reduced to two categories—fruits and veggies.

10. **Do you really need to hear it all?** Limit the amount of information. If someone is giving you a lot, ask what the most important parts are, i.e. separate the wheat from the chaff. Also, if possible, have the person organize what they are saying (ask them to chunk, too), and slow down if necessary. Summarize the information regularly as it is being presented (i.e. feed it back to the person as in, “So what you’re saying is…”).

11. **Avoid selective attention.** It’s also important to point out that once you become aware of memory or, for that matter, concentration difficulties, it is possible you will become highly sensitive to their presence. In other words, you may “selectively attend” to each lapse in your mental efficiency. This could lead you to believe that your memory is getting progressively worse. It is like the person who buys a new red car and then is amazed by how many red cars there are on the highway! We all forget many things each day. If we selectively attend to each incident of normal memory failure, we will soon believe we have a serious memory problem.

12. **Don’t for get the bookstore!** The psychology sections of popular bookstores often contain paperbacks on how to improve your memory. You’ll have to browse through these until you find one that seems good. Not all of the suggestions will apply, but some will.