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Spotlight on... Working Memory

Everyone has trouble remembering things from time to time – even adults! Working memory helps us hold onto information while we use it, but it can be difficult, especially for children. Some children, especially those with learning needs or who are neurodivergent, may find it harder to use their working memory.

It's important to remember that working memory struggles don't mean your child isn't smart. They simply need some extra help. With the right support, they can improve their memory skills. Here are some simple strategies you can try at home to help your child manage their working memory challenges.



1. Create a Visual Timetable

A visual timetable or a "now/next" board can help your child know what comes next during the day. Displaying pictures or words, such as "Lunch" followed by "Homework," gives your child something to refer to without needing to remember everything. This can reduce stress and help them focus. If you would like some resources printing to make a visual timetable for your child, please just ask in school and we will be happy to help.

2. Prepare Materials Before Starting

Before your child starts tasks like homework or a project, such as baking, make sure everything they need (like a pencil, ruler, notebook, recipe, ingredients etc.) are ready and nearby. This saves time and energy spent looking for things, and your child can focus better on the task at hand.

3. Break Tasks into Small Steps

Instead of asking your child to do a big task all at once, break it down into smaller steps. For example, if they need to get ready for school, rather than saying, "get your shoes on and grab your things to go.", start with "Put on your shoes." and then move to "Grab your bag." Giving one small task at a time helps them focus without feeling overwhelmed.

4. Create a Routine

Having a regular routine helps your child know what to expect each day. For example, do homework at the same time **after** a snack and break. A predictable schedule means they don't have to remember what comes next, giving them more energy to concentrate on the task at hand.

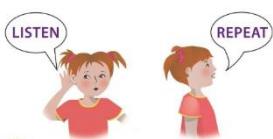


5. Backwards Chaining



One great way to help your child remember a sequence of activities is by using *backwards chaining*. This means you teach the last step of a task first, then the second-to-last, and so on. For example, if your child needs to learn how to pack their school bag, start by showing them how to put the backpack on. Once they've mastered that, show them how to zip it up, then put in their books, and so on. This method helps them feel confident in completing the final step, making the whole process easier to remember.

6. Ask Your Child to Repeat Instructions



Listen ► Repeat

After giving your child instructions, ask them to repeat them back. This helps ensure they've understood and can remember what to do next. For example, after saying, "Put on your shoes," ask, "What are you going to do now?"

7. Encourage Self-Help Strategies

Teaching your child how to manage their memory challenges is one of the best things you can do. Here are some ideas:

Use a notepad: Help your child get a special notebook to jot down things they need to remember, like homework or what to pack for school.

Make mnemonic devices: Create silly acronyms or rhymes to help them remember things, like "Bubbles, Brush, Bottoms" for brushing teeth (Bubbles for toothpaste, Brush for brushing, Bottoms for rinsing).

Organise belongings: Work together to organise their school supplies or toys in a way that makes sense to them.



8. Model Coping Strategies



Sometimes children feel frustrated if they forget something. Teach them it's okay to ask for help or take a deep breath if they forget. For example, "I forgot my keys today, so I had to ask for help. It's okay to forget sometimes!"

Remember: Working memory struggles don't reflect your child's ability or intelligence. With the right support and practice, your child can develop stronger memory skills.