

**Mental retracing** - going over in your mind a sequence of events.

**Stories or rhymes** - "Thirty days hath September", or song lyrics. Try making your own up.

**Categorising** - Placing information in groups under key headings (combined with visualisation), eg, if you have a group for work, visualise the entrance to your work place as a heading.

### FUNCTIONAL ACTIVITY TRAINING

Incorporate both internal and external memory strategies into everyday activity. The brain will adjust to using them and they will become routine/automatic.

- Watch the ten o'clock news and at the end, list the news items that were discussed.
- Think of "visual images" or "associations" for all the things you need to remember.
- Use "images" to remember food or drinks, eg Guinness by the bird, or Ireland, for food visualise it.
- Keep a list of things to do today.
- Draw up a weekly timetable.

### KEY POINTS

- Memory is the ability to keep things in mind and recall them at some point in the future.
- Memory is not a thing, it is a process.
- The two most functional, important memory problems are remembering things to be done on a daily basis and remembering to do things in the future.
- Memory cannot be regained once it is damaged—strategies need to be learnt.

References: *Cognitive Rehabilitation Workshop for Carers, Brain Tree Training, Kit Malia and Anne Branagan 2000*

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# MEMORY

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## TYPES OF MEMORY

**Sensory Memory** - taken in via the senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell), held for a few seconds and passed on to Short Term Memory.

**Short Term Memory** - held just long enough to be used (working memory). eg: looking up a telephone number and remembering it just long enough to dial the number. Much of the information is discarded. However, important information is passed on to Long Term Memory.

**Long Term Memory** - memory is stored. However, you have to remember where you stored it. Tends to be memories of personal experiences, knowledge and information that have been acquired and skills that have been learnt.

**Explicit Memory** - facts and events.

**Implicit Memory** - how to do things.

## HOW WE REMEMBER

Memory is a process and can be divided into five stages:

1. Attention.
2. Encoding (registering the information).
3. Storage.
4. Consolidation.
5. Retrieval (accessing stored information)

Retrieval is often the most difficult process. Cued recall makes the process slightly easier, eg "her name began with an S", so was her name Sue or Sam. Retrieval is better if the recall takes place in the same place as it was learnt.

## THE EFFECT ON MEMORY OF ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY

**Post Traumatic Amnesia** - A temporary state. Information is encoded (registered), but not stored.

**Retrograde Amnesia** - Being unable to remember personal information or events for a period of time just before the accident or the accident itself. Memories may gradually return or return in patches. Retrograde amnesia involves the loss of personal memories from long term memory.

**Everyday Memory** - The individual has difficulty remembering names, dates, faces, appointments, where they put things or what they have to do.

**Prospective Memory** - The ability to act in the future. eg, "When I get to work I need to talk to Sam."

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP YOU REMEMBER?

### EXTERNAL STRATEGIES

- Use a diary.
- Have a wall calendar or planner.
- Make lists.
- Use sticky notepads or memos.
- Place objects in special places, eg by the front door.

- Use alarms or watches.
- Use a Dictaphone or recorder.
- Use a computerised diary or organiser.
- Keep a notepad and pen at hand.
- Highlight information with specific colours, eg red as urgent.
- Use forward planning (similar to a school timetable).

## INTERNAL STRATEGIES

**Rehearsal** - Repeating information over and over in your mind.

**Visual Image** - This involves creating pictures in your mind of something familiar and the thing that needs to be remembered. Eg, If you are trying to remember a name, visualise the **face** "Sam has a beautiful face and hair", or a **location** at which you met, "we met at the bus stop" or "she was sat on the park bench".

**Association** - This involves creating a meaningful connection between something familiar and the thing that needs to be remembered, eg, "Sam's birthday is the day before Halloween", or a smell, "Sam uses .... perfume" or "her name is the same as my first girlfriend".

**First Letter Cues** - The first letter of the word you are trying to remember (mnemonics) and searching the alphabet until you reach the letter that triggers a memory. This can be used with the phonetic alphabet, eg alpha, bravo, charlie, etc.