



# PODCAST: MEMORY



Scan to review worksheet

Expemo code:  
1HJF-L1L5-6CA

## 1 Warm up

In small groups, answer the questions below.

1. Have you got a good memory?
2. Are you better at memorising names, faces or numbers?
3. How do you remember everything you have to do?
4. How often do you forget things? Are they usually important?
5. Do you have any hacks to remember things?





## 2

## Focus on vocabulary

Replace the underlined parts of the questions with the correct form of the words in the box. You might also have to add words and change their order. Then answer the questions in pairs.

## Group 1:

mention (v) / consolidate (v) / technique (n) / association (n) / scribble (v) / familiar (adj.)

1. When was the last time you saw a face that you could recognise but couldn't remember the person's name?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you usually write things quickly when you're studying or listening to important information?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Is it easy to make new habits stronger?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Can you think of any ways or methods to remember important numbers?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Is it easy to forget things when they're spoken of only once?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you often learn something by connecting it to something else?  
\_\_\_\_\_





**Group 2:**

multiple (adj.) / obstacle (n) / distraction (n) / interfere (v) / subjective (adj.) / recall (v)

1. If I need to memorise something, I have to repeat it many times.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. I can't focus, everything turns my attention away!  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. I don't think memories are based on opinions, they're facts.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. I love it when my family remembers and tells me of my childhood.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. I'm terrible at maths; it feels like there's something in my way and I forget all the rules.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Some things influence our memory more than others.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3**

**Listening to podcast**

**Part A: Listen to the first part of the podcast (00:00-02:38). Put the topics in the order they are mentioned.**



- \_\_\_ We need to pay attention so we don't forget things.
- \_\_\_ If we don't use someone's name very often, we tend to forget it.
- \_\_\_ We have to recall a memory from time to time.
- \_\_\_ We can create mental pictures for things we want to remember later.
- \_\_\_ We can remember new information easier when we add a familiar element.





Part B: Listen to the second part of the podcast (02:38-06:06) and say if the sentences below are true, false or not given.



- All the techniques that Angus mentioned are used by memory athletes. \_\_\_\_\_
- Taking a break can help you remember things better. \_\_\_\_\_
- We tend to forget things when we're under stress. \_\_\_\_\_
- Angus learnt mnemonics at school. \_\_\_\_\_
- The more you talk about a memory, the more you remember what actually happened. \_\_\_\_\_

Part C: Listen to the whole podcast again and complete the sentences below with a word, number or short phrase from the podcast.



- |                   |                 |                 |               |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>conditions</b> | <b>create</b>   | <b>familiar</b> | <b>forget</b> |
| <b>fresh</b>      | <b>memorise</b> | <b>shape</b>    | <b>store</b>  |
- Angus says that a key part of the memory process is to \_\_\_\_\_ things.
  - Encoding is the part of the memory process in which we \_\_\_\_\_ a memory.
  - Revising is an important aspect to keep the content \_\_\_\_\_.
  - We can associate new information with something that we're already \_\_\_\_\_ with.
  - Memory athletes are able to \_\_\_\_\_ multiple things.
  - Taking breaks when studying is important to \_\_\_\_\_ new information.
  - Good habits like sleeping and exercising can help with creating ideal \_\_\_\_\_ for a good memory.
  - We tend to \_\_\_\_\_ our memory with time.

#### 4 Speaking practice

Imagine you have a friend who is studying for a test. Record a voice message talking about the podcast. Mention the key points of the podcast and say how they can memorise content better.





## 5

## Language point

Read the extract below, then answer the questions together with a partner.

You know when something's on the tip of the tongue, but you just can't name it?

1. Do you remember what Helen and Angus were talking about?
2. What do you think the underlined expression means?
3. Is 'the tip of the tongue' being used in a literal way, as the real meaning?

We call **idiom** a group of words in a fixed order that together have a meaning that is completely different to the meaning if the same words are used separately. They have a non-literal meaning, which is, the meaning is not real. For example: if someone says that they **have had a change of heart**, it probably means that they've changed their opinion (non-literal) and not that they've had a heart transplant (literal)!

Part B: Read the sentences below. What do the underlined expressions mean?

1. Did you forget my name again? Let me refresh your memory: It's Greg!
2. Please, bear in mind the test finishes at four!
3. She isn't focused: the things we say go in one ear and out the other.
4. Looking at these photographs is jogging my memory.
5. If my memory serves me correctly, he is Mary's son.

## 6

## Talking point

In pairs, discuss the questions below.

1. What information did you find most surprising in this podcast?
2. What questions do you still have about this topic?
3. Have you ever tried any of the techniques Angus mentioned?
4. Which ones would you like to try in future?



## 7

**Optional extension / homework**

**Task A:** Record interviews with other students about how they think their memory is, how they memorise things and some techniques they already use to improve their memory. Then show your video to other students.

**Task B:** Let's test your memory. Answer the questions below in 5 seconds with a partner.

**Student A:**

1. What's the first step in the memory process?
2. Why was Helen in a hurry to finish the last podcast?
3. What is the name of the technique of taking a break between studies?
4. What did Helen do that Angus replied with 'very funny'?
5. Is Angus better with names or faces?
6. What is the name of the IT guy Angus used as an example?

**Student B:**

1. How long did Kate Kermode need to memorise 1080 numbers?
2. How many names could Simon Reinhard match to faces?
3. What's the first technique Angus mentioned to improve our memory?
4. Where was the study that proved that we memorise better when we take breaks from?
5. What does 'My Very Excellent Mother Just Served Us Nine Potatoes' help remember?
6. What is next week's topic?



# Transcripts

## 3. Listening to podcast

**Part:** - 1 -

**Angus:** Hello, and welcome to Angus and Helen's podcast. I'm Angus...

**Helen:** ... and I'm Helen.

**Angus:** Helen, do you remember what our topic for this week was? I mentioned it at the end of last episode as usual.

**Helen:** Hum ... hold on, don't tell me ... it was ... nope, it's gone!

**Angus:** Well, that's exactly it. Our memory.

**Helen:** Of course! Yes, memory. Seems like I need to listen carefully to this episode then!

**Angus:** Not necessarily. Forgetting is a very normal and actually important part of our memory process. OK, let's have a look at how our memory works - or doesn't work, in some cases!

**Helen:** Yes. Why did I forget the topic of the podcast then?

**Angus:** Well, the first step in the memory process is called encoding: that's when we create a memory. In our example, when I mentioned the topic of the podcast last week. Maybe the problem happened there: in order to encode a memory properly, we need to focus our attention on it.

**Helen:** Mmm, I was in a bit of a hurry to finish the episode because of a doctor's appointment. What's the next step then?

**Angus:** It's consolidating that memory. For that, we need to revisit it regularly. Each time we do, the memory becomes stronger. So students, for example, need to revise content at intervals in order to keep that information fresh. It's called the 'spacing effect'. So if you had asked yourself a couple of times what the topic of the podcast was during the week, you would be much more likely to remember it just now.

**Helen:** Of course. And is there another step?

**Angus:** Yes, retrieval, when you access that information. You know when something's on the tip of the tongue, but you just can't name it? That's an issue at the retrieval stage.

**Helen:** That happens a lot to me, especially with people's names. Do you have the same problem, ... hum ... (pretending to forget Angus' name)

**Angus:** Very funny! As a matter of fact, I do. I'm much better with faces than names. But in my research, I've learnt a good technique I want to try out next time I meet someone.

**Helen:** What's that?



- Angus:** Association. Create an image in your mind based on the name. So if it's Mark, from IT, then imagine him using a marker to scribble over a computer screen. The crazier the image, the more likely you are to remember.
- Helen:** That is a bit odd, but worth trying.
- Angus:** Association is used a lot by all memory athletes. One technique in particular they use a lot is called the Memory Palace – you picture a place you know well, and place the people or things you need to remember in different rooms. So, associating the new with the familiar.
- Helen:** Sounds interesting. But hold on – memory athletes?!
- Part:** - 2 -
- Angus:** Oh yes, memory is a very competitive sport. There are world championships and everything. Katie Kermode, a memory champion with multiple world records, was able to memorise 1,080 numbers in 30 minutes, for example.
- Helen:** Wow!
- Angus:** Another test is to match people's names to faces. Simon Reinhard, two-times World Memory Champion, could match 173 names to faces correctly in 15 minutes.
- Helen:** Oh, I would not do well in that test!
- Angus:** It's really just a question of technique and practice. I mean, maybe not to that level, but anyone can improve their memory.
- Helen:** OK, how then?
- Angus:** The first technique is quite easy, actually. Just do nothing.
- Helen:** What do you mean?
- Angus:** Well, one of the main obstacles to our memory is distractions, and we seem to have more and more of those in modern life. So, for example, when you're studying for something, experts recommend taking short breaks, but not to check your phone, but rather to do absolutely nothing. That way, your brain has time to process and store the new information properly, as well as rest and recharge. In a German study, for example, people were given two lists of syllables to remember. Half of them, however, were given a six-minute break between each list. Those were able to remember 50% of the lists, but the group who didn't have the break only remembered 28%.
- Helen:** That's a big difference. Any other tips?
- Angus:** There are lots of techniques, but it's also important to remove obstacles to our memory. We've already talked about distractions. Stress also interferes a lot with our memory: we remember a lot less when we're stressed. So things like going for a walk and breathing techniques help. Good sleep and exercise also go a long way to help create the ideal conditions for a good memory.
- Helen:** OK. What about mnemonics? You know, like My Very Excellent Mother Just Served Us Nine Potatoes?



- Angus:** Like what?!
- Helen:** It's a mnemonic to remember the order of the planets: My Very Excellent Mother Just Served Us Nine Potatoes. So, Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto.
- Angus:** Oh, I see. Mine was 'Most Vegetables Eat More Juice So Usually Never Pee'!
- Helen:** I think I'll stick to mine!
- Angus:** Yes, mnemonics are incredibly effective, which is proven by the fact we both remember them to this day. We might have to change them now that Pluto isn't considered a planet anymore though.
- Helen:** True. Oh, I remembered something you said last week. All this talk about memory must be jogging mine. You said we shouldn't trust our memory, or something like that.
- Angus:** Yes, well done. The truth is that memories are just our interpretation of an event, which can be very subjective to start with. But experts say that we tend to shape that memory every time we recall it. For example, if we tell someone about it. They compare it to ice cream. In the freezer, it's quite firm, but every time we take it out, it becomes softer and can change shape. So in a way, the more times we remember something, the more likely it is to not actually reflect what happened.
- Helen:** That makes sense. Well, we don't have time left. Ready for next week's topic?
- Angus:** Always!
- Helen:** We'll be talking about something we spend about 26 years of our life doing: sleeping. We'll look at some really interesting breakthroughs in sleep management, and also tips to sleep better. Now, will you remember that next week, Angus?
- Angus:** Of course! I've already associated it with an image and put it in my Memory Palace.
- Helen:** Yeah, right! Well, we'll see next week. Till then, folks!



# Key

## 1. Warm up

5 mins.

Form small groups and ask them to discuss the questions. Then hold a brief class discussion to summarise findings.

## 2. Focus on vocabulary

10 mins.

Ask students to look at the words and think about what they mean. They then replace the underlined parts of the questions with the words in the box. Remind them that they may have to change some of the words, as well as their order. After correction, students answer questions in pairs. Elicit some ideas as a whole class.

### Group 1:

1. When was the last time you saw a familiar face but couldn't remember the person's name?
2. Do you usually scribble when you're studying or listening to important information?
3. Is it easy to consolidate new habits?
4. Can you think of any techniques to remember important numbers?
5. Is it easy to forget things when they're mentioned only once?
6. Do you often learn something by association?

### Group 2:

1. If I need to memorize something, I have to repeat it multiple times.
2. I can't focus, everything is a distraction!
3. I don't think memories are subjective, they're facts.
4. I love it when my family recalls my childhood.
5. I'm terrible at maths; it feels like there's an obstacle and I forget all the rules.
6. Some things interfere with our memory more than others.

## 3. Listening to podcast

### Part A:

5 mins.

Ask students to read the list of topics, predicting what will be said about each one. Students then listen and put the topics in order. Correct as a whole class, eliciting further details within each topic.

We need to pay attention so we don't forget things.

We have to recall a memory from time to time.

If we don't use someone's name very often, we tend to forget it.

We can create mental pictures for things we want to remember later.

We can remember new information easier when we add a familiar element.

Sources for podcast:

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20140221-how-does-your-memory-work>

<https://theconversation.com/are-memories-reliable-expert-explains-how-they-change-more-than-we-realise-106461>



<https://theconversation.com/why-forgetting-is-a-normal-function-of-memory-and-when-to-worry>

<https://getpocket.com/explore/item/11-simple-ways-to-improve-your-memory>

<https://getpocket.com/explore/item/an-effortless-way-to-improve-your-memory>

**Part B:**

5 mins.

Ask students to predict what they might hear in the second part of the podcast. They then listen to the rest of the podcast and decide if the sentences are true, false or not given. Before correcting as a whole class, ask them to compare answers in pairs and try to remember other details.

1. Not given. [He mentions some techniques, but he doesn't say whether memory athletes use them.]
2. True. ["...but the group who didn't have the break only remembered 28%."]
3. True. ["...we remember a lot less when we're stressed."]
4. Not given. [He doesn't say where he learnt it.]
5. False. ["...the more likely it is to not actually reflect what happened."]

**Part C:**

10 mins.

Students read the sentences and try to remember what was said. They then check the wordbox to complete the sentences, then listen to the podcast again to check. When correcting, play the recording again and pause at the key parts.

- |             |           |               |             |
|-------------|-----------|---------------|-------------|
| 1. forget   | 2. create | 3. fresh      | 4. familiar |
| 5. memorise | 6. store  | 7. conditions | 8. shape    |

#### 4. Speaking practice

15 mins.

Tell students they are going to record a voice message about the topic of the podcast. Allow them some time to prepare, but encourage them not to write down everything they're going to say. Once they're ready, they can record themselves. Tell them they can either start again if they're not happy with the result or record it in parts. Once they're ready, ask them to exchange messages with another student, who should listen to them and give feedback.

#### 5. Language point

**Part A:**

5 mins.

Students read the extract and answer with a partner. Then ask them to read the box with the explanation and examples.

1. They were talking about the retrieval stage.
2. To say you remember what something is called but forgot the exact word for it.
3. No, it is not.

**Part B:**

5 mins.

Do the exercise and give feedback as a group.

1. remind someone of something they have forgotten
2. don't forget an important piece of information



3. get distracted and don't remember things later
4. try to make someone remember something
5. be confident you are right about something you remember

## 6. Talking point

5 mins.

Students discuss the questions in pairs. Elicit some ideas as a whole class.

## 7. Optional extension / homework

### Task A:

15 mins.

Students record on their phones other students talking about how they memorise things and some techniques they already use to improve their memory. They then show their video to other students.

### Task B:

15 mins.

Students will be tested on how much they can remember of the podcast. Pair them up and have student A and B to ask questions to each other.

### Student A:

- |                   |                                     |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Encoding       | 2. she had a doctor' appointment    |
| 3. spacing effect | 4. she pretended to forget his name |
| 5. faces          | 6. Mark                             |

### Student B:

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. 30 minutes           | 2. 173                 |
| 3. do nothing           | 4. Germany             |
| 5. the order of planets | 6. Money and happiness |