



Mental Activity

OVERVIEW

Brain training can improve brain function and ability to perform daily activities.

Just as physical activity is needed for a strong and healthy body, mental activity is needed for a sharp and healthy mind. Mental activities are like exercise for the brain, and can be more fun!

In order to improve your memory and protect against cognitive decline, we recommend that you challenge your brain in new ways. Examples include:

- Talking to new people
- Traveling to a foreign country (if that interests you) and learning about different cultures
- Performing mentally challenging tasks
- Taking a class
- Learning a new language or musical instrument
- Playing brain games

When we perform activities that challenge the brain that are both new and complex, new connections are formed between brain cells and existing connections are strengthened.

Challenge yourself with new ways to think, move, and engage your brain.

Having a sense of life purpose also protects the brain from cognitive decline.

Did you know if you complete 8 hours of brain games per month, the benefits are immediate and last at least 5 years?

Online Resources

BrainHQ (www.brainhq.com) and **Lumosity** (www.lumosity.com) are online brain training programs with dozens of exercises that are designed to be fun and challenging. The exercises are designed by scientists to strengthen brain functions including memory, reasoning, and processing speed.

KEEP THE BRAIN ENGAGED

Population studies have shown that people with higher levels of education, with mentally challenging jobs, or who engage in lifelong learning suffer from cognitive decline at lower rates than others. Keeping your mind active may be an important way of protecting your mind.

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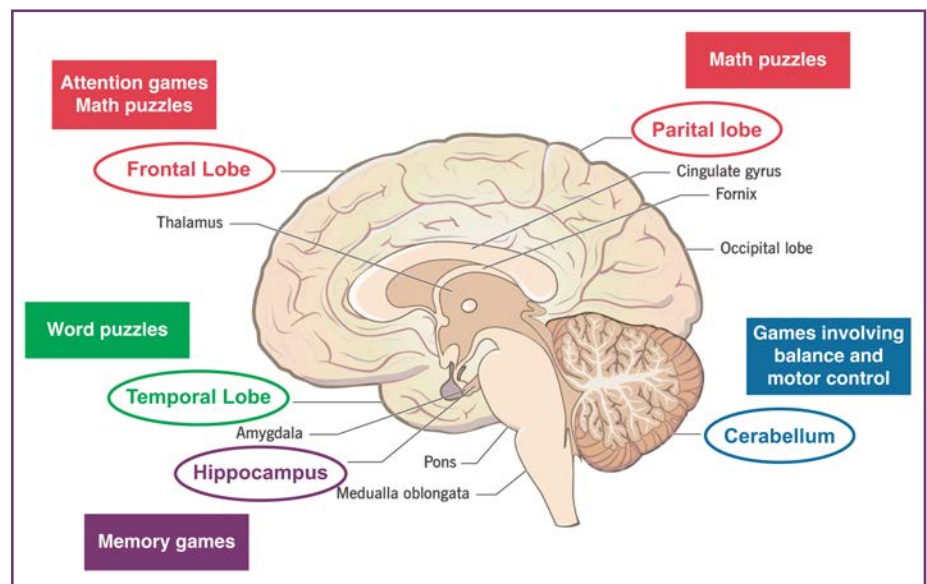
KEEP THE BRAIN ENGAGED

By contrast, being sedentary, watching hours of television each day, not trying new things, and being socially isolated can harm the brain.

People often experience a change in memory after retirement. The brain is negatively affected by the decrease in stimulation, social interaction, and sense of purpose that employment provides. Therefore, it is essential to remain active and engaged in retirement. Retirement is an opportunity to learn new skills, discover new interests, explore, travel, and interact with other people.

Remember, it is never too late to improve your brain and memory!

- Practice brain games on websites such as www.lumosity.com or www.brainhq.com
- Do puzzles like crosswords, Sudoku, or KenKen
- Volunteer at an agency or program you would like to support
- Learn to play chess or, or if you already know how, join a chess club
- Play challenging card games like Pinochle, Bridge, Rummy, Euchre, or Hearts
- Learn to knit or crochet
- Take an art class or pottery class
- Learn floral arranging
- Learn woodworking
- Learn to play a musical instrument
- Do math problems in your head or on paper instead of using a calculator
- Go to an art museum and learn about your favorite artists



- Go bird watching and try to identify birds by sight and song
- Take a dance class or play music and dance at home
- Learn a foreign language
- Attend a lecture on an interesting subject
- Read a book and discuss it with someone else or join a book club
- Learn computer programming



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KEEP THE BRAIN ENGAGED

- Take an acting class
- Direct a play
- Go to a bead shop and make a piece of jewelry
- Learn the art of quilting
- Sing in a choir
- Chant in a kirtan
- Write a short story, book, or article
- Write a children's book
- Take a class at the local community college or online
- Be a tutor or a mentor
- Teach someone how to do something
- Teach a class
- Help your grandchildren with math problems
- Do consulting in your field
- Color in an adult coloring book
- Practice tai chi or other form of martial arts
- Compose a piece of music
- Learn sign language
- Learn calligraphy
- Try origami
- Build a model
- Learn about different religions
- Take a history class
- Give a lecture at your local library
- Give a cooking demonstration in your community
- Invite friends over for a sing-a-long
- Make an item of clothing from a pattern
- Learn the art of storytelling
- Travel to new places and talk to the locals
- Learn to cook different styles of cuisine
- Complete the program in “The Artist’s Way” (a book by Julia Cameron). Do it with a friend or family member.
- Keep exploring. Take a different route to work, the grocery store, etc.
- Meet and talk to new people
- Do something that gets you outside of your comfort zone

Tip to improve memory:

Challenge your brain by engaging in a stimulating activity every day. Check off the days you do some type of stimulating or challenging activity on your Daily Checklist.

Reference

Tennstedt SL, Unverzagt FW. The ACTIVE study: study overview and major findings. *J Aging Health*. 2013;25(8 Suppl):3S-20S. doi:10.1177/0898264313518133