

IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY



36 Ways to Boost Your Brain Power

Proven by Science



Improve your memory with these simple but powerful tips and techniques. Based on the latest science, our in-depth guide is the way to build a better memory.



Until fairly recently, it was believed that once your memory started slipping a bit, things could only get worse.

But it's now known that ***this is not true.***

Every day, your brain has the opportunity to grow new cells and form new neural connections ... provided you give it what it needs.

Your brain's ability to change and grow, to get better, throughout your lifetime is called neuroplasticity.

Simply put, your brain is constantly changing.

And all of your daily habits influence — *for either better or worse* — how well your brain works, including your memory.

In this guide, we've compiled the most effective ways to improve memory by harnessing the power of the brain's ability to change.

All 36 tips and techniques are based on time-tested results and the latest scientific evidence.

And we've included action steps for everyone, so you know what to do to start building a better memory *today*.

Whether you want to be a better student, maintain your competitive edge at work, or stay mentally sharp as you age, this guide is your how-to manual.

Improve Your Memory with the Right Foods



The human brain is the most complex entity in the known universe.

So treat your brain like the powerful machine it is and give it the highest quality fuel.

Eating the right foods — and avoiding the wrong ones — should be a cornerstone of any long-term strategy for keeping your brain fit for life.

#1. Follow a Proven “Memory Diet”

The **Mediterranean diet** is widely considered the healthiest diet on the planet.

People who eat this way rank high in health and longevity, and have some of the lowest rates of Alzheimer’s disease.

It’s been shown to boost memory and attention and slow the rate of age-related cognitive decline.

Here’s a visual of the Mediterranean diet.

Mediterranean Diet Pyramid

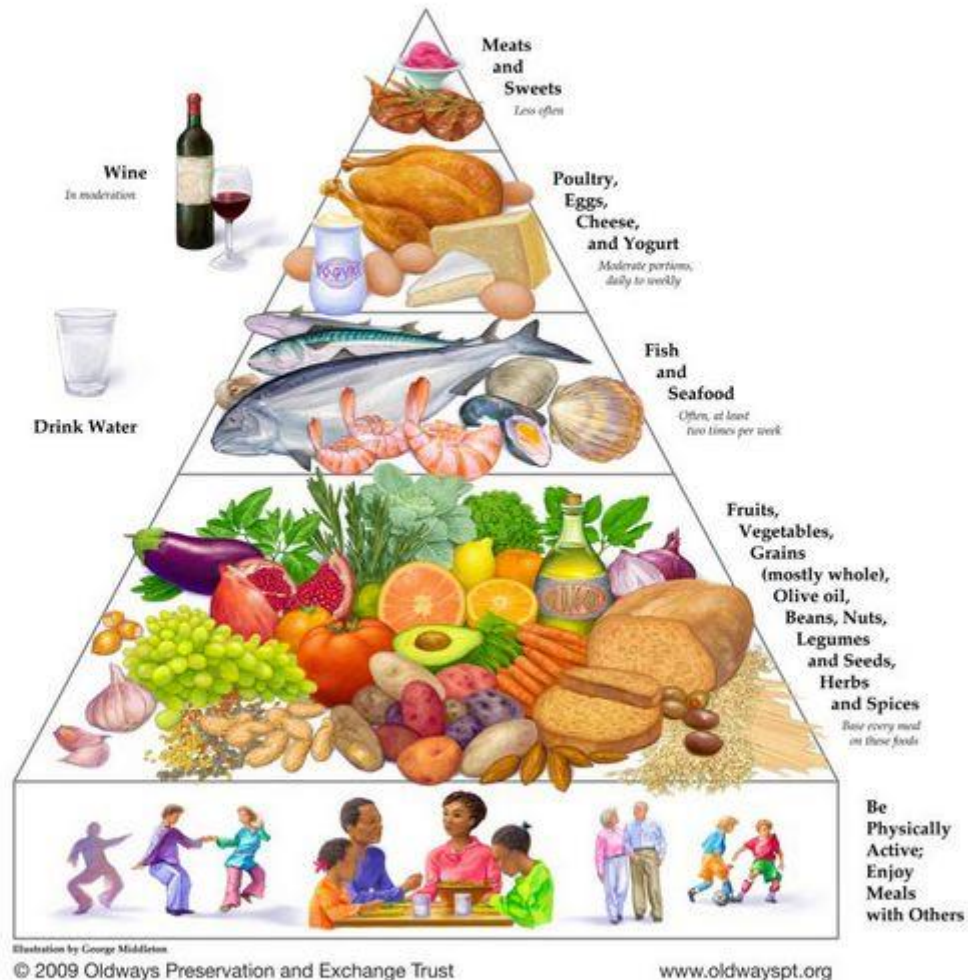


Image courtesy of Oldways.com

The **MIND diet** was created specifically to preserve your mental faculties as you age.

MIND is an acronym for the *Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay*.

In the MIND diet study, over 1,000 seniors were tracked for 8 years.

When study participants rigorously followed the MIND diet, they reduced their risk for Alzheimer's by an impressive 53%.

Researchers were surprised that participants who didn't follow the diet strictly still experienced substantial protective benefits.

Even making modest dietary changes reduced their risk by 35%.



Image courtesy of CanadianLiving.com

Interestingly, a very **low carb or ketogenic diet** (high in good fats and proteins) also shows promise for memory improvement.

But don't let these seemingly contradictory diet concepts confuse or discourage you.

The thing to focus on is what all of these diets have in common, not their differences.

They emphasize eating "real" rather than processed foods, avoiding sugar and trans fats, and including healthy fats.



Action Steps

Start eating a Mediterranean-style or other “real” food diet.

You’ll find hundreds of mouth-watering [Mediterranean diet recipes](#) at Oldways.com.

Oldways is a non-profit organization that created the original Mediterranean Diet Pyramid in conjunction with the World Health Organization and the Harvard School of Public Health.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[The MIND Diet: How to Eat for a Healthy Mind \(+ 42 Recipes\)](#)

#2. Emphasize Foods Known to Improve Memory

A good overall diet has the most positive effect on memory, but certain foods stand out for their outsized benefits.

It may seem like a stretch to claim that eating a particular food can improve your memory.

Yet these foods, when eaten consistently, can:

- strengthen your memory by improving blood flow to the brain
- provide precursors to neurotransmitters (brain chemicals)
- form the structural components of brain cells
- protect brain cells from aging and damage.

Here’s a **list of the top memory foods** and their main brain-enhancing components:

- avocado — *monounsaturated fats, tyrosine*
- berries of all kinds — *anthocyanins, resveratrol*
- coconut oil — *medium chain triglycerides*
- cold-water, fatty fish — *omega-3 essential fatty acids*
- dark chocolate — *flavonols, caffeine*
- eggs — *choline, omega-3 essential fatty acids*
- fermented foods — *probiotics*
- green leafy vegetables — *vitamins C, K, and B complex, magnesium*
- olive oil — *monounsaturated fats, vitamins E and K*
- sea vegetables — *iodine, vitamin B12, inositol*
- turmeric — *curcumin, turmerone*

- walnuts — *omega-3 essential fatty acids, monounsaturated fats, polyphenols*
✓ [Extra Virgin Olive Oil](#) See Amazon.com for best selection and value
✓ [Dark Chocolate](#) See Amazon.com for best selection and value



Action Steps

Add these foods to your grocery shopping list and make them a regular part of your diet.

Learn more about the memory-boosting power of these foods, including lots of practical tips on buying, food prep and much more, in our **brain foods guide** directly below.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[12 Brain Foods That Supercharge Your Memory, Focus & Mood](#)

#3. Avoid Unhealthy Trans Fats

Trans fats are adulterated fats found in processed foods that contribute to heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity, cancer, and other diseases.

Trans fats harm the brain several ways.

They cause inflammation, promote free radical damage, compromise cell membrane integrity, and inhibit the production of long-chain omega-3 fatty acids.

Regular trans fat consumption not only takes a toll on your memory, but increases your risk of depression by up to 50%.

Trans fats are such a health hazard that some countries have banned them and the US will soon follow suit.

✓ [Coconut Oil](#) See Amazon.com for best selection and value

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has mandated that food manufacturers get them out of processed foods, baked goods, snacks, and fast food by June of 2018.



Action Steps

Clear your kitchen of any foods that list trans fats or partially hydrogenated fats on the label.

Next, stop using processed vegetable oils like soy and canola oil. These oils can contain up to 4.2% trans fats that are created during processing. ([11](#))

Don't be fooled when you see "0g trans fats" on product labels containing these oils.



The FDA allows processed food manufacturers to round down their figures so that anything less than 0.5 grams per serving can be listed as 0 grams. ([12](#))

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[The Benefits of Coconut Oil for Brain Health](#)

#4. Avoid Sugar

White sugar is one of the worst food-like substances for your brain and memory, yet the average American annually consumes 156 pounds of it every year.

Poor memory formation, learning disorders, and depression are linked to eating refined sugar.

Chronically high blood sugar levels lead to decreased activity in the [hippocampus](#), the part of the brain most strongly associated with memory.

✓ [Stevia Natural Sweetener](#) See [Amazon.com](#) for best selection and value

Excessive glucose negatively affects attention span, short-term memory, and mood stability.

Sugar is highly suspected as a root cause of Alzheimer's which many experts now consider diabetes of the brain.



Action Steps

Read the labels of all the foods and drinks you normally eat and start eliminating those with the most added sugar.

This means looking beyond the word “sugar.”

The most ubiquitous sugar alternative is high fructose corn syrup (HFCS).

But there are over 60 alternative names for added sugar including healthy-sounding names like cane sugar, raw sugar, honey, agave nectar, and fruit juice concentrate.

You’ll find a comprehensive list of alternative names to watch out for at [SugarScience.org](https://www.sugarscience.org).

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[*The Role of Sugar Cravings in Mood and Anxiety Disorders*](#)

#5. Avoid Monosodium Glutamate (MSG)

MSG is a popular but controversial flavor enhancer added to many processed foods.

MSG breaks down in the body into formaldehyde and glutamate, a known excitotoxin that can overstimulate brain cells to death.

In those sensitive to MSG, **it can cause brain fog, mood swings, migraines, upset stomach, diarrhea, heart irregularities, and asthma.**

If you’ve ever felt dizzy, flushed, mentally fuzzy, or gotten a headache after eating at a restaurant, you may have experienced MSG-induced “Chinese restaurant syndrome.”

But know that you can experience these symptoms after eating at *any* kind of restaurant, especially fast food outlets.



Action Steps

Disturbingly, MSG is extremely common in processed and fast foods, yet is not required to be listed on labels.

Some of the worst hidden sources of MSG include canned soups, snack foods, ramen noodles, and even “healthy” refined soy products like veggie burgers.

Check out this [list of foods containing MSG](#) and minimize the major sources from your diet.

✓ [Taurine Supplements](#) See [Amazon.com](#) for best selection and value

If you know you react badly to MSG, keep a bottle of the amino acid taurine on hand.

There’s a growing body of evidence that taking supplemental taurine after accidental MSG consumption can reduce symptoms.

#6. Keep Your Brain Hydrated

It isn’t just what you eat that affects your memory, it’s also what and how much you drink.

Water might just be the best brain tonic.

Your brain is 73% water and **it takes only 2% dehydration to diminish your memory, attention, and other cognitive skills.**

To illustrate how easily this can happen, you can lose 10% of your body’s water after a strenuous physical workout.

Mild dehydration causes measurable brain shrinkage with adverse effects on concentration, alertness, and short-term memory.

It’s estimated that 75% of the US population does not drink adequate fluids.

The effects of dehydration on the brain are so pronounced that they mimic the symptoms of dementia.

How much do you need to drink?

The “8 glasses per day” rule is an over-simplification.

A better rule of thumb is to divide your weight in pounds by two and drink that many ounces of water per day.

How much water you should drink, before factoring in physical activity

$$\text{Calculation: } \frac{\text{your weight}}{\text{weight}} \times 0.5 = \text{oz. of water per day}$$
$$\text{Example: } 200 \text{ lbs.} \times 0.5 = 100 \text{ oz. per day}$$

Image courtesy of [University of Missouri](#)

Better yet, check out this [online hydration calculator](#) created by Camelbak.com.

NOTE: 1 fluid ounce (OZ.) is equal to 28 millilitres. So If you weigh 11 stone (=154lbs you need 77 fluid ounces which is 2 litres of water).

It will help you determine how much water you need taking into account variables such as your age, weight, and gender; the type, intensity, and duration of activity; temperature and even cloud cover.



Action Steps

Determine how much water you need, then start drinking! Get a BPA-free, leak-proof water bottle and never leave home without it.

If drinking water does not come naturally to you, download an app like [Waterlogged](#) or [Daily Water](#) to remind you to drink enough.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[Why Natural Energy Drinks Are Better for Your Brain](#)

#7. Drink Caffeine Strategically

Caffeine is the world's favourite mind-altering drug.

People around the world drink it to upgrade their memory, mood, focus, and productivity.

And while some caffeine might be helpful, too much can leave you irritable, sleepless, anxious, and even addicted.

Caffeine now meets the criteria for an addictive substance: dependence, tolerance, and withdrawal.

Caffeine addiction and caffeine withdrawal are now recognized psychiatric disorders.

✓ [Green Tea](#) See [Amazon.com](#) for best selection and value

So respectfully consume caffeine in moderation from natural sources like coffee, various teas, and yerba mate.

These traditional brews are loaded with antioxidants, flavonoids, and other beneficial compounds that nourish and protect your brain and increase mental vitality.



Action Steps

Drink caffeine *in moderation*.

Get it from natural sources rather than from sodas and energy drinks which are laden with sugar, chemicals, and synthetic caffeine created in laboratories.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[Caffeine Addiction and the Benefits of Quitting](#)

#8. Drink Alcohol Moderately

Red wine has a reputation of being the healthiest alcoholic beverage.

It's a top source of resveratrol, a potent antioxidant isolated and sold as a memory supplement that protects against age-related mental decline.

But it may surprise you that **moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages in general — wine, beer, champagne or spirits — can positively impact memory.**

Drinking moderately throughout adulthood protects your memory later in life and significantly decreases your risk of dementia or Alzheimer's.

It seems that *what* you drink isn't as important as *how much* you drink.

Here in the US, moderate drinking means one daily drink for women and two for men.

Here's a look at what constitutes one drink.



Image courtesy of [Lehigh University](#)



Action Steps

To support your memory now and protect it later in life, enjoy alcoholic beverages *in moderation*.

You'll find a comprehensive list of drinking guidelines from around the world at the [International Alliance for Responsible Drinking](#).

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[Alcohol, Memory Loss and the Brain: The Evidence](#)

Don't Forget the Best Memory Supplements



Eating a healthy diet isn't always enough to get all the nutrients you need to maximize your memory.

Processed foods, depleted soils, stress, pollution, and medications are only some of the mostly unavoidable factors of modern life that rob your brain of nutrients.

Here are some supplements that can help, including two that provide an immediate memory boost you can notice within minutes!

#9. Take an Omega-3 Supplement

DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) is an omega-3 essential fatty acid that's a major building block of the [cerebral cortex](#), the part of the brain responsible for memory, language, creativity, emotion and attention.

It's widely agreed that taking an essential fatty acid supplement, specifically DHA, is one of the best things you can do to support brain health and cognitive function.

✓ [DHA Supplements](#) See [Amazon.com](#) for best selection and value

DHA facilitates neurotransmitter activity and increases the number of neurotransmitter receptors.

Being low in DHA results in a structurally *smaller* brain.

Fish oil, a popular source of DHA, has been shown to improve working memory in young adults by 23%.



Action Steps

Don't be among the 70% of the population estimated to be deficient in DHA. ([38](#))

Take supplemental omega-3s in the form of a DHA, fish oil, or krill oil supplement.

✓ [Fish Oil Supplements](#) See [Amazon.com](#) for best selection and value

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[The Brain Benefits of Omega-3 Fats in Your Diet](#)

#10. Ensure Nutritional Balance with a Multivitamin Supplement

Virtually all vitamins are needed in adequate amounts for a fully functioning brain and memory.

Proper amounts of vitamins C, D, E, K and B complex in the diet have all been linked to memory enhancement.

The same goes for minerals like magnesium, iron, iodine, and zinc.

But there is no need to take a lot of pills.

Most people can fill in the nutritional gaps in their diet with a *high-quality* multivitamin / mineral supplement.

✓ [Natural Multivitamins](#) See [Amazon.com](#) for best selection and value

Numerous studies confirm that **taking a multivitamin alone can improve your memory** and overall brain function.



Action Steps

If you don't already do so, start taking a multivitamin / mineral supplement.

If you already take a multi, make sure the one you are taking is of the highest quality.

Contrary to what many people believe, the [FDA does not “approve” supplements](#) or test them for purity or effectiveness.

To make sure you are getting what you’ve paid for (and nothing else), make sure your supplement meets the criteria in our [10-point supplement evaluation checklist](#).

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[Key Vitamins for Memory: Deficiencies Are Common](#)

#11. Try A Memory Supplement

Memory supplements have become a huge business and too many companies are trying to cash in on this growing market.

Several popular brain supplements have come under fire from the FDA or have had class actions suits filed against them for making false claims, not reporting side effects, or failing to comply with [Good Manufacturing Practices](#).

And not all supplements for the brain contain ingredients that do anything for your memory.

When choosing a memory supplement, look for one that contains therapeutically effective amounts of one or more of these **proven memory enhancers**:

- acetyl-L-carnitine (ALC or ALCAR)
- alpha GPC (alpha-glycerophosphocholine)
- bacopa (*Bacopa monnieri*)
- citicoline
- curcumin
- ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*)
- American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*)
- huperzine A
- magnesium threonate
- phosphatidylserine
- Arctic root (*Rhodiola rosea*)
- velvet bean (*Mucuna pruriens*)
- vinpocetine

✓ [Citicoline Supplements](#) See Amazon.com for best selection and value



Action Steps

Do your homework before taking any memory supplement.

Not all of the above supplements are a good fit for everyone.

Determine which ones best match your unique set of symptoms here: [Choosing Memory Supplements That Work](#).

✓ [MindLabPro Brain Supplement](#) Optimizes brain health, supports memory, focus & mood

And keep in mind that no memory supplement will take the place of the core nutrients — vitamins, minerals, and essential fats — that your brain needs.

So we recommend trying a memory supplement *after* you've taken care of all your core nutritional needs.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[Top 15 Brain Supplements for a Mental Edge](#)

#12. Use Essential Oils for an Instant Memory Boost

Essential oils are naturally occurring volatile compounds extracted and concentrated from plants.

They are rarely taken internally, but are inhaled or applied topically instead.

A few are renowned for their ability to give you an instant memory boost.

Ancient Greek scholars wore wreaths of rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) to sharpen their minds.

Now science has confirmed that sniffing **rosemary essential oil can significantly improve memory, processing speed, alertness, and focus on the spot!**

Peppermint is another essential oil that can make you more alert and attentive.

✓ [Essential Oils](#) See [Amazon.com](#) for best selection and value

One study found that peppermint worked by increasing beta waves, the brainwave state associated with concentration and problem solving.

This mint's volatile oils are so intense that you can even get a memory surge from peppermint tea, candy or gum.



Action Steps

Sniff undiluted rosemary essential oil, inhale with a diffuser, or apply diluted oil to your wrists or temples.

Chew peppermint gum or mints, drink peppermint tea, or sniff peppermint essential oil for an immediate memory boost.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[All About Essential Oils for Anxiety Relief](#)

Boost Your Memory with Good Brain Workouts



Just as your body benefits from physical exercise, your brain benefits from mental “workouts” as well.

Some of the reported benefits of brain exercise include better memory and mood, faster thinking, better vision and hearing, quicker reaction time, and feelings of increased focus, motivation and productivity.

Here are just some of the many proven ways you can develop your memory by stimulating and challenging your brain.

#13. Turn Off the GPS

On a routine commute, your brain is on autopilot and gets very little stimulation.

But taking an unfamiliar route activates the cortex and hippocampus.

The use of GPS technology is making us mentally lazy and destroying vital mental skills that have taken mankind thousands of years to develop.

Don't let this happen to you.



Action Steps

London cab drivers must memorize a map of London — a feat known as [“The Knowledge.”](#)

Astoundingly, this includes 320 main routes, 25,000 streets, and the location of 20,000 landmarks.

As a result, the hippocampus of a London cabbie is significantly larger than average.

Put away your GPS to exercise your mental navigation skills.

Using your memory instead of relying on maps or GPS will help increase your memory capacity too.

#14. Get Familiar with a New Language

Few people will learn a new language for the primary purpose of enhancing their memory.

But fortunately, there's no need to be that ambitious.

Even a minimal knowledge of a second language can improve your mental abilities.

If you are already bilingual, you have a greater advantage since speaking a second language is one of the most effective ways to keep your mind sharp and protect your memory.

Adults who speak more than one language are likely to have a better working memory and memorization skills.

✓ [Foreign Language Learning](#) See [Amazon.com](#) for best selection and value

But you don't have to *master* a new language to get those benefits.

It's estimated that the 100 most commonly used words of any language comprise 50% of the words used in day-to-day conversation and that the top 1,000 words comprise 89% of everyday writing.



Action Steps

Google "learn 100 core words" and you'll find a series of free online lessons that teach 100 core words in numerous languages.

Set a goal of learning 3 words per day and you'll have those 100 core spoken words mastered in three months.

At that rate you'll be reading reasonably proficiently in less than a year.

And just as importantly, you will reap all the mental benefits of learning a new language.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[The Brain Benefits of Learning a Second Language](#)

#15. Try Out a Brain Training Program

There is a lot of controversy surrounding the exploding billion dollar brain fitness industry. ([74](#))

The experts are still on the fence as to whether brain training only makes you better at playing brain games or whether the benefits translate to an overall improvement in mental function. Most brain training programs contains games specifically for improving memory, but the only way to know for sure if it will help *you* is to give it a try.



Action Steps

If you already enjoy playing games online, trying a brain training program is a no-brainer.

Sign up for a program that offers games for improving memory and see how it works for you.

Most programs offer a trial period so you can try them for free.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[Does Brain Training Work? Neuroscientists Speak Out](#)

#16. Do Neurobics

Brain exercises don't have to be high tech to be effective.

Dr. Lawrence Katz was well ahead of his time when he coined the term "neurobics" in his book [*Keep Your Brain Alive: 83 Neurobic Exercises to Help Prevent Memory Loss and Increase Mental Fitness*](#).

This book is the granddaddy of brain exercise, written in 1998 when few people were talking about brain fitness.

To qualify as *neurobic*, an activity must be new, fun, and challenging and should engage as many sense as possible.



Action Steps

Try some neurobics.

You can follow Dr. Katz's prescribed exercises or create your own.

Examples include doing tasks with your non-dominant hand, wearing your watch upside down, folding laundry with your eyes closed, and eating with chopsticks.

One of Dr. Katz's favorite neurobic activities is engaging all your senses by shopping at a farmer's market.

With this neurobic activity, you'll have the added benefit of getting the freshest brain foods.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[15 Brain Exercises to Keep Your Mind Sharp](#)

#17. Fill Your Life with Music

Music is one of the few activities that engages both sides of the brain simultaneously. **Listening to music, particularly instrumental music, positively impacts memory, focus, attention, language skills, and physical coordination**

Playing an instrument is even better for mental development than passive listening.

Kids who learn to play an instrument develop better memories and higher IQs than kids with no musical training.

Seniors with dementia seem to be brought in touch with their emotions again when they listen to their favourite music.



Action Steps

Listen, play, sing, and dance to music — it's all good for your brain.

If you want to listen to music to specifically enhance learning or concentration, check out the free music streaming service [Spotify](#).

Spotify has a reasonably good lineup of brain-enhancing music.

Once you create an account, go to their “genres and moods” tab where you’ll find a focus playlist category.

Here you’ll find playlists with names like *acoustic concentration*, *deep focus*, and *intense studying*.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[How Music Affects the Brain for the Better](#)

#18. Meditate

The average person has a non-stop flow of 50,000 to 70,000 thoughts per day.

Meditation might not sound like mental “exercise,” but quieting your perpetual thinking machine can be hard work.

Researchers at the UCLA Laboratory of Neuro Imaging have called meditation “push ups for the brain.” Over 1,000 published studies have demonstrated the health benefits of meditation.

Proven cognitive and mental health benefits include memory improvement, stress reduction, mood enhancement, increased focus and attention, better performance at work, and growth of the hippocampus.



Action Steps

Start practicing meditation.

There's evidence that even as little as two minutes per day is beneficial.

Check out our [beginner's guide to meditation](#).

Or try listening to a [binaural beats meditation](#).

Binaural beats sound technology provides a shortcut to get the benefits of meditation more quickly and easily.

✓ [Zen12 Meditation](#) Mental clarity, focus and calm in 12 minutes a day

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[Evidence-Based Health Benefits of Meditation](#)

#19. Take Up a Hobby

You'd expect mentally intensive hobbies like playing chess or computer coding to give your brain an excellent workout.

But craft hobbies such as sewing and woodworking are great brain exercise too.

One study found that any "purposeful activities" — knitting, quilting, drawing, photography, gardening, and do-it-yourself home repair — have the power to focus the brain similar to meditation. **Crafting hobbies of all kinds ward off depression, protect the brain from aging, and increase dopamine**, the brain chemical that keeps you motivated.

They can improve memory now and future-proof your memory against age-related decline.



Action Steps

Take up a hobby.

If you aren't sure where to begin, think back to what you used to like to do when you were a kid.

If you still need a nudge, you'll find a list of over 300 hobby ideas at [NotSoBoringLife.com](#).

Another source of ideas is [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com/).

Here you'll find local "hobbies and crafts" groups where you can share your interest with others.

#20. Embrace Your Inner Artist

Creating art stimulates your imagination, makes you more observant, and improves your memory.

Art therapy can improve cognitive abilities even in people with serious brain conditions.

✓ [Anti-Stress Colouring Books](#) See [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/) for best selection and value

Remarkably, it can improve memory in Alzheimer's patients up to 70%.



Action Steps

Engage in a creative pastime just for fun. The results don't need to be fine art.

If you need ideas to get started, check out this list of [100 Art Therapy Exercises](#).

If you aren't artistic, no worries! Even doodling can help you stay focused, learn new concepts, and retain information.

Doodling while listening to a lecture can increase memory recall by an impressive 30%.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[The Mental Health Benefits of Art Are for Everyone](#)

#21. Never Stop Learning

Albert Einstein is quoted as saying, *"Once you stop learning, you start dying."*

And in a very real sense this is true for your brain.

When you stop learning, some parts of your brain start to atrophy while unused neural connections wither away.

✓ [Hypnosis Live](#) Change your mind & your life - 200+ professional self-hypnosis MP3s

Fortunately, we live in the greatest time in history to keep up with lifelong learning.

The internet has made much of man's knowledge available at your fingertips — much of it for free.



Action Steps

Recall something you've always wanted to learn but have never gotten around to.

Check out websites like [Khan Academy](#) and [Udemy](#) for online courses.

They have enough online learning material to keep you busy for a lifetime.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[*Brain Plasticity Means a Better Brain At Any Age*](#)

Remember More with Physical Exercise



Physical exercise helps keep both your body *and* brain fit.

In fact, exercise could be the most important thing you do to keep your brain in shape, even more important than using it to think!

Just as regular exercise builds bigger muscles and a stronger heart, so does it increase brain volume.

Exercise raises levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that stimulates the formation of new brain cells and new neural connections. Exercise especially increases the number of cells in the hippocampus, your brain's memory centre.

The hippocampus gradually shrinks with age and exercise helps to regrow this area.

You may be pleased to know that exercise doesn't have to be strenuous to build brain fitness.

The best types of exercise are those that just about everyone — no matter their level of physical fitness — can do.

#22. Take a Walk

Since the time of ancient Greece, philosophers have made the connection between walking and better thinking.

And now there's scientific evidence to support this.

Walking not only clears your mind, it actually builds a bigger and sharper brain.

Walking increases oxygen, encourages the growth of new brain cells, offsets brain shrinkage, and promotes connectivity between brain cells.



Action Steps

Take one or two 10-minute walks daily.

Two hours of walking per week can measurably increase hippocampus volume.

Plus you'll be meeting the recommended 150 minutes of exercise per week, according to the [US Centers for Disease Control](#).

✓ [Fitness Trackers](#) See [Amazon.com](#) for best selection and value

If you need a little motivation, consider getting a personal fitness tracker or app that measures your mileage or counts your steps.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[How Physical Exercise Builds Brain Fitness](#)

#23. Engage in Mind-Body Exercises

No-impact exercise practices like yoga, tai chi, and qi gong provide significant mind-body benefits.

Just one 20-minute session of Hatha yoga has shown to have a significant, immediate impact on working memory and concentration.

The slow, controlled movements of tai chi and qi gong look easy, yet give both your brain and body a remarkably good workout.

These ancient exercises increase brain volume while improving memory and thinking.



Action Steps

The next time you're feeling mentally foggy, do a few minutes of yoga, tai chi or qi gong.

The top yoga poses for better concentration include the prayer pose, the eagle, warrior 2, and alternative nostril breathing.

You'll find instructions for these poses at [Yoga.com](https://www.yoga.com).

If you don't currently practice yoga or are at work, try these [desk yoga](#) or [chair yoga](#) positions.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[The Many Mental Health Benefits of Yoga](#)

#24. Exercise Outdoors in Nature

Exercising outdoors, more so than indoor exercise, increases vitality, enthusiasm, pleasure, and self-esteem while lowering tension, depression, and fatigue.

And walking in natural surroundings is more beneficial for your memory and mood than walking in an urban setting.

Memory performance and attention span improve by 20% after spending an hour interacting with nature.

Gardening is a great way to get your daily dose of "vitamin N."

Daily gardening lowers your risk of dementia by an impressive 36%.



Action Steps

Spend some time each day in nature.

It doesn't have to be wilderness. Any little, green corner of the world such as a park or garden will do.

If you can't get outside, gazing out a window or even looking at pictures of nature can boost cognitive functions.

So can having house plants.

Build a Strong Memory with a Healthy Lifestyle



We've dealt with nutrition and exercise in our first 24 tips and techniques because they are so influential to the state of your memory and general brain health and fitness.

But there are some other lifestyle factors and habits that can dramatically affect your memory.

#25. Get 8 Hours of Quality Sleep

Getting adequate sleep is no indulgence.

It's critical for your health and mental well-being.

It's during sleep that your brain consolidates memories, washes out toxic debris, and repairs itself.

✓ [Natural Sleep Aids](#) See [Amazon.com](#) for best selection and value

Lack of quality sleep will impair your memory, creativity, judgment, and attention.

According to the Penn State Hershey Sleep Research and Treatment Centre, skimping on just one night of sleep affects your mental performance as much as being legally drunk.



Action Steps

More than half of all adults have occasional insomnia.

Your ability to get to sleep doesn't depend just on what you do the last few minutes before you go to bed.

Food choices, stress levels, caffeine consumption, light exposure, and other lifestyle factors play a role in how well you sleep.

If you struggle getting a good night's sleep, check out our [15 Ways to Stop Chronic Insomnia Naturally](#).

#26. Breathe from Your Diaphragm

If you've ever watched a baby or a pet sleeping, you'll notice that their stomach, rather than their chest, rises as they breathe.

They are breathing from their diaphragm — the way we are *meant* to breathe.

If you are like most adults, the stress of modern life has you breathing from your chest instead.

Your brain uses 20% of your total oxygen intake and brain cells can live only a few minutes without oxygen.

Maximize your oxygen intake and mental function with diaphragmatic (belly) breathing.



Action Steps

Practice this diaphragmatic breathing exercise 5-10 minutes a few times per day.

Every day you take tens of thousands of breaths.

Here's how to get the most from each one.

Diaphragmatic Breathing Exercise

Sit comfortably or lie down.

Place one hand on your chest and one on your stomach.

Slowly exhale through your mouth.

Then slowly inhale through your nose, concentrating on keeping your chest still while expanding your stomach.

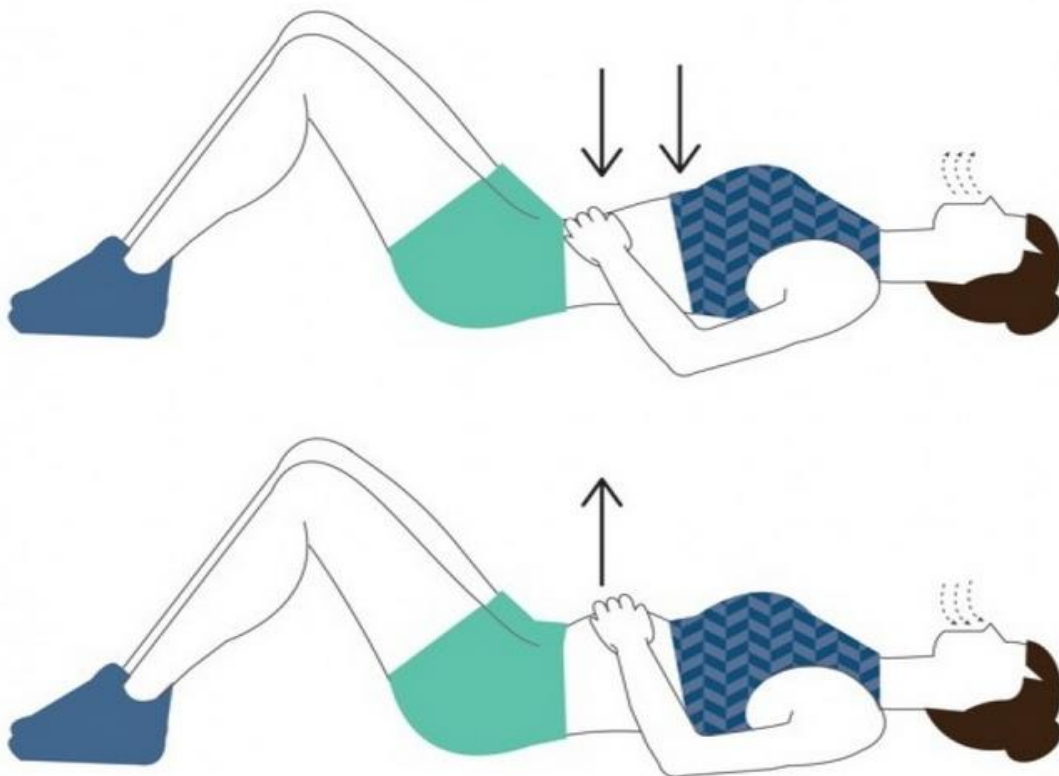


Image courtesy of Amanda Soto, [Washington Post](#)

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[Breathing Exercises for Anxiety Relief](#)

#27. Spend Quality Time with Friends

People with the most active social lives have the slowest rate of memory decline.

As little as ten minutes of conversation with a friend results in measurable memory improvement.

And if you have a belly laugh while you're together, even better, since laughter boosts memory by reducing the stress hormone cortisol.



Action Steps

Texting and email does not provide the same cognitive value as face-to-face conversation.

Set a time to meet a friend for coffee, a meal, a walk, or other activity you both enjoy.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[How to Reduce Cortisol, the Stress Hormone](#)

#28. Avoid Prescription and OTC Medications Known to Cause Memory Loss

Prescription medications are notorious for causing memory loss.

Cholesterol-lowering statins and prescription sleeping pills are among the worst.

An entire group of medications — the anticholinergic drugs — cause memory loss by blocking acetylcholine, the neurotransmitter of memory and learning.

And it's not just prescription medications that can diminish your memory.

A large study found that OTC (over-the-counter) antihistamines, pain relievers, sleep aids, and remedies for acid reflux significantly increase the risk for dementia.



Action Steps

Check out the top [20 Kinds of Drugs That Cause Memory Loss](#) to see if you take any on the list.

There you'll also find expert tips for how to effectively talk to your doctor about switching medications, lowering your dose, or getting off them completely if possible.

If you are taking any OTC remedies, look for natural alternatives.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[The Connection Between Statins and Memory Loss](#)

#29. Quit Smoking

Every drag on a cigarette creates million of free radicals (unattached oxygen molecules) that degrade and kill brain cells.

Smoking more than two packs a day increases your risk of Alzheimer's and dementia over 150% and 170% respectively.

Surprisingly, nicotine ingested on its own (NOT from smoking) is a promising cognitive enhancer.

An analysis of 41 studies concluded that nicotine safely improved fine motor skills, attention, accuracy, response time, short-term memory, and working memory.

A nicotine transdermal patch can aid memory, attention, and mental processing in people with mild cognitive impairment (MCI), often the precursor to dementia.



Action Steps

If you've struggled to quit smoking, you might be low in the neurotransmitter dopamine.

This could be an underlying reason why your attempts at quitting have been unsuccessful.

✓ [Dopamine Boosting Supplements](#) See [Amazon.com](#) for best selection and value

Many people low in dopamine self-medicate with nicotine or other addictive substances and activities.

Learn more about the [signs of low dopamine and how to correct it](#) here.

#30. Lose Weight

There is a strong correlation between obesity and memory loss.

Overweight people have less brain tissue and, upon examination, their brains appear years older than the brains of people of a healthy weight.

The more overweight you are, the more brain shrinkage and corresponding brain function loss you're likely to experience.



Action Steps

You already know if you need to lose weight.

Perhaps understanding that your extra weight is also affecting your memory and cognitive functions will help make it happen.

Fortuitously, the best diets for overall health and sustainable weight loss are also the same for brain health.

See [#1. Follow a Proven "Memory Diet"](#) above.

[Never Forget with These Top Memory Techniques](#)



Memory techniques, also called [mnemonics](#), were first developed and used by ancient Greek teachers and philosophers.

They understood that having an excellent memory is a skill that can be taught and learned.

Back in those pre-book, pre-internet days, having a good memory was essential.

Some of the current world memory champions readily admit that they were not born with exceptional memories.

Instead, they mastered the best memory techniques.

Don't be concerned that memory techniques will act as a crutch and make your memory worse.

This is an unfounded fear.

As US Memory Champion Joshua Foer explains:

"They (memory techniques) work because they make you work. They force a kind of depth of processing, a kind of mindfulness, that most of us don't normally walk around exercising. But there actually are no shortcuts. This is how stuff is made memorable."

#31. Assign Abbreviations or Acronyms

From government agencies to chatspeak, our modern world is bursting with abbreviations.

An acronym is a type of abbreviation that forms a word from the initial letters of other words.

They can form a word you'll find in the dictionary, like *radar* (radio detecting and ranging).

Sometimes they are an abbreviation that's spoken as a word such as AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) or NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization).

If you grew up in the US, you may have learned the acronym SHOME ("Show Me") to remember the names of the Great Lakes.



Image courtesy of [Wikipedia](#)



Action Steps

Create an acronym anytime you need to remember a short list.

If you need to remember to buy milk, apples, carrots, and eggs at the grocery store, just remember “MACE.”

Here’s another example of an acronym to get your creative juices flowing.

This one is commonly used in business and personal development circles — [SMART goals](#).

Goal considered SMART should be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Realistic
- Timely

These five qualities assure that the goals you set are clear and reachable.

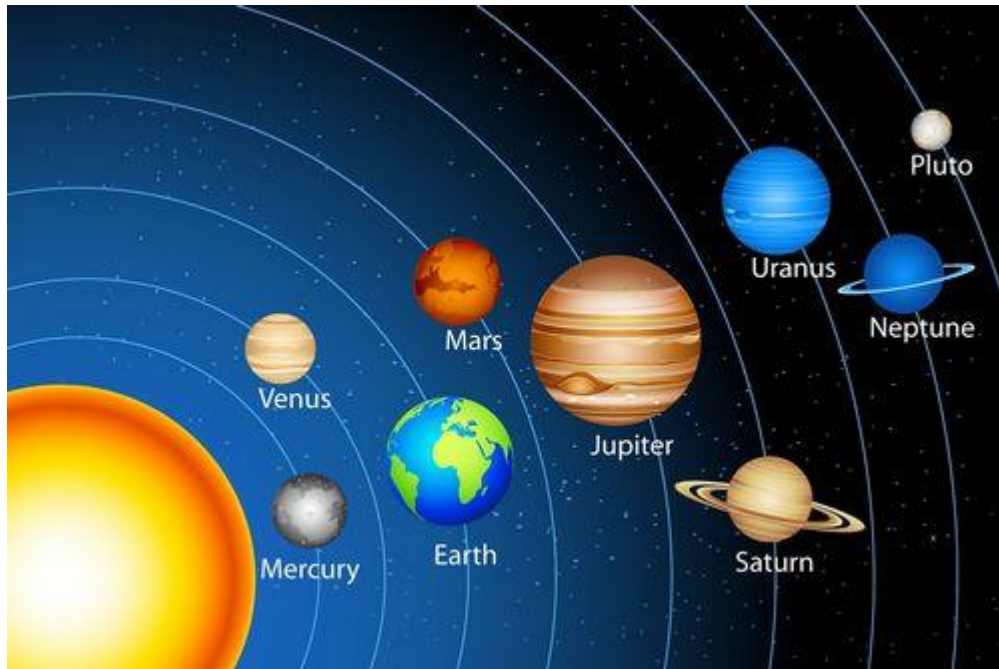
#32. Use Acrostics

An acrostic is a sequence of letters to help you remember a set of facts in a particular order.

A popular acrostic is this one for remembering the order of the planets:

“Mary’s Violet Eyes Made John Stay Up Nights Pining.”

“Pining” is optional, depending on whether Pluto is considered a planet when you read this.



Action Steps

Use acrostics when you need to remember something in a particular order.

If you’ve ever played a musical instrument, you may have learned that

“Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge” to remember the notes that fall on the lines of the treble clef.

I can never remember how to spell rhythm so I use this acrostic to remember: **Rhythm Helps Your Two Hips Move.**

So if there isn’t a well-known acrostic for what you want to remember, make up one of your own.

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[Memory Problems: Normal or Serious?](#)

#33. Use Chunking

It's generally accepted that the average person's short-term memory can hold only about four arbitrary pieces of information.

The act of chunking breaks pieces of information into smaller, more memorable bits.

That's why phone numbers, social security numbers, and zip codes are broken down into small groups of numbers.

For example, it's harder to remember 8034273298 than it is 803-427-3298.



Action Steps

Use chunking to remember phone numbers, social security numbers, passwords, and other important numbers that you need to memorize.

Chunking can also be used to create small subgroups of items that are easier to recall.

If you need to pick up 10 items from the grocery store, it's easier to remember that you need 4 items from frozen foods, 3 from produce, and 3 from the baking aisle than a list of 10 seemingly unrelated items.

#34. Use The Mind Palace

The *mind palace* memory technique, also called *memory palace* or *method of loci*, calls upon your brain's **power of visualization**.

If you are a Sherlock Holmes fan, you'll recall that Holmes goes into his "brain attic" to reconstruct events.

Let's start with a very basic example of using your own home as the location to remember a grocery list.

In your mind's eye, place the items you want to remember throughout your house, such as apples on the coffee table, carrots on the bed, and lettuce on your desk.

Later, when you want to recall the items as you shop, visualize walking through your house.

You should be able to "see" the items on your shopping list.



Action Steps

Practice using the mind palace the next time you have to pick up a few items at the grocery store.

If you want a demonstration of how effectively this works, watch US Memory Champion Joshua Foer's TED Talk "Feats of Memory Anyone Can Do" below.

He'll guide you through a mind palace exercise so painlessly, you won't even realize you are doing it.

I think you'll be impressed at how easily you memorized a list of items.

blob:<https://embed.ted.com/685e5c00-11db-4df1-869e-876a54d77116>



Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[10 Online Memory Tests You Can Trust](#)

#35. Use Reminders

There are several kinds of reminders that can make your life go more smoothly.

Checklists are used in a variety of occupations such as surgeons, pilots, and emergency workers.

If people in these high-stress occupations rely on checklists, maybe you should too.

Take notes. Curiously, compared to taking notes electronically, manually writing them down increases the likelihood that you'll remember what you've written.

Using red ink seems to work better than blue or black.

Use visual cues. The old “string around the finger” tip has some merit.

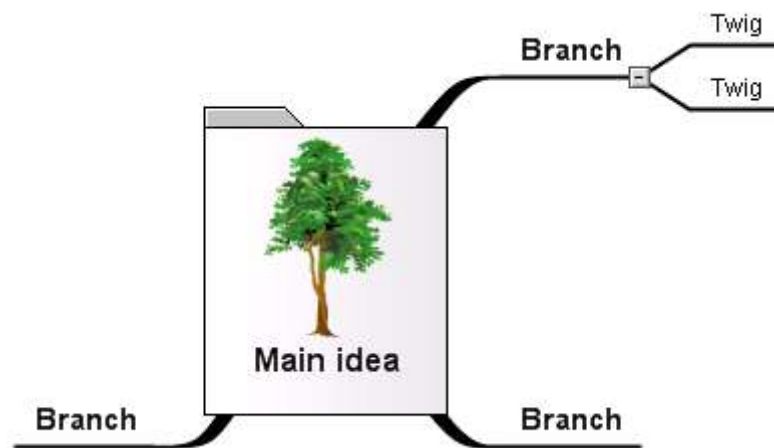
Put any item out of its normal position as a cue to remind you that there’s something you need to remember.

This works particularly well when trying to create a new habit.

Leaving your athletic shoes by the door is an excellent way to assure you’ll take your daily walk.

Mind mapping is a non-linear way to take notes that can help you learn and remember better than conventional note taking.

Mind mapping is sometimes described as a tree with the main ideas represented as branches and topics of lesser importance represented as twigs.

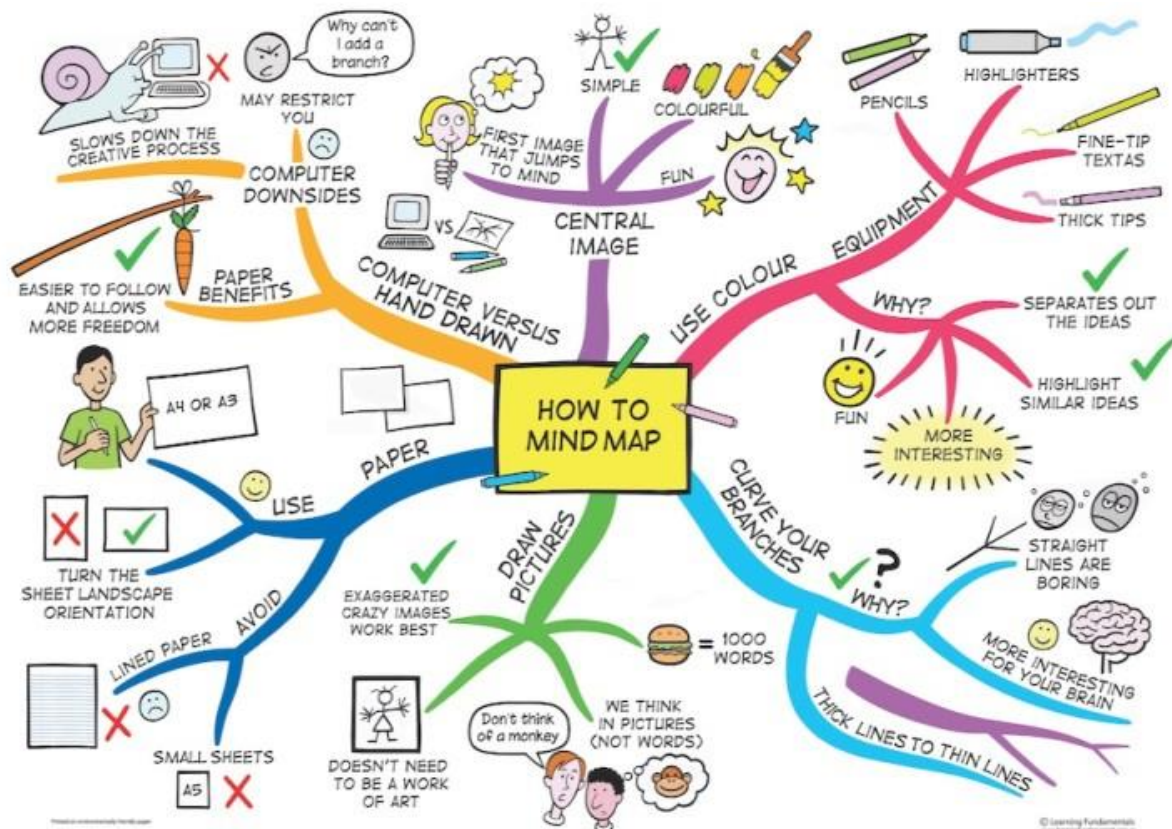


Simple mind map courtesy of MindMapping.com

A mind map can be as simple or as complex as you need it to be.

You can create them by hand or with software.

Below is a fun, colourful mind map that illustrates the process of “how to mind map.”



Mind map courtesy of LearningFundamentals.com.au



Action Steps

Make a checklist for any tasks you do regularly at work or home.

Keep a small notepad or sticky notes in your desk, purse, nightstand, car or anywhere you might have a flash of inspiration you'll wish later you had captured.

If you'd like to give mind mapping a try, download the free version of the mind mapping tool Mindomo.

Even if you are new to mind mapping, you'll find it intuitive to use.

#36. Pay Attention

Paying attention may be the most powerful, but overlooked, way to improve your memory.

Why? Because you can't remember what you never processed in the first place.

Yet it's rare these days for anyone to give a task or person their undivided attention.

You'll have a much easier time paying attention if you avoid distractions.

Two significant kinds of distractions are clutter and multitasking.

Clutter affects your brain's ability to concentrate and process information.

Multitasking interrupts one task to focus on another which disrupts short-term memory — the capacity for retaining pieces of information for short periods of time.



Action Steps

If either clutter or multitasking is a problem for you, we've got help.

Read [Declutter Your Life for Less Stress, Better Mental Health](#) for a 5-step decluttering plan.

Learn two simple but effective antidotes to multitasking in [The Cognitive Costs of Multitasking](#).

Related articles on Be Brain Fit:

[Smart Ways to Improve Concentration and Focus](#)

Improve Your Memory: The Bottom Line

When you first decided it was time to improve your memory, you may have been concerned that it would not be possible.

But as you've seen, there are many effective ways to sharpen your memory.

The two big takeaways we hope you'll come away with are:

- A healthy lifestyle is the foundation for a fit and resilient brain *and* a good memory.
- You are not stuck with the memory you have today. Memory is a skill you can learn and improve.

Start taking these steps today and you can upgrade your memory now and keep it sharp in the years to come.