A problem that affects majority of people who have suffered with a brain injury is Memory. This is because most areas of the brain have something to do with memory either processing it, retrieving it or storing it!



**Headway CW**

**- Info Blasts -**

Memory: Tips and tricks! (provided with help from official Headway documents)

It can affect people in different ways; some mildly, some severely; some lose short term memory, others lose long term memory.

However it presents itself as a problem to you it’s guaranteed to cause some problems and frustration. This information worksheet should provide some understanding of what memory is, how it works, and provide some tips and tricks for coping with memory problems.

Coming to ***terms*** with ***memory***

Let’s have a look at some common memory terms and their meanings;

**Short Term Memory**: is the ability to hold a small amount of information in an active, readily available state in the mind for a short amount of time. It is believed on average a person can hold 7 items of memory (plus or minus one) in their short term memory.

Examples of short term memory:

Being asked to look at a list of words, look away for 30secs and then remember as many as you can.

Taking orders for tea and coffee with who wants sugars and how many.

**Long Term Memory:** this one’s a little less straightforward! Long term memory is the ability to hold *memories* in the brain for a long time to be able to be retrieved at any time. It is split into two types: declarative and procedural.

*Procedural Memory:* Is remembering how to do things. For example, riding a bike, making a cup of tea, swimming, how to get dressed.

*Declarative Memory:* is the memory of facts and knowledge. This is also split into two subtypes; semantic memory and episodic memory.

*Episodic Memory:* is the memory of events, experiences that have happened to you personally. For example, remembering the birth of your first child, what you last ate, remembering the score at the last football game you saw, remembering meeting your partner for the first time.

*Semantic Memory:* contains general factual knowledge related to your world. For example, your knowledge of WW1, the meaning of words, the concept of television, knowledge of plays written by Shakespeare.

**Recall:** Have you ever felt like you knew the answer to a question, but couldn't quite remember the information? This phenomenon is known as a 'tip of the tongue' experience. You might feel certain that this information is stored somewhere in your memory, but you are unable to access and retrieve it. We use retrieval cues to trigger information. These are stored around the same time as the memory and tend to be something to do with the context for example;

If someone is introduced to us at a party, we don’t only store the name and appearance of the new acquaintance in our memory. We also include external cues in the situation such as what kind of party it was, where the party was. Internal cues are also made like what mood we were in. When we later try to recall the person having one of these cues present will help!

If you met that person again in the super market, you may not remember them as well as if you met them again at another party.

The diagram below should help explain this better.



Hi I’m John

**EXTERNAL CUES**

**INTERNAL CUES**

Party at my best friend’s house

Engagement Party

Elvis Presley’s album is playing

Drinking beer as my partner is driving

It smells like Popcorn

He is drinking a can of coke

Harry introduced us

I am feeling excited

I think this person is very funny

Retracing the same context of memories we would like to remember can be really helpful.

If you suffer with memory loss, which of the above do you think you have most trouble with?

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Short Term Memory Loss

Is one of the most common memory problems after brain injury. It can show itself in very different ways.

These are some examples:

* Forgetting what has just been said
* Finding it difficult to learn a new skill
* Repeating the same question over and over again
* Forgetting people’s names
* Getting details mixed up
* Forgetting a change in routine
* Forgetting where you have put something

Perhaps the most frustrating thing about short term memory problems is that they can’t be fixed. What you can do however is put strategies in place to help.

Strategies, tips and tricks!

Here are a few ideas you might have heard before and some you may not. What’s important is that you have to find techniques that work for you!

1. **Rehearsing:** A good way to store memories is to rehearse them. Memories are better remembered when they are rehearsed. When given something to remember saying it over in your mind multiple times, thinking it over again and even writing it down several times will store it more efficiently in your mind. If someone tells you something to remember it is good to repeat it to them, not only will you be able to check you have the correct information but again you are rehearsing it in your mind.
2. **Keep things as simple as possible:** short term memory loss can be confusing as it is, so keeping things simple will be easiest.
3. **Remembering events:** keep a diary and calendar for writing appointments on. As soon as you are aware of an event that you need to remember write it down on both the calendar and diary. You can also set alarms and reminders of events on your phone. Keep your calendar somewhere you look at a lot such as by the front door or in front of your bed.
4. **Sticky Notes:** It might be an obvious one but it does seem to work! Buy some sticky notes or a notepad and bluetac. The trick is to write down everything that is important to remember when you remember it. If you are at home write it on a sticky note straight away and stick it somewhere you look at every single day like the fridge, or the bathroom door. This could also be used to remind yourself of things you need to do before you leave the house such as
5. **Take a notepad with you:** Find a small notebook that can fit in your coat pocket or in your handbag and take it with you wherever you go. If you learn something you need to remember write it down in the notepad and keep the notepad available to keep everything important to remember in! When you are home transferring these notes to a sticky note will keep it as a visible memory.
6. **Keeping a routine:** sticking to a daily routine including where you put your personal items such as phones, keys will help to store this as a long term memory rather than a short term memory. Include checking your sticky note spot and memory notepad in your daily routine.
7. **Alarms:** some mobile phones allow you to set several alarms with titles. This could remind you to take medication at different times in the day, feed the dog etc. However if you don’t have a device that does this use several alarm clocks to set different alarms. Place each alarm clock on top of a piece of paper that is labelled with the action that alarm requires you to do.
8. **Asking for help from someone you trust:** If there is something important you need to remember, asking someone else to remember it for you can take the pressure off yourself. You should never feel like a burden asking those around you for help.
9. **Remembering in small chunks:** Short term memory holds 7 items of memory (plus or minus one), that means even someone with “perfect” short term memory capacity could remember only 6,7 or 8 numbers of a telephone number at a time. If you struggle with short term memory your capacity is likely to be smaller. A great way to remember a telephone number for example is to split it up into smaller chunks. Remembering this 11 digit number 06870901105 is easiest by splitting it into 068 – 709 – 011- 05.
10. **Struggle with remembering the date?** Use a whiteboard in your kitchen, get someone to write Day/Month/Year in a permanent marker on the whiteboard with space for you to fill it in. Use a non-permanent marker to fill in the day, month and year every day. Make it a part of your daily routine in the morning to fill this in every day.
11. **Avoid stressful situations:** Being in a situation of stress can make your recall of memory worse. Try to remain calm and collected when trying to remember something.
12. **Testing your memory:** using simple memory games like remembering a set of words or pictures is good practice. We should all test our memory every now and then, it is perfectly normal for memory to decrease as we get older so challenging ourselves to keep remembering things is a good idea.

Do you have any techniques you use that aren’t mentioned on here?

Testing the Temporal Lobe!

Here is a brain exer­cise whose aim is to stim­u­late the con­nec­tions or asso­ci­a­tions between words in your tem­po­ral lobe. Words are stored here in your memory.

In the left col­umn you have a pair of words. Your goal is to find a third word that is con­nected or asso­ci­ated with both of these two words.

For example PIANO and LOCK. The answer is KEY. The word key is con­nected with both the word piano and the word lock: there are KEYS on a piano and you use a KEY to lock doors.

Key is what is called a homo­graph: a word that has more than one mean­ing but is always spelled the same. Answers are on the next page, don’t cheat!

1. DOG - TREE

2. SHIP — CARD

3. TREE — CAR

4. SCHOOL — EYE

5. PILLOW — COURT

6. RIVER — MONEY

7. BED — PAPER

8. ARMY — WATER

9. TENNIS — NOISE

10. EGYPTIAN — MOTHER

11. SMOKER — PLUMBER

12. FINGER – HAMMER

13. BODY PART – MEASUREMENT

14. SOMETHING NEW – A BOOK

Answers:

1. DOG – TREE > Bark

2. SHIP — CARD > Deck

3. TREE — CAR > Trunk

4. SCHOOL -  EYE > Pupil (Exam and Pri­vate are also possible)

5. PILLOW -  COURT  > Case

6. RIVER — MONEY > Bank (Flow is also possible)

7. BED — PAPER > Sheet

8. ARMY — WATER > Tank

9. TENNIS — NOISE > Racket

10. EGYPTIAN — MOTHER > Mummy

11. SMOKER — PLUMBER > Pipe

12. FINGER – HAMMER > Nail

13. BODY PART – MEASUREMENT > Foot

14. SOMETHING NEW – A BOOK > Novel