

5 Strategies to Improve Working Memory Skills

Tips for Mastering Memory.

By Dr. Randy Kulman



If your child has problems following directions, seems to forget their homework on a daily basis, or gets lost while trying to follow a fast-moving conversation, they may be exhibiting signs of a Working Memory problem. Fortunately, a few great researchers have developed highly effective strategies to improve working memory skills at home and in school.

Judy Willis is a neurologist and educator who has some excellent ideas for synthesizing and retaining memories. Her work is driven by data from neuro-imaging studies. Daniel Willingham, a cognitive scientist, now applies his knowledge about the brain basis of learning and memory to education.

Willis and Willingham offer some pragmatic, easy-to-employ strategies to improve Working Memory skills. These strategies do require some effort, and of course, you or your kids will need to “remember” to apply them when appropriate. Read on for 5 memory-boosting strategies every parent should know.

Strategies to Improve Working Memory Skills

1.) Synthesize, summarize, and remember.

(Willis) Memory can often be assisted by concise summarizing, so that the most important information will be retained. When studying, take a 1-2 minute break every 15 minutes and summarize what you have learned into a few short sentences. If your child wants to use technology to help her, she can text a few messages to herself, or use an app such as “Notes” to write or dictate her summary.

2.) Remember by rereading.

(Willis) Most people are not able to read something once and retain it. Willis suggests that a student underline the parts she understands the first time highlight in yellow, anything she understands second time blue, and anything she understands the third time in green. This process demonstrates the power of rereading for memory, gives individualized self progress charts, and brings to light the the metacognitive components of learning and memory.

3.) Think about what you want to memorize.

The amount and depth of what an individual remembers is directly related to how they think about it. Willingham describes that “what you think about is what you remember.” This suggests that a metacognitive approach, in which a student thinks about his thinking and studying processes is likely to result in better retention. So, if your child really wants to remember what he is studying for the test tomorrow or what he needs to put in his soccer equipment bag, we suggest that he stop and think deeply about it.

4.) Make your memories distinctive.

Memories can be bolstered by distinctive cues. So good strategies to improve working memory skills will include ways to make something either unique or connected to other salient cues. This might mean to use mnemonics such as an acronym or putting it to a rhyme. Connections such as using “pegwords” where one develops a visual image of things to be remembered that with a “peg” word that is already firmly entrenched in memory.

5.) Don't over memorize, overlearn.

It is not uncommon for students to study for a test, feel as if they know it all, and then quickly forget the material. Distributed studying and learning, as opposed to cramming, may help with this problem. Additional review after the material is seemingly set can be helpful. Willingham suggest that self-testing is a good tool to consolidate and refine memories.

Source; <http://learningworksforkids.com/2013/08/5-strategies-to-improve-working-memory-skills/#.UiXoeerMwTI.twitter>