

Special Educational Needs Newsletter

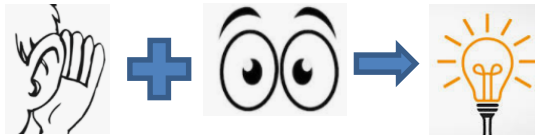
Supporting Memory Systems at home: Information for parents and carers

Different types of memory systems:

We use our **short-term** memory to hold information for approximately 20-30 seconds – for example, to remember phone number or email address whilst writing it down. Where we then **use** or **apply** this short-term information (such as adding up a list of numbers or working out where we are in a set of instructions to determine what is the next step) we are using our **working memory** system. Working memory is important as not only does it support our responses to information/instructions, but it also enables us to focus and concentrate our attention as well as organising how we arrange information and transfer it to our **long-term memory** system.

Approximately 10% of people have difficulties with working memory; this figure is much higher for people with specific learning differences such as Dyslexia and ADHD.

Typically, a person with Dyslexia is likely to find it harder to retain and respond to verbal input such as speech. Visual input is often easier for them to retain and can work well to support verbal input. In the classroom, teacher will be supporting pupils with visual prompt to remind them of the verbal input.



Working memory systems are sometimes described as the '**post-it notes**' used by the brain – only a small amount of information can be recorded and it's only for a few seconds. The amount of information varies from person to person and also within the individual at different times/in different circumstances.

Useful Acronyms & Vocabulary about SEND:

SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disability

SENDCo: Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator

ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder

ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

EWO: Education Welfare Officer

SENDIASS: Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service

SALT: Speech and Language Therapists

Ideas for supporting memory systems:

- Remember – post-it notes are small, so only give **small chunks** of information/instructions at a time.
- Post-it notes can easily be lost, so be prepared to give a **reminder** of information/instructions – your child does not choose to forget.
- Keep instructions **short and simple** so that your child has less content to retain and process.
- Ask your child to **repeat** these short, simple instructions back to you – this builds in an additional reminder and enables you to check what your child thinks you have just said...
- **Making connections** to other learning and experiences help with storing new learning tidily in the brain where it can be found and used again.
- Make it **memorable!** Humour is great for boosting memory so make a funny story including the items on a shopping list or the order of tasks for getting ready for bed.
- Make it **personal**. Linking to other memories/experiences is a great way to cement learning, so encourage your child to make connections to people/places/events that have meaning to them. For example, when working on the 'ea' sound in beach, refer to a trip to the beach.
- If your child is working on reading/spelling specific words, encourage them to use different **colours** to pick out and reinforce different sections – perhaps the tricky bit, or a 'silent letter' that keeps being forgotten (thumb**b**)

Ideas for supporting memory systems continued:

- **Applying** a new piece of information/learning helps us to store and find that new learning again another time, so try to put new learning to work – spotting a word/letter pattern in a book, an advert on TV, a WhatsApp message from Grandma and so on.
- It's helpful to **check in** with your child if they are trying to remember or work on a set of instructions – so ask them, 'What do you need to do now?' – this is useful for errands around the house as well as work-based tasks.
- Add something **physical**, to reinforce sets of instructions – for a 3 part set of instructions, encourage your child to touch a finger (or fold a finger down) for each instruction so there is a physical connection to each part of the input.
- Be aware that everyone finds it more difficult to use their memory systems efficiently when they are feeling **stressed** and/or **tired**, remember to break things down and build in extra reminders.

Games and activities to encourage good use of memory:

Matching card games: Place the cards face down and spread them out. Each player tries to find a matching pair by turning up two cards. If they do not match, then the cards are put back in the same place, face down. If they do match, the player keeps them and gets to take another turn.

What's on the tray?: Place objects on a tray, starting with around 4. These should be everyday items such as a comb, a key, a rock and a banana. Show the tray to your child and let them look at the objects, then cover the tray over and ask them to name the objects. This builds up children's ability to visualize and use visual memory skills. To add interest to the game you can take an item away each time and ask them what is missing.



The Magic Cup game: This game is also popular because it has a multitude of benefits, the most important of which is that it builds concentration which is necessary for improving memory. This can be made harder by adding more cups, or moving them more quickly, or shuffling more. Your child may also like to switch roles and have a go at moving the cups for themselves.

I went to the moon and I took: This game is best played in a group setting with lots of different personalities adding to the list, but could also be played on a smaller scale around the dining table at home. The first person to play starts the sentence, in this case, "I went to the moon and I took a..." and picks something they take with them such as "teddy bear". The next person must then repeat the first player's phrase and add their own item e.g. "I went to the moon and I took a teddy bear and a flag". Each player then adds another item and must recount the list prior to their turn.

Drum beats: Use drums, or upturned pots and pans, to play rhythms. One player "sends" the rhythm, by playing it on their drum, and the other must then send it back, by playing it on theirs. Take turns to come up with the rhythm. This activity builds children's listening skills which has a whole host of benefits for memory including exercising their auditory processing system and laying the foundation for recognising different sounds as part of speech, which is important in learning to read and write.

Simon Says: Simon Says is a classic childhood game and a great way of building memory skills because it requires that children listen carefully and respond correctly, remembering and referencing a set of rules. This careful listening is required to remember information that is given verbally, as much of teaching is, and will pay long term dividends.