

Brain exercises

Sharpen your mind with some easy brain exercises.

You've lost your keys for the umpteenth time. You return home from the grocery store and realize you forgot the most important item. You open your mouth to talk but forget what you want to say?

Like a pencil low on lead, our minds need sharpening. Here are some daily exercises you can do to keep the brain from getting flabby.

1. Toss the calculator. Next time you balance your check book, do it in your head or on paper. Add those numbers, compare balances, until the totals are correct (or as close as you'll accept). You may actually feel the numbers whizzing through your mind as you calculate.
2. Figure the tip in your head. Don't even use paper to determine fifteen or twenty percent. There are some short cuts that you may use, such as making the tip equal double the tax (depending on your area's tax rate).
3. Keep the grocery list hidden. Write the list, pack it away in your purse or pocket and head for the store. As you stroll the aisles, think about what's for dinner, who you are entertaining, whether or not you're providing scout snacks. Visualize your refrigerator and pantry to see what's in stock. Just before checking out, check your list to see if you've remembered it all.
4. Do crosswords and word jumbles daily. It's a sad truth that many of these mind activities head to the recycling bin completely blank when they are so good for your brain. Make it a habit and soon you'll be in the rhythm of doing these activities every day.
5. Play board games, charades, and word games. Any games that force you to use math and language skills are tapping into those areas of your brain that may need some stirring.
6. Learn a new word a week. Have each family member bring a new word to dinner once a week. Go over the meaning and how the new

word relates to your family. Visualize the word being filed in your mind and review it from time to time. Keep track of the words.

7. Play name games with yourself when you meet new people. For example, if you meet Ted and he is over six feet, think of the Two "T" man - Ted and tall! Be creative in your approach. If Sarah is an orthodontist, think of it as , "Sarah, with the Straight Teeth."

8. Recite the alphabet backwards until you are proficient. Try this exercise three times a day until you can do the backwards version as quickly as the regular version. This takes work!

9. Read riddle books and try to solve them. These also make good party ice breakers.

10. Get organized! Keep your keys in the same place each day. Clean your desk. Straighten your closet. When your life is organized, you spend less time worrying about where things are and other details that cloud the mind. Just the process of organizing will clear your mind.

11. Take up a hobby that forces you to think outside the box. Some examples include learning a foreign language which is very different from English, such as Russian. Or learn how to read music. Or, on a practical note, enhance your computer skills by either teaching yourself a new program, or taking a class. Make certain to incorporate the newly acquired information into your lifestyle.

12. Increase your base of knowledge. When you meet someone new, ask questions using the "who, what, where, when, why, how" formula. Ask who the person is (name), what is his or her career, where they work, when they began their career, why they enjoy that line of work, and how they decided to pursue their career. Then go deeper with questions, such as, "What does it mean to be a paleontologist?" or "What is the most challenging part of dentistry?" Listen closely, and you will gain new knowledge. Learning is a way to continually sharpen the mind.

We exercise our bodies to keep them firm. It's important to do the same for our minds.

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