



Train your BRAIN

THE HUMAN BRAIN IS ABLE To continually adapt and rewire itself. Even in old age, it can grow new neurons. Studies suggest that keeping your grey matter in shape can lower the risk of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Severe mental decline is usually caused by disease, whereas most age-related losses in memory or motor skills simply result from inactivity and a lack of mental exercise and stimulation. In other words, use it or lose it. The neural pathways and connections in our brains, like all of the other muscles in our bodies, need exercise and training. There are a variety of exercises and activities that can successfully work your cognitive functions on a daily basis.

COGNITIVE FUNCTIONS

Our minds consist of five main cognitive functions: memory, attention, language visual-spatial skills and executive function. It's important to challenge, stimulate and effectively exercise all five areas to stay mentally sharp as our brains age.

Your brain is a thinking organ that learns and grows by interacting with the world through perception and action. Mental stimulation improves brain function and actually protects against cognitive decline. Let's learn more

1. MEMORY

Memory plays a crucial role in all cognitive activities, including reading, reasoning and mental calculation. There are several types of memory at work in the brain. Taken together, these are the cognitive skills we may notice most when they begin to fail. To maintain a good memory, you need to train for it, which can be easier than you think. Listening to music is not only enjoyable, but by choosing a song you don't know and memorizing the lyrics, you boost the level of acetylcholine, the chemical that helps build your brain and improve your memory skills. Challenge yourself even more by showering or getting dressed in the dark or using your opposite hand to brush your teeth. These challenges help build new associations between different neural connections of the brain.

2. ATTENTION

Attention is necessary in nearly all daily tasks. Good attention enables you to maintain concentration despite noise and distractions and to focus on several activities at once. We can improve our attention by simply changing our routines. Change your route to work or re-organise your desk – both will force your brain to wake up from habits and pay attention again. As we age, our attention span can decrease, making us more susceptible to distraction and less efficient at

multitasking. Combining activities like listening to an audio book while jogging or doing math in your head while you drive forces your brain to work at doing more in the same amount of time.

3. LANGUAGE

Language activities will challenge our ability to recognize, remember and understand words. They also exercise our fluency, grammatical skills and vocabulary. With regular practice, you can expand your knowledge of new words and much more easily retrieve words that are familiar. For example, if you usually only thoroughly read the sports section, try reading a few in-depth business articles. You'll be exposed to new words, which are easier to understand when read in context or easier to look up on a dictionary site if you are reading the news online. Take time to understand the word in its context, which will help you build your language skills and retrieve the word more readily.

4. VISUAL-SPATIAL SKILLS

We live in a colorful, three-dimensional world. Analyzing visual information is necessary to be able to act within your environment. To work this cognitive function, try walking into a room and picking out five items and their locations. When you exit the room, try to recall all five items and where they were located. Too easy? Wait two hours and try to remember those items and their locations. The next time you're waiting on your colleague or friend to arrive, try this mental exercise. Look straight ahead and note everything you can see both in front of you and in your peripheral vision. Challenge yourself to recall everything and write it down. This will force you to use your memory and train your brain to focus on your surroundings.

5. EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

Without even realizing it, you use your logic and reasoning skills on a daily basis to make decisions, build up hypotheses and consider the possible consequences of your actions. Activities in which you must define a strategy to reach a desired outcome and calculate the right moves to reach the solution in the shortest possible time are actually fun activities you do daily – like social interaction and, yes, video games. Engaging in a brief visit with a friend boosts your intellectual performance by requiring you to consider possible responses and desired outcomes. Video games require strategy and problem solving to reach a desired outcome – like making it to the final level.



Editor recommends

Vital Herbtyme Memory & Concentration is a high-potency herbal, vitamin and mineral formulation, specially formulated with a therapeutic dose of ginkgo biloba. Ginkgo biloba aids in the treatment of poor memory and concentration as well as circulatory problems. **Vital Herbtyme Memory & Concentration** also contains carefully selected nutrients such as B vitamins, zinc, L-glutamine, salmon oil and phospholipids. It is free from preservatives, artificial flavors, lactose, gluten and yeast.



Vital Ginkgo & Vital Mental Stimulation Giveaway

Q. Which one of these is not a mental stimulation?

- Watching TV
- Solving puzzles
- Reading
- Physical exercise

Fill in this coupon & drop it at any Healthy U store to stand a chance to win yourself a Vital Ginkgo or Memory & Concentration from Healthy U.

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? Did You know?
 A cognitive psychologist in England found that when elderly people regularly played bingo, it helped minimize their memory loss and bolster their hand-eye coordination. Bingo seemed to help players of all ages remain mentally sharp.

KEEP YOUR MIND FIT

Here are some other suggestions for staying mentally fit.

- **Include some basic problems in your Day.** Consider your brain a muscle and find opportunities to flex it. Read, read, read. Do crossword puzzles. Play Scrabble. Start a new hobby or learn to speak a foreign language – anything that stimulates the brain to think. Try fun challenging mental tasks like reading a hard book, or using your other hand for something you typically do such as eating or brushing your teeth. Not only will it be fun, but it will strengthen the connections (synapses) between nerve cells in the brain. **Note:** Exercising your brain isn't just something you do once. Try fitting in these steps every day. Like other exercise, it is only really effective if it is done more than once.

- **Try investing in a brain-training game.** This isn't the only way to train your brain, but some may think it is the best. Some examples of popular brain-training games include "Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day!" for Nintendo DS and "Brain Challenge" for Apple's iPod. These supposedly work all of the areas of the brain and can help you exercise your brain effectively.
- **Include exercise in your day.** Not only can exercising your brain help it, but exercising other parts of your body may help, too. Exercise has many mental benefits such as improving cognitive functioning, reducing the risk of developing dementia, and many other Benefits.

? Did You know?
 Most of us know that physical exercise is good for our general health, but did you know that physical exercise is also good for your brain? Studies of senior citizens who walk regularly showed significant improvement in memory skills compared to sedentary elderly people. Walking also improved their learning ability, concentration, and abstract reasoning. Stroke risk was cut by 57% in people who walked as little as 20 minutes a day.

- **Limit the television you watch.** When you watch TV, your brain goes into neutral. One study says that people watching TV had increased alpha brain waves – their brains were in a passive state as if they were just sitting in the dark.
- **Laugh.** Studies have shown that people are typically better at solving exercises designed to measure creative thinking right after exposure to comedy. Subjects claimed that they felt more alert, active, interested and excited after watching comedy. Keep in mind, though: Humor can be distracting and may decrease performance on non-creative tasks.
- **Eat a good breakfast.** Eating the right breakfast can have quite an impact on brainpower. It has been shown that kids who have fizzy drinks and sugary snacks for breakfast perform poorly on tests of memory and attention. Eating a good breakfast everyday will also insure that you have the energy throughout the day to exercise your mind and body.
- **Watch what you eat.** Studies show that a diet rich in nutrients such as antioxidants and vitamins boosts cognition and memory.

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