# 8th Grade Expository: Memory Training

**Task Prompt:** Write an explanatory article about improving memory. Using more than one source, select the most relevant information to support your thesis/controlling idea about memory.

## Practice Makes Perfect

We've all had it happen to us. Big math test. Hours of studying the night before. You walk in confident, but when the teacher comes around with a huge packet that you have to complete in 45 minutes, that's it. Your mind goes blank. What was that formula? Why can't I remember anything? Maybe it's simpler than you think. If you need to improve your memory, the key is practice, practice, practice. As the article "How Do We Remember?" explains, "If you keep using your brain the same way over and over again, it shapes how your brain will be organized." We've gathered together some tips and tricks to help you practice your memory, so next time you can take a deep breath and remember whatever it is you need with ease.

The first tip is good for short-term memory, which is "[the ability] to hold onto information for as long as you are thinking about it" as explained by the article "How Do We Remember". Seems easy enough, right? Wrong. As soon as you let your mind wander or even get distracted for a second, those memories are gone. In "Memory Masters", Alice Andre-Clark suggests associating memories with places, creating "memory palaces," as she calls them. This trick can be especially useful for remembering grocery lists. "Picture a building you already know pretty well," she says, "Perhaps your own house. Now imagine each item in a different part of the house. Marshmallows strung like pearls, dangling from your mom's jewelry drawer. A graham-cracker fan on the coffee table. Chocolate bars popping out of the toaster." By associating these items with items in your house, you can call up the mental image of your house and think about what's on your grocery list! Next time you're going to the store, conjure up the picture of whole-wheat bread lamps, soap made of butter, or milk coming out of your backyard hose. You'll be sure to remember what to buy now!

Our next tip is often used by international translators. They have a unique job; they must simultaneously listen to something in one language and say it in another, while the person is still talking. "Much of an interpreter's brain power is devoted to keeping information in short-term memory," Dr. Michel Paradis explains. "Simultaneously listening in one language and speaking in another makes the task much more challenging." Translators may often be bilingual, but they're not born with perfect short-term memories, so how can you train your brain to be as sharp as theirs? Luckily, Charles Capaldi includes some exercises they do in his article "Interpreters: Silver-Tongued Masters of Memory". "[H]ave a friend read [words] to you at a slow, steady pace […] Listen to the first word. When you hear the second word, cover it up by saying the first word." What does this help you do? It requires you to say a word while listening to a different word, then say that different word while

yet another plays. You must lock the words in your short-term memory, so practicing this way will help you with short-term memory in the future.

Have you ever tried to remember a number, but end up forgetting it quickly? Do you ever end up asking yourself something like “Was it 17,860 or 17,861”? If so, we’ve got the perfect trick to help you with remembering numbers. Alice Andre-Clark, author of “Memory Masters” calls the trick “Person + Action + Object = ?” The gist of this trick is as follows; think of a person, action, or object for ever number from zero all the way to ninety-nine. When you want to remember a large number like 17,860, you would just combine the people, actions, and objects. Let’s say 17 is Barack Obama, 86 is running, and 0 is a phone. Just imagine Barack Obama running while on his phone, and you can remember 17,860 easily. The sillier it is, the easier it will be to remember, so try to think of some outrageous people, actions, and objects!

The last tip is also from “Memory Masters”. This one will surely be handy at large social events and gatherings, so if you have trouble remembering the names of your guests, we’ve got the trick for you! “Change names just a little,” Alice Andre-Clark writes, “And Cohen becomes ‘cold hen,’ an unhappy chicken sitting on a nest filled with ice cubes. Use pictures to match faces with names too. If Mrs. Cohen has curly red hair, give the hen some fluffy red feathers.” This trick can work for any name or person! Let’s say you just met someone named Taylor. You can think of them as a ‘tailor,’ or a person who makes clothes. When you see them again, just think of them sewing hemlines and cutting fabric to remember their name! You’ll never forget a name or face again.

Memories can be fickle things. As soon as you hand in that math test, perhaps you remember. Oh, it was y=mx+b! It seems you never remember anything at the right time or place. Now that you know four new tips, however, you may be able to calm down and think about it, and soon you’ll be remembering in no time. Who knows, maybe you’ll have a career as an interpreter if you’re especially good at the second game! Having a good memory can really get you ahead in life, so it’s time to start practicing. After all, you know what they say; practice makes perfect.