

Brain Exercises to Maintain and Improve Cognitive Function

Research has shown “brain exercises” can improve and maintain brain health. The following exercises can jumpstart memory, improve concentration and focus, and keep our minds sharp as we continue to age.



1. **Challenge yourself to a jigsaw puzzle.** Looking at all the pieces and figuring out how they fit within the larger picture is a great way to exercise your brain.
2. **Play cards.** A quick card game—like poker, solitaire, gin rummy, hearts, crazy eights, etc.—can lead to greater brain volume in several regions of the brain as well as improve memory and thinking skills.
3. **Boost your vocabulary.** Research shows many regions of the brain are involved in vocabulary tasks, particularly in areas that are important for visual and auditory processing. Write down unfamiliar words and look up the definitions. Challenge yourself and use these words in your conversations!
4. **Get up and dance.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that learning new dance moves can increase your brain's processing speed and memory. Grab a partner or a group of friends and try out a ballroom, hip hop, jazz, salsa, or other dance class!
5. **Engage all your senses.** Strengthen your brain by doing activities that simultaneously engage all five senses, such as baking a batch of cookies or visiting a new restaurant. Focus on smelling, touching, tasting, seeing, and hearing all at the same time.
6. **Challenge yourself to learn a new skill.** Learning a new skill may help strengthen the connections in your brain and can help improve memory function in older adults.
7. **Teach that new skill to someone else.** Teaching a skill to someone else helps expand your learning by requiring you to explain the concept and correct any mistakes you make.
8. **Listen to or play music.** Cranking up your favorite tunes can help boost creative thinking and brain power. Your brain is also capable of learning new skills at any point in your life, so you're never too old to pick up a new instrument and play your own tunes!
9. **Take a new route while walking, driving, cycling, jogging, etc.** Your brain can benefit when you make simple changes and try new ways to do routine things.
10. **Devote a few minutes each day to meditating or practicing mindfulness.** Doing so may help fine-tune your memory and increase your brain's ability to process information.
11. **Learn a new language.** Bilingualism can contribute to better memory, improved visual-spatial skills, and higher levels of creativity. Being fluent in more than one language may also help you switch more easily between tasks and delay the onset of age-related mental decline.
12. **Take up tai chi.** Regular practice of tai chi can help reduce stress, enhance sleep quality, and improve memory. One study also found long-term tai chi practice could induce structural changes in the brain, resulting increased in brain volume.
13. **Focus on the details.** The next time you interact with someone, note four things about them (color of pants, glasses, hair color, smile, color of eyes, etc.) and commit them to memory. At the end of the day, write down what you remember about those four details.

Source: Healthline ([healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com))