



Mindscares- Volume III Edition 9

Boost your working memory

Dear Parents

This edition of Mindscares will focus on how to boost the working memory of children. Working memory refers to how we hold on to and work with the information stored in the short-term memory. Children use working memory all the time to learn. It's needed for things like following multi-step directions or solving a Math problem in one's head. You can help your child improve working memory by building simple strategies into every day life.

**“Tell me and
I’ll forget;
Show me and
I may remember;
Involve me and
I’ll understand”**

–Chinese proverb

Strategies for improving working memory (adapted from the original work of Ms. Amanda Morin reviewed by Mr. Thomson E. Brown)

1. Visualization skills.

Encourage children to create a picture in their mind of what they've just read or heard. For example, say you've asked your child to think about a beautiful garden. Have your child imagine a garden with beautiful flowers, and then draw it. As children get better at visualizing, they can describe the image instead of drawing it.



2. Articulation

Being able to explain how to do something involves making sense of information and mentally filing it. Maybe your child is learning a skill, like how to dribble a basketball. Ask your child to teach you this skill. Teachers do something similar by pairing up students in class. This lets them start working with the information right away rather than waiting to be called on.

3. Try games that use visual memory.

There are lots of matching games that can help kids work on visual memory, like the classic game Concentration (or Memory). You can also do things like give kids a magazine page and ask them to circle all instances of the word *the* or the letter *a*.

License plates can also be a lot of fun. Take turns reciting the letters and numbers on a license plate and then saying them backwards, too.

4. Play cards.

Simple constructive card games like Crazy Eights, Uno, Go Fish, can improve working memory in two ways. Children have to keep the rules of the game in mind. They also have to remember what cards they have and which one's other people have played.



5. Be an active reader

Writing down notes and underlining or highlighting text can help children keep the information in mind long enough to answer questions about it. Talking out loud and asking questions about the reading material can also help with working memory.

6. Chunking

Ever wonder why phone numbers and social security numbers have hyphens in them? Because it's easier to remember a few small groups of numbers than it is to remember one long string of numbers. Keep this in mind when you need to give your child multi-step directions. Write them down or give them one at a time. You can also use graphic organizers to help break writing assignments into smaller pieces.



7. Make it multisensory.

Using multiple senses to process information can help with working memory and long-term memory. Write tasks down so your child can look at them. Say them out loud so your child can hear them. Walk through the house as you discuss the family chores your

child needs to complete. Using multisensory strategies can help kids keep information in mind long enough to use it.

8. Learn making connections.

Help your child form associations that connect different details and make them more memorable. One way is to grab your child's interest with fun mnemonics. (For instance, the made-up name "Roy G. Biv" can help kids remember the order of the colors in the rainbow—red, orange, yellow, and so on.) Finding ways to connect information helps with forming and retrieving long-term memory. It also helps with working memory, which is what we use to hold and compare new and old memories.

Further Reading

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/distractibility-inattention/understanding-your-childs-trouble-with-focus>

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/executive-functioning-issues/5-ways-kids-use-working-memory-to-learn>