Top 10 List to Improve Your Child's Memory

A neurologist/classroom teacher's ten tips: Be your child's memory coach.

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One of the most exciting areas is brain-based [memory](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/memory) research we now have is neuroimaging and brain-mapping studies to view the working [brain](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/neuroscience) as it learns. These memory tips are derived from my background as a neurologist. I review the neuroimaging research. I then use my experience as a classroom teacher to make connections between the research and strategies that are NEURO-LOGICAL.

* **DESTRESS:** [Stress](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/stress) causes the brain intake systems to send information into the Reactive brain (automatic-fight, flight, freeze) and prevents information flow through to the Reflective higher thinking, conscious brain (prefrontal cortex) where long-term memory is constructed. Establish enjoyable rituals (favorite songs, card games, ball toss) or surprises (a fun picture downloaded and printed from the internet) before study time to destress the study experience and open up the brain networks that lead to memory storage.
* **GRAB ATTENTION:** Memorable events make long-term memories. Find out what your child will study next in school and hang posters "[advertising](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/consumer-behavior)" or giving hints about that topic and encourage him to guess what it might be. Curiosity open's up the brain's sensory intake filter so when the topic comes up in class or in reading it will grab her attention.
* **COLOR:** The brain only lets in a small part of the billions of bits of sensory information available every second. A filter in the low ([unconscious](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/unconscious), automatic, animal-like) brain decides what gets in. Color is something that gets through this filter especially well. Have your children use colored pens color code notes or words to emphasize high importance. You can have a picture of a traffic light on the wall and he can use green, orange, and red in order of importance - like the traffic light.
* **NOVELTY:** If you add novelty to a study experience it will be more memorable. Use video clips from the internet, put on a funny hat, put a scarf on the dog, light a candle) right before your child begins to study. His alerting system will be more open to processing and remember information that comes in after a novel experience.
* **PERSONAL MEANING:** Children must care enough about information or consider it personally important, for it to go through the brain filters and be stored as memory. Use your child's interests to connect her to the material. Make stories together using the information. Stories are great ways to remember new things because you child's brain grew up hearing stories and the pattern for remembering stories is strong in her brain.
* **RELATIONAL MEMORIES:**The brain keeps information in short-term memory for less than a minute unless it connects with prior knowledge. Activate your child's prior knowledge by reminding him of things you've done as a family or that he's learned in other subjects that relates to the new information
* **PATTERNING:** The brain is a pattern-seeking organ. When your children recognize relationships between new and prior knowledge their brains can link the new information with a category of existing knowledge for long-term storage. Charts, mnemonics, listing similarities/differences, and making analogies build long-term memory patterns.
* **MENTAL MANIPULATION FOR LONG-TERM MEMORY:**Once the information gets to the higher thinking brain your child must do something with it to build permanent memories. Your children can write summaries of new information in their own words. To make these even more personally meaningful the summaries can be in forms that suit their learning style preferences including sketches, skits, songs, dances, comic strips, or drawings.
* **PRACTICE MAKES PERMANENT:** Information from each of the senses is stored in a part of the brain specific to that sense. Review material using multiple sensory activities so different neural networks store the knowledge in multiple brain regions. Your children's brains will build multiple pathways leading to the stored memory, which makes retrieval more efficient. When a memory has been recalled often, this repeated neural circuit activation makes the memory stronger—like exercising a muscle.
* **SYN-NAPS:** Neurotransmitters, brain transport proteins, needed for memory construction and attention are depleted after as little as ten minutes of doing the same activity. Syn-naps are brain-breaks where you help your child change the learning activity to let her brain chemicals replenish. The Syn-naps can be stretching, singing, or acting out vocabulary words. After just a few minutes, her refreshed brain will be ready for new memory storage.

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