

Strategies to support short-term memory in the classroom

Factors affecting a child's ability to remember

1. Hearing Acuity – the ability to hear the message impacts on the ability to process it accurately. Important to rule out the presence of a hearing loss.
2. Attention – if the child is not paying attention, they are less likely to remember what has been said.
3. Knowledge of the topic – a child can integrate new information into what is known. Known information provides a framework to 'hang' new knowledge
4. Interest – easier to learn new information if there is an interest. A student will likely remember details of a field trip more than homework tasks.
5. Motivation – some children may not be intrinsically motivated to perform and may require offers of simple rewards
6. Message complexity – the simpler the message, the easier it is to remember
7. Length of the information – too many words is overload and the full message will not be processed and stored
8. Speed – if information is presented quickly it may be difficult to 'get' it all and if too slowly the student may forget bits and lose the point of what is said.
9. Energy – the more tired we are, the harder it is to concentrate on and remember the information
10. Predictability – it is easier to remember information that links into known information
11. Emotional Wellbeing – It is hard to attend to and remember if the child feels concerned about other issues
12. Physical wellbeing – unwellness contributes to a child's inattention and the ability to remember.

Strategies for the Child

- 1) Active Listening – teach children to not only listen with their ears but use their eyes, brains and hands as well. Eyes by looking at the speaker, brains by thinking about what is being said and hands by staying still
- 2) Visualisation – make a picture of something in your head so that you can remember it.
- 3) Rehearsal – involves the repeating of words, either silently or quietly out aloud so that it is easily remembered.
- 4) Links – this helps children remember if they group like things together. Use categories
- 5) Chunking – information is broken down into smaller parts.
- 6) Counting items – counting off on your fingers targets how many items we need we need to remember and helps to trigger recall.

Active Listening

Game: Looking for goodies

- 1) Arrange an obstacle course
- 2) Hide “goodies” around the room
- 3) Each child in turn needs to listen to the instructions in order to reach the “goodie”
- 4) Begin with one instruction and increase the length of the instructions as the children have success
- 5) This activity can be readily adapted to a physical education session

Adaptation: more difficult directions can be given such as “left, right, below, beside, the second, the first”

Copycats

Everyone has to follow the leader – leader ‘claps’ out a sequence and children copy.

2 beats	--	3 beats	---	4 beats
	..		--- -		-----
			- --		... -

Children copy the band leader and then take turns being the leader

Visualisation

I see a picture

Tell the students we are going to try to make a picture of a house in our heads. Then we are going to make it on paper.

Show them the outline of a house and say “it might look something like this”

Say – “Lets make a red house with a yellow roof. Close your eyes and make the house red and the roof yellow. Have you got it?”

Now put on a blue door and a yellow window

Now we’ve got a red house with a yellow roof, it’s got a blue door and a yellow window.

Keep that picture in your head. Now let’s make it on the paper.

Children recreate the house.

Bottle Memory

Read the following story while the children look at the picture of the bottle.

Story: I found this bottle in a junk shop. It is made of glass. It is red

With a double blue stripe towards the base. At the bottom of the neck is a Beautiful gold chain.

Ask the students if the following statements are true or false’

The bottle is made from plastic	T	F
The double stripe is at the base	T	F
If found the bottle in a junk shop	T	F
The double stripe is blue	T	F

Instruct the children to colour in the bottle as accurately as they can and verbally describe it.

Linking

Word chain – things that belong together

Children sit in a circle. Teacher says, “We are going to make a chain. O link up to a person we need to say a word that links up with that person’s word.

Teacher says a category name and gives a word that belongs to that category, for example Clothes – pants.

First child says another word in the same category, then links hands with the teacher. Continue around the circle until all hands are linked.

Possible categories

Clothes

Food

Animals

Furniture

Drinks

TV programs

Boys’ names

Girls names

Sports

Body Parts

Toys

Games

Any words connected to the topic of study – space, Community Helpers etc.

Counting Items

Aim is for children to listen to a sentence, identify the key words and remember the sentence.

It’s time to pack your bag, clean your teeth and go to bed. Students figure out the key words.

Give the students a sentence beginning with one key word and work up to their short-term memory capacity.

Sentences

I hurt my arm.

I hurt my arm and wrist.

I hurt my arm, wrist and finger.

I hurt my arm, wrist, finger and hand.