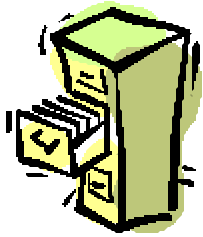


# How to Beat the “I FORGOTS”

How many times have you used the excuse, “I forgot”—even when it was something you really wanted to remember to do? Like most things, memory is a skill. It takes time to learn and *lots* of practice.

There are three steps for **RE**membering:

1. **RE**cording,
2. **RE**taining,
3. and **RE**trieving,



“That’s nice, but what do these mean?” you ask. Think of your memory as a big filing cabinet. The things that you want to remember are **recorded** on pieces of paper. If you decide that, “Hey, this bit of information is worth saving. I’ll put it in my filing cabinet—I mean, memory—to use later.” Putting the information in the cabinet is **retaining**. A few days pass and later comes—it is time to use the information you’ve stored, so you take it out of your wonderful filing cabinet. (That’s called **retrieving**.)

With memory, things can go wrong at *every* step. (That’s one reason remembering is so hard.) Not only do you have to make sure you’ve **recorded** the information in a way that you’ll understand later, you need to figure out where to put that information, **THEN** decide how you will **re-**trieve it when you need it. Ugh!

Luckily, there are memory aids! Memory aids make associations (links) between what you need to remember and what you are likely to remember. Read the paragraph below for an example:

Lindsay (age 12) had trouble remembering to floss and brush her teeth each evening. Although she was willing to brush, her mother did not like reminding her. Lindsay and her mother finally found an approach that worked—Lindsay would brush and floss in the shower. The shower was her helper. She associated the shower with brushing her teeth (she visualized the shower cleaning her teeth). For about a week she made up silly stories about strange showers. Then, Lindsay would mentally pretend to bathe in the strange showers and practice remembering to brush and floss her teeth. This worked because Lindsay already remembered to take a shower every evening—she just added one more step.

**We can break the memory association process down into four steps:**

1. Pick a **key word**.

This represents the task or information to be remembered.  
(example: teeth—brush and floss)



2. Choose a **helper**.

This is something you will notice or remember later. For example, a person, place (kitchen), thing (string around your finger), or sound (buzzer). (example: taking a shower)



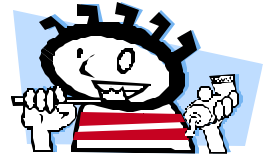
3. Make an **association**.

Form a connection—silly or logical—between the key word and the helper. For most people, silly active associations are more powerful than boring ones.  
(example: the shower cleaning Lindsay’s teeth)



4. **Practice.**

Imagine noticing the helper and associating it with the original task. The more detailed the images, the more effective the process. (example: making up stories about silly showers and pretending to brush and floss teeth)



Now, try your skill at developing memory aids. Pretend that your parents have decided that you need to be responsible for making your own formula. (Your mother usually makes your formula in the morning and you take it to school.)

You say, "Hey, I know how to make my formula already, this should be no problem-o." You do all right on the weekend, but Monday rolls around. The bus is at the corner, you run out of the house, and "OOPS!" you forgot to make your formula. (Luckily, your mom thought something like this might happen and made some formula for you.) How are you going to remember tomorrow? ... *Create a memory aid!*

1. Pick a **key word**.
2. Choose a **helper**.
3. Make an **association**.
4. **Practice.** (You can practice now, or write your plan down below.)

What is something you *always* forget to do? Create a memory aid for that task too.

Task: \_\_\_\_\_

Key Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Helper: \_\_\_\_\_

Association: \_\_\_\_\_

Remember to practice!



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