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Meta-Memory Strategies

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Your brain has a lot on its plate. Processing, retaining, and retrieving new information can be extra taxing for a brain on the go. Meta-Memory Strategies are a way of giving your brain a helping hand to learn new information.

Meta-Memory is a different way of saying “thinking about memory.” Students (and adults) benefit from learning how their brains work and being taught strategies to help navigate the complex process of memorizing information. These strategies are great for people with auditory processing deficits, deficits in executive functioning, or anyone who wants to improve his/her memory skills! Here are some strategies (also explored in [Handy Handout #331](#)) that aid the brain with memory.

- **Only try to learn a small amount of information at one time.** For example, instead of trying to master all 20 vocabulary words at once before the test on Friday, try to learn five words per day throughout the week.
- **Chunking even works with numbers!** For example, phone numbers are organized by chunking the three digit area code (555), followed by a three digit central office code (111), followed by a four digit line subscriber number (1234) to create a full, ten digit number (555-111-1234). Instead of memorizing the whole number at once, try to memorize the parts. This also works for letters, which is great for spelling tests! Just make sure you are chunking the letters in a logical way, such as by syllable (e.g. dic-tion-ar-y).

Elaboration – Don’t just hear the information: elaborate! By elaborating on new information, you are planting more flags in your brain that help you find the information later.



Chunking – You wouldn’t eat a hamburger in one bite, so why take in new information all in one sitting? Break information into smaller chunks to keep your brain from “choking” on the new material.



- **Make bullets or lists** – This organizes information in a concise manner and visually looks less overwhelming.
- **Making an outline** when taking notes also makes new information more digestible.

- **Describe it!** – If the new information involves objects or events, use your words and senses to talk about what they look like or how they sound (look to [Handy Handout #546](#) for describing hints).
- **Try to define, explain, or paraphrase the information in your own words.** By going through the work of understanding the new information well enough to explain it, you have already imprinted that information in your brain.

Visualization – Don’t just hear or read the words. Use your imagination to paint a picture of the new information in your brain.



- **Create a story** – A story is usually easier to remember than isolated steps. For example, if you are learning about the lifecycle of a butterfly, you can make up a story incorporating all of the phases (e.g. Beauty the



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(cont.)

Butterfly started out in an egg with his brothers and sisters. When he became too big for his egg, he hatched as a larva eating leaves...

- **If reading a story, make sure to stop often, close your eyes, and create a picture in your brain of what you just read.** Make sure to include who was in the story, what they were doing (and the expressions on their faces), and the setting (where they are). The more detailed the better!
- **If reading a text, make sure to look at diagrams, charts, and illustrations to put information in multiple parts of your brain.**

Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

– Repeat new information to give your brain more opportunities to hold on to it. This is also called verbal rehearsal.



- **Say it out loud or to yourself.** After looking at the information, stop, and then repeat it again five to 10 minutes later.
- **Use a new word in a text, email, or a conversation.** Recognizing environments where the word can be used helps create an understanding of the word and makes it easier to recall later.

Relational Strategies – Put the new information with older or easier information stored in your brain to help you recall it later.



- **Associate new words** with words and concepts that you are already familiar with by thinking of synonyms, antonyms, and analogies.
- **Make a song about it!** Not only is it fun, but music also helps put the information in yet another part of your brain.

- **Mnemonics** – Use the letters of the word or the first letter of each word in a set to make a silly sentence that is easily remembered later. For example, the mnemonic for the order of algebraic operations is Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally, which correlates with Parentheses, Exponents, Multiplication, Division, Addition, and Subtraction.



Resources:

Buehler, Velvet, "Auditory Processing Disorder Team Evaluation and Management." American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2013, <https://www.asha.org/Events/convention/handouts/2013/1077-Buehler/>

"Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD)," American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Accessed November 5, 2019, <https://www.asha.org/PRPSpecificTopic.aspx?folderid=8589943561§ion=Overview>

"Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD) Evidence Maps," American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Accessed November 5, 2019, <https://www.asha.org/EvidenceMapLanding.aspx?id=8589936309&recentarticles=false&year=undefined&tab=allTab&filters=8589935906/8589936309/8589936310/8589936313/>

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