



# Memory Aids for Individuals

with Memory Impairments and Dementia

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Common issues associated with memory impairments are recalling recent conversations and events, remembering to do things in the future, and difficulty learning new things.




Compensatory strategies are used to cope with deficiencies or failings, such as memory deficits. This means strategies exist that can be used to compensate for memory loss or memory impairments.

The early stage of dementia can be a great time to use compensatory strategies so an individual can continue to do daily activities on their own more easily and maintain their independence for as long as possible. Compensatory strategies, such as using memory aids, also may be used during the middle and late stages of dementia. However, an individual will likely need more assistance from their caregiver when incorporating aids throughout their day.

The same applies for other memory impairments. An individual with a mild memory impairment will be more likely to use memory aids and strategies independently. Individuals with more severe memory deficits likely will require more assistance and reminders for using memory aids to help them complete activities of daily living.

The following are compensatory strategies and memory aid suggestions that can help individuals with memory impairments maintain their independence and assist them with completing everyday tasks.

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## Memory Aids for Individuals with Cognitive Impairment



### CALENDAR

- ❑ Put a calendar or notice board in a spot where individuals frequently can see it. When posted on a place like the refrigerator, it will be easy to access and serve as a visual reminder of their schedule.
- ❑ Use a digital calendar clock to remind the individual of the date, day, and time of the day.
- ❑ The Digital Calendar Alarm Day Clock with Non-Abbreviated Day and Month Alarm Clock is great for individuals with decreased orientation to day/time. This clock states the time of day and spells out the month, plus it has the time/day in large print. It also has an alarm function that allows for three daily alarms, which can be useful for meal or medication reminders.



### DRY-ERASE WEEKLY REFRIGERATOR PLANNER

- ❑ This can also be used to jot down any appointments or upcoming events. Using a white board is helpful for noting things like activities or tasks and wiping them off as they are completed.



### JOURNAL / DIARY

- ❑ Use a notebook or weekly view diary to write down things that need to be remembered, such as a to-do list. Keep the diary somewhere that is easily seen.
- ❑ A journal can be used to write down experiences or thoughts that can be returned to or shared with others. Adding pictures can help an individual remember their experiences. This could also provide a place for saving receipts or event tickets.



### STICKY NOTES

- ❑ Use sticky notes anywhere in the home to be reminded about something important. For example, placing a sticky note on an item and writing a reminder to return it by a specific day. In situations like this, be sure to also place the item in a spot where it is easily noticed.



### MEDICATION REMINDER BOX

- ❑ This is a medicine box that has compartments for day and time of day to take medications. It is an easy way to be reminded when to take which medication. If the individual needs help organizing their medication or finding the right medication box, ask their pharmacist for assistance.



## MEMORY BOOKS

- ❑ For individuals with more severe cognitive impairments, using a memory book is a tool to help trigger memories and make conversation. The book could have their name on the front and include pictures of them, their family, friends, pets, and past experiences.



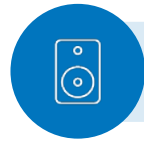
## LOCATOR DEVICE

- ❑ Items like the Tile Pro are bluetooth trackers that can be used to locate items that are easily misplaced, such as keys, bags, phone, wallet, etc. It tracks anything that the user attaches it to. The Tile Pro can track a phone by double pressing the button on the locator device to make a phone ring, even if the phone is on silent mode.



## VOICE RECORDER

- ❑ Voice recorders are a great tool for important reminders. Record the list of items needed at the store, if keeping track of a list is difficult.
- ❑ Voice recorders can be used to record memories also.



## SMART DEVICES

- ❑ Devices like Amazon Echo and Google Home can be used as a memory aid. These devices are voice activated and answer questions an individual has or can be used to notify a person about important reminders. You can also tell the device to set a recurring alarm or start a timer.



## ALARM CLOCK

- ❑ Using an alarm clock or timer is useful for reminding someone when they need to leave for an appointment or take food out of the oven. The individuals can write down why they set the timer on a sticky note, if needed.



## AMPLIFIED PHOTO PHONE

- ❑ This amplified photo phone is great for individuals with difficulty using regular phones or cell phones. It has nine large programmable photo memory buttons that the user simply presses to dial that person. The phone also has an option to improve the sound quality as well as increase the ringer volume and pitch.



## SMART PHONES

- ❑ Smartphones have many beneficial features that can be used to help aid memory and complete daily tasks more easily.
  - Pay attention to the display screen to have a reminder about the day, date, and time.
  - Special appointment reminders are typically sent to a person by email or by text. You can request to have appointment reminders sent to you by text, email, or phone call when you are scheduling an appointment with a doctor.
  - Take advantage of assistive apps on smartphones. Most phones now include reminders, alarms, in-phone calendars, GPS, and built-in notepads. Be sure to arrange the apps in a way that is easy to navigate for the user. Put the most important apps on the first screen so they are easy to find.
  - Use the reminders feature to set an alarm for things you need to remember. This can be set to occur at the same time every day or every week, if needed.
  - Most smartphones have a voice recorder. You can use this to record voice memos for things you want to remember.
  - Use the camera feature to take pictures of things you want to remember instead of writing them down.

## ADDITIONAL HELPFUL APPS INCLUDE:

### **In Case of Emergency**

This app creates a notification that can be visible on a lock screen. The notification contains necessary information about you or your contacts in case of an emergency.

### **Where Am I.**

This app assists with navigating and instantly pinpoints your location. It can approximate an exact address and allows you to share your location with someone else with the tap of a button. It also allows the user to search local attractions and businesses in the area.

### **It's Done!**

The app provides a checklist for life's everyday critical tasks such as feeding pets, locking doors, and taking medication. This app is ideal for those who suffer from short-term memory loss.

### **Medisafe Pill Reminder**

This app is one of the top medical apps that offers personalized reminders for each day, important drug interaction warnings, missed medication alerts, and refill reminders. In addition, there is a family scheduling tool that allows a caregiver to get notifications.

### **Mango Health**

This medication management app also allows a person to create a schedule of healthy habits and provides helpful reminders to improve consistency with the plan. Healthy reminders could include staying hydrated, taking medications on time, and remembering to check vital signs, like blood pressure.

### **MindMate**

The award-winning MindMate app helps transform and maintain health and wellness through daily workouts and mental activities. It provides entertainment through interactive games that are fun while providing learning materials for current events. It can be used to reduce the risk of memory loss and cognitive decline, and it also is used to support those who are already living with such conditions.



## Memory Strategies

Along with using memory aids previously mentioned, incorporating additional memory strategies can help individuals completing daily activities and tasks as well as orienting themselves.

### MEMORY STRATEGIES INCLUDE:

#### SAME LOCATION

- Keep commonly used items in the same location every day.

#### SIMILAR ROUTINE

- Follow a similar routine every day. This could involve completing tasks at the same time each day, such as checking a diary, calendar, and whiteboard when they wake up each morning.

#### CROSS DATE OFF

- Cross the day's date off a calendar before going to bed.

#### WRITE IT DOWN

- Keep a notepad and pen by the phone to write down important information.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

- Keep a list of important contact numbers by the phone. This could include doctors, dentists, therapists, family members, and friends.

#### PHONE CONTACT APP

- Put important phone numbers in the contacts app of a cell phone. The individual may need assistance setting this up in their phone.

#### MAKE A LIST

- Make a list before going shopping or when running errands. Cross things off as items are selected or tasks are complete.
- Add items to a grocery or shopping list as soon as they run out.

#### COLOR CODE

- Color key caps or rings are inexpensive and can be used to color code keys so they are more easily distinguished.

#### VISUAL CUES

- Use visual cues to help an individual navigate their living space. Label storage areas such as closets, kitchen cabinets and medicine cabinets to identify where things are located.

#### POST REMINDERS

- Post permanent, laminated reminders for things you routinely need to be reminded about.



## Making visual cues and external memory aids



### USE PICTURES OR LABELS

- ❑ Pictures and visual cues not only help someone “find” what they are looking for, but also help them participate in meaningful activities more independently.
- ❑ When labeling items, use words the person with a memory impairment commonly uses.
- ❑ Using both the picture and the word is helpful. In the early stage of dementia, the individual will be able to read; but as the disease progresses, reading may become more frustrating and difficult. When this occurs, remove the word from beneath the picture to make it easier for them to make the connection simply by looking at the picture.



### CREATE COLOR CONTRAST

- ❑ Print on high quality contrast paper to make it easier for the individual to see. First, figure out what color is easiest for the individual to read. Lime green is a good color, but everyone’s preference and sight is different.



### FIND THE RIGHT HEIGHT

- ❑ Place visual cues in an obvious place and consistent with their line of sight. Consider whether an individual typically is sitting in a wheelchair or standing.



### DIRECTIONS

- ❑ Give directions to items that are not in their line of sight.
- ❑ Signs can help an individual find their way and navigate the environment. Try using arrows or pictures to help guide the person to an area they frequently go to, such as the bathroom.
- ❑ For example, if the bathroom is down the hallway, put a toilet sign on the wall pointing in the direction of the bathroom and then place another picture of a toilet on the door of the bathroom.



### LINK COLORS TO ROOMS

- ❑ Keep colors in each room one color. If the bathroom has green tile, make labels green to help them make the connection for what room they are in.



### LAMINATING

- ❑ If laminating signs, use matte laminating paper.
- ❑ Laminating paper typically is high gloss, which makes it extremely hard for some individuals to see.

# Sources

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