



Memory Use

Zoom

Hunters, scientists, astronomers and doctors all understand the importance of zooming in on an object. Hunters look through rifle scopes, focusing on their prey. Scientists peer down **microscopes**, studying objects that can't be seen by the naked eye. Astronomers use **telescopes**, getting a closer look at a star or planet that is very far away. Doctors use **stethoscopes** for listening only to the heartbeat. Mechanical **scopes** help us focus our attention on a specific object. These various types of scopes all have one thing in common: they eliminate the unimportant details and allow us the opportunity to pay attention to what is truly important. For example, in the case of hunters, the scope allows them to focus on the deer and not the surrounding trees.

We can also narrow our focus without using mechanical scopes. Our brain acts like a scope every day. It recognizes and sorts information into meaningful patterns that allow us to live our daily lives. We eliminate unimportant information and focus on the information that we need. If we had to pay attention to everything around us all the time, we wouldn't be able to do anything. For example, if you're playing a game of darts and you're looking everywhere in the room but the board, you won't hit the bull's-eye. To hit the bull's-eye, you need to focus your attention on the bull's-eye and practise throwing your darts at it. Memory works the same way.

Focus

When learning new information, you have to pay attention and learn the information, or you won't remember it. Be an active listener. For example, when people introduce themselves and you're not paying attention, you won't remember their names because you didn't learn them. Sometimes people will say, "**I have a bad memory**" when what they mean is, "**I wasn't paying attention**".

Tips to help with your memory:

- If someone tells you something, for example, the ideal weight of a package, repeat that weight out loud. Saying something out loud (numbers, names, colours) helps us to remember the information.
- Take notes in a notebook. Write the information down. If you cannot write it down immediately, write it down as soon as you get a break. Writing information helps you to remember it.
- If you have trouble writing the information, draw diagrams and pictures to help you remember. Don't worry about how "good" a drawing is, because it just needs to remind you.
- Visualize the information. Picture the information in your mind. See the number, the name, the colour, even the process of doing something in your mind. Rehearse it in your mind. Picture yourself doing the task or saying the information out loud. Visualization is a good tool.
- The more you understand something, the more likely it is that you will be able to remember it. If you don't understand, ask questions.
- To help you remember something that you are reading, try highlighting important information.

People use many different tricks to help them remember things. Memory tricks work best when you create them yourself. When something is familiar to you, chances are you will remember it better.

Learning new material is easier if you connect it to something that is familiar to you. You can use colours, shapes, smells, sounds and even how something feels to help you create links with things you already know. For example, lamb's ear is a plant that has a soft velvety leaf.