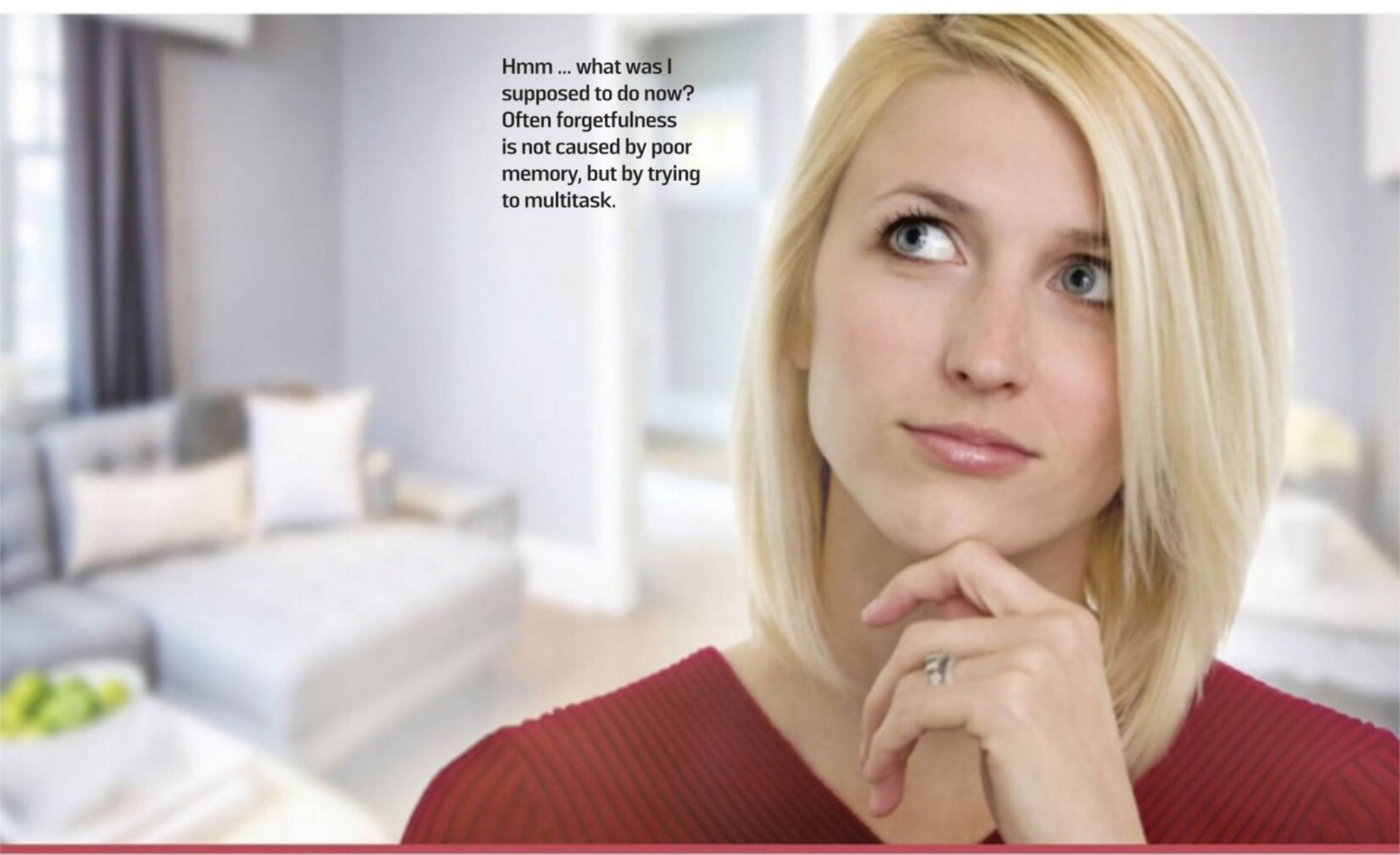

HOW TO BOOST YOUR MEMORY

For many people, remembering things like names, codes and where they left their keys can be a challenge during a hectic day. ***If you find forgetfulness is a constant source of frustration, read on*** to discover tips on how you can improve your recall.



Hmm ... what was I supposed to do now? Often forgetfulness is not caused by poor memory, but by trying to multitask.

SCENARIO 1

It's incredibly annoying having to root around looking for your car keys when you're in a rush. Or when you've seen an exciting drama that you want to share with friends, only to find you've forgotten all the plot details. Not to mention the horror of realising that the name of your new colleague has disappeared into a black hole in your brain.

If these scenarios sound all too familiar, you may feel embarrassed and frustrated by your poor recall. However, it's not always a symptom of bad memory, but rather a lack of focus.

A very common reason for forgetting things in everyday life is that we do too much at once, so the information doesn't have a chance to be stored in the brain. That's why it's always better to stop multitasking and try to concentrate on one thing at a time.

Turn up the exercise and sleep

That said, there are differences in how well people recall things, and scientists don't fully understand why. Fortunately, you can do a lot to help your memory. In general, it helps to live an all-round healthy life. Firstly, this means exercising regularly, which improves blood flow to the brain and helps to strengthen its functions.

It's also important to avoid stress, as this directly impacts the area of the brain that's responsible for learning and memory. Stress kills newly formed nerve cells (neurons), making you forgetful.

Finally, it's a good idea to get a good night's sleep, as this is when your brain processes and stores the knowledge you've gained during the day. Over the years, several studies have confirmed the impact of sleep on memory. For example, a large UK study found that as many as 25% of people who slept less than five hours a night had memory problems that affected their quality of life. □

**25% SUFFER
POOR MEMORY
FROM A LACK
OF SLEEP**

**Take the test on the next page,
count your points and find out
if you have poor memory.**



You forget codes and names

Everything requires a code these days: your credit card, phone, online banking, fitness login and the 117 other memberships you have. The codes fly around, competing for space in your memory with reminders, names and all sorts of everyday information. You're getting fed up relying on scraps of paper, making extra trips to the supermarket and trying to remember people's names.

The memory expert:

CREATE IMAGES OF WHAT NEEDS MEMORISING

● A good technique for keeping track of names is to conjure images of them in your head. When you meet a new person called Mark, for example, think "cropmark" and then imagine him with crops in his hair. Or Frida sounds like a "free day" so visualise her relaxing at home. That way, the name will automatically come to you the next time you meet. Another method is to deliberately repeat the name of the person you have just met, preferably out loud.

● An internal shopping list helps you to remember what you need by forming an inner landscape that represents something familiar, such as the rooms in your home. Here, you

place all the things you need to get in different locations. For example, the bathtub is filled with eggs, the sink is overflowing with coffee, the dog has muesli in his bowl and there's toilet paper hanging from the hall lights.

● If you struggle with codes, try associating an image with the numbers. For example, for 1789, you might think of a person whose birthday is the 17th standing in front of a wall because the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. Or even better: find a topic that can cover all the numbers such as "my home". Then, for example, the number 1425 can remind you that there are 14 houses on your street that are in the E25 postcode.

SCENARIO 2

It's hard to learn new things

You often find yourself forgetting things you've learned on a course, at a lecture or at work. The same is true when you read a book or article on a subject you want to learn more about. It's as if all that new information immediately seeps out of your head, which is very frustrating – doubly so when you eagerly try to tell others about what you've read or heard, but can't remember half of it.

The memory expert:

REPEAT THE MATERIAL VISUALLY & VERBALLY

● One of the reasons we often forget something is that we never learned it properly in the first place. It was never stored in memory because our minds wandered or we got sloppy. So, when you're working on a task, reading a book or sitting through a lecture, give it your full attention and concentrate. This also means that you shouldn't try to multitask, so no radio or TV when reading!

● When you need to get something new lodged in your brain, it's crucial to repeat the material over and over again. This works particularly well if you vary the repetition and use different senses. For example, if you come across

an interesting article, you'll naturally start by reading it thoroughly. Then you can retell the content aloud to yourself and finally, for example, draw or mime the main points from the article. The more you can encode the new learning visually, verbally and through muscle memory, the better you'll remember it.

● Make your night's sleep a major priority during periods when you have a lot to learn, such as when you're on a course or studying for an exam. While you sleep, your long-term memory repeats all your new knowledge, so memories stick. Conversely, if you sleep too little, you can easily lose your newly acquired knowledge.

SCENARIO 3

Your stuff keeps going missing

"Has anyone seen my keys?" That's often the call when you're about to walk out the door and have to search in every room. You've lost countless gloves, purses and glasses over the years, and your forgetfulness irritates the rest of the family too because you never know where you've put their things after tidying up. It annoys you and the constant searching takes up a lot of time and energy in your daily life.

The memory expert:

FIND A FIXED PLACE AND SAY IT OUT LOUD

● You easily forget where you put things if you didn't focus in the first place. Grab your attention by saying out loud what you're doing: "Now I'll put the keys on the kitchen table."

● Give your things fixed homes, so the keys are always in a bowl near the door and the remote control on the shelf under the coffee table. Once you've repeated the action a few times, it becomes a habit,

and then finding things is an automatic process that saves unnecessary energy.

● Once the keys have been lost, it's important not to panic, as this will interfere with your ability to stay focused. Take a deep breath and think back to when you last had them. The more detail you can employ when recreating your day, the better chance you have of digging up the necessary information from your brain.



Always put your keys in the same place, for instance in a special bowl close to the door, and you'll never lose them again.

TEST YOURSELF

Is your memory poor?

Do you have a sticky brain, or do you waste time and energy because you keep forgetting key information? Answer the questions, add up your points and find out.

1. How often do you look for keys, mobile phones and other missing items?

I almost never do: 1 point

It happens once in a while: 2 points

I search for missing things on a daily basis: 3 points

2. Can you recall a person's name when you greet them for the second time?

Yes, without problems: 1 point

It mostly comes to mind: 2 points

No, I forgot long ago: 3 points

3. Do you have to write a list to get everything from the supermarket?

No, I have it all in my head: 1 point

Only if many items require purchasing: 2 points

Yes, always – even if it's just a few items: 3 points

4. How good are you at staying focused on a task at hand?

I'm really good at it: 1 point

I stay focused most of the time: 2 points

My mind constantly wanders to other things: 3 points

5. How much can you remember of what you hear at a lecture, read in a book, etc?

I remember most of it afterwards: 1 point

I remember quite a lot, but not all the details: 2 points

I quickly forgot most of it: 3 points

6. Who wins most often when you discuss facts with others?

I am almost always right: 1 point

It's about 50-50: 2 points

I almost always lose the discussion because I've remembered incorrectly: 3 points

Find your answer here



Total

6-10 POINTS

● You're generally really effective at remembering and concentrating when you need to learn something new, so it sticks in your mind. That's a skill you should value highly. Keep feeding your brain with new knowledge so that it stays fresh and sharp throughout your life.

11-14 POINTS

● Sometimes your memory is poor and your forgetfulness can take up too much of your time and energy. Writing things down can help you practise memory techniques and make everyday life run more smoothly. That way, your brain can concentrate solely on the task at hand and you avoid becoming stressed.

15-18 POINTS

● Your memory is not in good shape, and you probably often feel frustrated and sad that you keep forgetting things. You might benefit from more exercise and a better night's sleep, but it could also be that your failing memory is a sign that you're too busy and perhaps even stressed. In that case, consider seeking professional help.