

2A | Memory

VOCABULARY: memory & memories

1 Make the following statements true for you by choosing the relevant alternatives to complete the sentences.

- 1 I have a *good* / *poor* memory for names and faces.
- 2 I *keep forgetting* _____.
- 3 I *know* / *used to know* the poem '_____' by heart.
- 4 I *have vivid* / *only vague* memories of the family holidays I went on as a young child.
- 5 I have *fond* / *painful* / *bittersweet* memories of my schooldays.
- 6 The *song* / *piece of music* '_____' brings back memories of _____.

Work in pairs. Discuss your sentences.

READING

1 Read the three texts A–C, which describe different methods for improving memory. Which methods do you find most and least appealing? Tell your partner, giving reasons for your opinions.

2 Read the texts again and decide whether the following are stated (v) or not stated (x).

Text A

- 1 Most people cannot remember facts and figures.
- 2 You can train your memory to learn whole conversations.
- 3 The writer has not always had such a good memory.

Text B

- 4 Memory-enhancing drugs will not cause significant damage to our overall health.
- 5 Coffee will one day cease to be used as a stimulant.
- 6 Mental cosmetics would place greater demands on people to perform well.

Text C

- 7 Exams make you hungry.
- 8 Alzheimer's disease is caused by a failure to eat the right foods.
- 9 Drinking water increases the size of the brain, enabling it to store more information.

3 Work in small groups. Discuss the question.

What techniques do you use for committing information to memory?

Never forget facts & figures

Have you ever struggled to remember a fact or figure? Perhaps it was a famous date in history. Or maybe it was a song that hit number one, the name of a chemical compound or the capital of Sweden. Whatever it was, that particular fact or figure has buried itself deep within the vault of your memory and you just can't seem to retrieve it.

My advice is, don't put up with having an average memory. Improving your memory is a skill. If you master some basic techniques, remembering facts and figures can become a stimulating mental exercise – not to mention a chance to show off in conversation! Plus, a good memory for facts and figures can help you to sail through exams. People think that because I can remember so many facts and figures I must have a photographic memory. This isn't the case. There was a time when I struggled to remember seven or eight digits in a row, let alone 20 or 30 – and now I'm the eight-times winner of the World Memory Championships. I didn't just wake up one morning with the ability to remember. I simply studied the techniques for making my mind more supple and put them into practice. Here, I reveal these methods, sharing with you my specially devised exercises that will help you never forget facts and figures.



Drugs to boost brain power will become 'as common as coffee'

Powerful stimulants that improve memory, intellectual agility or other aspects of mental performance will almost certainly be developed over the next 20 years. They will have few side-effects, little or no addictive properties and could be used for boosting exam performance, making better business decisions or even eliminating bad memories.

'In a world that is increasingly non-stop and competitive, the individual's use of such substances may move from the fringe to the norm, with cognition enhancers used as coffee is today,' says the Foresight report of the government's Office of Science and Technology. 'Cognition enhancers are likely to be developed to treat people who need to improve attention, memory or wakefulness and to help people forget, sleep more efficiently and be less impulsive.'

Drugs that help people to forget disturbing experiences raises the prospect of a future portrayed in films such as *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, where characters are able to forget painful relationships. But the possibility raises disturbing practical, ethical and social issues. 'It is possible that such an advance could usher in a new era of drug use without addiction,' says the report. 'If we ever find ourselves in a society that embraced cognition enhancers, "mental cosmetics" could become accepted and raise expectations about the performance and behaviour of individuals and groups.'





C

Food for thought

Increasingly, it is recognized that diet plays a vital role in exam performance.

According to senior nutrition consultant Lorraine Perretta, the brain needs fuel just like any other organ. 'Without the correct diet, it cannot give its peak performance,' she says. 'Eating the right foods can dramatically improve learning, concentration and memory.'

Patrick Holford, author of *Optimum Nutrition for the Mind*, points out that the brain uses a quarter of all the carbohydrates you eat under normal conditions, rising to around 40 per cent at times of intense concentration. 'During an exam, your legs don't need the energy as you are sitting down. Your brain uses it all and that's why you are starving at the end of an exam. You would train your body for a physical exam, so why not do the same for a mental test?'

In order for the brain cells to communicate effectively with each other they need neurotransmitters, the messengers that carry information. Acetylcholine (ACh) is the neurotransmitter responsible for memory, and studies have found that people with Alzheimer's may have less of it. Foods rich in the vitamin complex needed to make ACh include egg yolks, peanuts, liver, broccoli, fish and cheese.

Drinking water is also important. The brain is 70 per cent water, and when it is dehydrated it works more slowly. This is particularly true of memory; a dehydrated brain releases the stress hormone cortisol, which adversely affects the brain's ability to store information. Too much coffee will also slow down the thinking process and make you feel foggy.

GRAMMAR: gerunds & infinitives

Use the **full infinitive** (with *to*):

- to express purpose. (1)
*I drink water at work **to improve** my concentration.*
- after certain adjectives, eg *easy, surprised, likely*.
- after certain verbs, eg *agree, hope, refuse*. (2)
- after certain nouns, eg *ability, decision, effort*. (3)

Use the **bare infinitive** (without *to*):

- after modal verbs. (4)
- after these verbs: **help, make, let, had better*. (5)
*The infinitive with *to* is also possible after *help*.

Use the **gerund**:

- as the subject of a sentence or clause. (6)
***Drinking** water at work improves my concentration.*
- after prepositions. (7)
- after certain verbs, eg *appreciate, consider, deny*. (8)
- after *have difficulty (in), it's no use, it's (not) worth, can't help*. (9)

Some verbs can be followed by either the gerund or infinitive:

- with no change in meaning, eg *begin, continue*.
- with a change in meaning, eg *forget, go on, regret*.

SEE LANGUAGE REFERENCE PAGE 24

1 Match each of the highlighted verbs in text A to one of the uses 1-7 in the grammar box.

2 Complete the sentences using the correct form of the verb in brackets.

- I can't help _____ (*wonder*) why they decided to buy that awful house.
- I must remember _____ (*get*) some stamps.
- I didn't get round to _____ (*phone*) John yesterday - I was just too busy.
- He gave up teaching and went on _____ (*become*) a best-selling author.
- We appreciate your _____ (*agree*) to come at such short notice.
- I regret _____ (*inform*) you that your application has been unsuccessful.
- She suddenly stopped _____ (*laugh*) and began _____ (*cry*) instead.
- I keep _____ (*forget*) _____ (*buy*) some stamps.

3 Complete the sentences with an appropriate verb form so that they are true for you.

- I **have no intention of** _____.
- I wish I **had the power** _____.
- I often **have difficulty** _____.
- I really should **make more effort** _____.
- My _____ (*family member*) **has a tendency** _____.
- I (don't) **regret my decision** _____.

4 Work in pairs. Discuss your sentences.