5 Tips to Improve Working Memory Skills*by*

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Improving your child’s ability to remember and recall information may seem like a difficult task, but it can often be accomplished by practicing some simple, short-term strategies. Simple activities like having your child repeat what you have said can reinforce basic [Working Memory](http://learningworksforkids.com/skills/working-memory/) skills, while encouraging her to write short lists can help her to more easily complete tasks. Conversely, an intensive approach such as *Cogmed Working Memory Training* can result in a vast improvement in memory, but will take a commitment of time and effort over the course of many weeks.

[Games](http://learningworksforkids.com/playbooks/?tab=all&sortby=date&sort=desc), [apps](http://learningworksforkids.com/apps/?tab=all&sortby=date&sort=desc), and non-tech strategies that focus on improving Working Memory skills can often be an excellent complement to a rigorous digital training program like*Cogmed Working Memory Training*. While Cogmed exercises the brain and literally alters its structure in the areas that manage memory, non-tech strategies can support and practice techniques that reduce working memory demands, or make it easier to access short and long-term memory. Try integrating the following strategies into your child’s routine to boost Working Memory and apply those skills to real-world and academic activities.

1.) **Encourage your child to connect an emotion to something they want to remember.** For example, if your child is trying to remember information for a history test, ask her to consider how she might have felt if she were in that setting and connect that emotion to what she is trying to remember. Studies suggest that if you can make a meaningful connection emotionally to something, or attach a strongly held opinion to what you are trying to remember, you are more likely to commit that information to memory. Sometimes it might be useful to generate an emotional response, such as finding a reason to be angry about a historical event or to think of something that is scary about a scientific fact.

2.) **Treat your brain like a garden.** A 2% decrease in hydration can lead to a 20% loss in energy and in the capacity to memorize and think correctly. This means your child needs to drink water, juices or something healthy to remain hydrated and to remember optimally. Provide nutrition (or fertilizer) for the brain through memory-boosting vitamins, such as Vitamin B12, Folic Acid, and food such as salmon and fruits. Also, give that brain some rest. Gardens that do best are not always planted with the same things and have a chance to recover before growing a crop again.

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3.) **Sustain your attention if you want to sustain your memories.** Pay attention to what is important, because otherwise it will be discarded from your memory within 18 to 30 seconds. As a result, one needs to “download” information, in a way, to obtain it. In other words, you have to “work” to get information into your long-term memory. Taking notes, connecting information to other memories or using visualization strategies all can offer support to retaining crucial bits of information.

4.) **Improve Working Memory by teaching others.** Before teachers relay information, they process what they have learned in a way that prepares it for departure, consolidating information, archiving it, and making way for more long-term memory. Teaching others requires individuals to think about what they have learned and memorize it in a different way, so that they can present it to others. This illustrates the common axiom, “To teach is to learn twice.”

5.) **Encourage your child to “chunk” activities into a single action.** Parents can help their child to visualize a nighttime routine of putting on pajamas, brushing teeth, and washing her face as one single activity to increase the probability that she will engage in all three behaviors each night. Grouping physical items into categories can help kids locate and recall them later when they are needed, like gathering multiple pieces of equipment for sports practice, or packing various items into a “sleepover backpack” for an overnight stay at a friend’s house. Help your child to determine other tasks that she could chunk together, encouraging her to develop her own “chunking” strategies.