



Research, evaluate and compare your senior housing options. It's easy and free.

Find a Senior Housing Provider

City: State:

- OR -

Zip

Type: Assisted Living Continuing Care (CCRC)

Independent Living Retirement Living

Alzheimer's Care Home Care

Go

[Articles - Seniors For Living :: Timely Topics - Feature Articles](#)

30 Tips For Improving Your Memory

by Aly Walansky

We all have those moments when we can't find our car in a crowded parking lot or frantically search

for our keys as we rush out of the house. Memory problems plague everyone, but are especially prevalent as we begin to get older. Before you accept this as your reality, though, check out these stellar memory-improvement tips. Finding your keys just got a little easier!

1. Embrace the Wii

Interactive video games have become popular for family members of all ages, says Chris Roslan, a representative of **Home Instead Senior Care**, the largest provider of non-medical **Home Care** and companionship services for seniors, with more than 800 independently owned and operated franchises in the United States and 14 countries abroad. Some games, such as Nintendo's Brain Age, and the new Wii home video game system, may be particularly good for stimulating the mind.

2. Schedule a weekly game night

Mind stimulation is great, but making it fun kicks it up a notch. Home Instead suggests beginning a habit of hosting game night at your home. Get a few friends together, and make your "mental work out" social! Board games such as Scrabble or chess involve a great deal of mind activity and are inexpensive and surprisingly effective tools!

3. Join a club

Whether it's an investment club, card group, or political activism committee, the geriatric care professionals at My Health Care Manager, a health care advisor and support provider for older adults and their families, recommend taking part in a group activity to keep your mind active" and improve your memory.

4. Learn a new language

Staying active mentally can help to reduce the effects of aging on memory, says Gretchen Hanson Gotthard, Assistant Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania. Learning a new skill (e.g., a new language) or simply practicing an old skill in a new way (e.g., trying to eat, brush your teeth, or dial a telephone with your non-dominant hand) "wakes up" your brain and can lead to new connections being made in the brain. Your brain is "plastic" (i.e., it can change), and these changes can take place at all stages of life, Gotthard says.

5. Play a jaunty tune

"Playing or singing music -- especially with others -- is a powerful way of helping all parts of the brain work together: It

involves coordinating motor, auditory, emotional and visual brain systems along with verbal and nonverbal memory,” says Michael Jolkovski, Ph.D, a Virginia psychologist and psychoanalyst who specializes in musicians and music groups. Music is “not bad for overall quality of life, either,” Jolkovski says. “It’s a darn sight more fun than doing puzzles!”

6. Take your vitamins

“I have found that taking B vitamins increases memory retention,” says Karon White Gibson, RN, co-author of “Nurses on our Own” (AuthorHouse Books: November 2000) and host of radio talk show “Outspoken with Karon.”

7. Lifelong learning

Learning is crucial to enhancing brain activity, and in older adults, one of the biggest revelations to come out of the research conducted on the brain during the 1990s was that the human brain undergoes significant physiological changes when it is exposed to new insights and experiences, says Nancy Merz Nordstrom, author of “Learning Later, Living Greater: The Secret for Making the Most of Your After-50 Years” (Sentient Publications: September 2006). So the next time you visit the library, bypass the fiction section and explore an area you’ve never encountered before.

8. Sleep tight

It seems obvious, but if you are not getting enough sleep at night, your brain won’t be as sharp during the more active hours.

9. Exercise

Exercise increases circulation to the brain and lymphatic massage helps to drain the body of toxins that would otherwise stay, says Gibson.

10. Consult the great philosophers

One of the best memory techniques is **Aristotle’s Method of Loci**, says Bill W. Tyler, founder of Bubble Planner creative day planners. Essentially, you connect new information that you want to remember with places in your geographic location. This connection of new to old makes it easier for the brain to store and recall the new information. Many people use pictures to make this connection. For example, if you are going to the store, you may look around your living room and visualize a large jug of milk on your couch or choose to imagine your television is a giant loaf of bread.

11. Exercise your brain

Get a personal trainer -- for your brain! For example, **CogniFit’s** brain fitness software provides an assessment of several cognitive functions, including memory. It creates and then adjusts a series of mental exercises as the individual becomes more proficient. CogniFit provides updated assessments along the way. Games like MindHabits (for your PC), or Brain Age (for your Nintendo DS) are great brain-personal-trainers as well.

12. Memorize and utilize

“Many short-term memory problems can be helped by taking immediate action when needed,” says professional speaker Darcy L. Keith. She recommends keeping a voice recorder to remind you of important events, and leaving post-it notes reminders around your home and in your purse. Big wall calendars to mark appointments help as well.

13. Try the right supplement

It’s no secret that mental decline occurs as we age. Whether it’s common forgetfulness or the all-out scourge of Alzheimer’s, poor mental health ruins quality of life, says organic chemist Shane Ellison. Surprisingly, studies show that age-associated mental decline can be slowed or even prevented with the energizing combo of alpha-lipoic acid (ALA) and acetyl-L-carnitine (ALCAR), taken daily. These are both supplements easily found at your local health food store or vitamin retailer.

14. Explore the mind/body connection

Practice Tai Chi!! This is a great way to work on the mind-body connection and to create muscle memory while engaging the frontal lobe. Tai Chi increases awareness, strengthens joints and promotes flexibility in people of all ages, says Randi Smith-Todorowski of Atlas Martial Arts in Arizona.

15. Treat yourself to dark chocolate!

Seriously -- it helps! According to recent scientific data, dark chocolate is full of flavonoids, which are antioxidants that naturally boost memory! Remember, though, that it only works in moderation!

16. Memorize the words to your favorite song

How does this help? By challenging the brain with new information over a period of time, unused parts of the brain will continue to develop and have the ability to learn new skills, says Dr. Eduardo Locatelli of **FloridaNeuroscience.com**, a neurologist who implements memory improvement techniques with his Alzheimer’s and epilepsy patients. Research indicates that if you stimulate your brain by utilizing the five senses and staying more mentally active, you allow your brain to maximize its potential. Studies also show that by challenging the brain with new experiences, some people could

be less likely to develop conditions such as dementia and Alzheimer's. The key is to keep learning. The brain is a learning machine. To keep it strong, you must continually develop new challenging skills.

17. Learn relaxation techniques

When we decide to focus on and accomplish a goal (in this case, improving memory), we are making that decision with only 10 percent of our mind -- the conscious mind. When we use relaxation techniques (self-hypnosis, which is meditation with a focus) we are bringing into play the other 90 percent of our mind -- the subconscious mind, says Susan Gayle, author of 14 self-help/self-hypnosis CDs. With 100 percent of our mind in complete agreement, obstacles can easily be overcome and it is easier to reach goals.

18. Enjoy a hot cup of green tea

Drinking green tea is soothing, good for your memory, and a relaxing experience!

19. Play a card game

Simple matching and the repetition of counting and adding numbers in one's head serve as great memory-enhancing exercises. Give it a try.

20. Go international -- for herbs!

Acupuncture and traditional Chinese herbs are a great way to boost memory for seniors. In Chinese medicine, memory is linked to the brain function, which is also related to one's kidneys. The function of the kidneys is important throughout our lives since it helps our brain and body function. A way for an acupuncturist to boost memory for the elderly would be to boost their kidney function so it can help with the brain function, says Eunice Kan of Live Well Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine of Burlingame, California.

21. Consistency is key

"I always hang my keys in the same place when I walk in the door," says Jill Nussinow, a registered dietician. "I tell people that it doesn't matter if you throw them down on the floor as long as you do it every time. Consistency is key."

22. Meditation

Meditation is a way to calm the mind, relax the body, and dive into a peaceful state of greater mental clarity and wellness. It has been proven scientifically to reduce various aging signposts, including loss of memory, says Dr. Susan Shumsky, a New York-based author and spiritual advisor.

23. Create a memory spot

Create a memory spot in your home office, offers Douglas J. Mason, Psy.D., LCSW. Find a container, such as a beautiful basket or a decorative crate, to stash all those important items you need before heading out the door. These might include your calendar, directions, wallet or purse, glasses, keys, lists, and so on. Train yourself to check your memory spot before you leave home. Be consistent. It may take a while to train yourself to empty your pockets or purse and place the contents into your memory spot at the end of the day. But once you've established this as a new habit, it will save you a lot of time.

24. Try embracing yoga

Yoga improves concentration, focus, and memory. In fact, there are many yoga classes specifically designed for elders (i.e., chair yoga) and many that are suitable for people whose concentration and memory need a boost (i.e., gentle yoga) says Felice Rhiannon, a professional yoga instructor based in California.

25. Avoid too much sodium

Two major contributors to memory loss are high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels. A low sodium diet helps improve memory while boosting heart health. Seniors with memory loss can find easy solutions to cutting salt from their diet without cutting flavor by using veggies with less salt and substituting soups, stews, or casseroles in the place of regular canned vegetables or meat.

26. Fill up on folate

Heidi Skolnik, a renowned nutritionist who specializes in nutrition conditioning, says people who experience fading memory or slight changes in motor coordination skills are advised to consume foods high in folate. Research shows that folate is an essential vitamin for mental growth that can help reduce the risk of brain defects and Alzheimer's. Good dietary sources of folate include orange juice and dark leafy greens like spinach, onions, legumes and broccoli. These foods contain quercetin, a flavonoid found to promote brain function and prevent risk for stroke. Fresh Omega-3 rich fish, such as salmon and tuna, also contributes to improved blood flow in the brain.

27. Be friendlier with your computer

According to Alexander Ben-Israel, executive director of a senior living **Assisted Living** facility in Portland, Oregon, memory development can be accomplished easily using a computer. His facility has a computer center where residents

are trained on various software programs. This helps to “wake up” dormant areas in the brain and also assists in memory retention.

28. Get a furry friend

A pet will brighten your day, beyond any doubt. But a furry friend is also shown to boost spirits and improve health, including memory retention! A dog to run after can also be an excellent road to physical fitness.

29. Stay organized

It may seem obvious, but writing things down and keeping track of your appointments and important papers can help you to learn -- and retain -- information.

30. Stay motivated!

Daily affirmations are not as hokey as people may make them seem; they can work! Tell yourself that you want to learn what you need to remember, and that you can learn and remember it. Telling yourself and others that you have a bad memory actually hampers the ability of your brain to remember, while positive mental feedback sets up an expectation of success!

[Read More Articles](#)

 [Facebook](#) |  [del.icio.us](#) |  [Digg](#)

I am glad I already do half of those. The Other half might take a little work...ugh! Michael (www.outcome3.com)
by mike bry submitted on Oct 24, 2008

Sound Off! Post Your Comments

You are not currently logged on. Please login to add a comment.

[Login](#)

© 2008 Seniors for Living. All Rights Reserved