



Activities to help improve memory skills

VISUAL MEMORY

Visual memory skills are vital to developing literacy. Learners need to be able to recall what has been presented visually, such as the appropriate letters patterns to match sounds in order to be able to spell, and to recognise letters in combination in order to be able to read. Careful observation of pictures/ photos/ diagrams can support understanding, especially in learners who might struggle with reading. The following activities can help build visual memory skills.

1. What's Missing/ Kim's Game

There is a PowerPoint version of this on the TES website but it can be done with a tray with some random items on it. Begin with a low number of items. Let the learner see the items for a given length of time e.g. 1 minute. Cover and ask the learner to remember as many as they can.

Gradually make this more difficult by increasing the number of items, removing an item and asking them to say what's missing and/ or reducing the time allowed to look.

A variation is 'What moved?', a spot the difference type activity in which learners look at an arrangement of items on a desk, windowsill, etc. and after turning their backs for a moment, look again and say which item has been moved to a different position.

2. Spot the Difference

Spot the Difference activities require holding a visual in the memory for a short time in order to compare it with another.

3. Matching pairs visual memory games

There are lots of these available commercially. Ravensburger Memory Games are inexpensive and durable and come in several themed variations but there are also printables online. Orchard Games make versions which help develop other literacy skills e.g. Slug in a Jug is a matching game which also supports rhyming skills.

4. Snap

Simple Snap games require holding pictures in the short term memory and improving recognition/ reaction times. Variations are available which also help develop other skills required for literacy e.g. Syllable Snap and Word Snap from the Brainbox Series from Green Board Game Company. This company makes other Brainbox games which can help develop both visual and auditory memory if the text on the picture is read to the learner.

5. Copying actions

These activities can be part of drama, dance, PE or playtime games and simply require observing and copying actions from teachers or peers. Learning sequences of increasing length/ complexity can develop these skills further.

6. Barrier games

An adult or peer creates a pattern, picture, model or sequence made out of coloured items such as pencils, blocks, picture tiles or pieces of fabric which the learner looks at for a minute or two. The model is covered or a cardboard barrier put up between the two participants and the learner has to recreate the pattern from memory.

Printable variations are available in texts such as *Visual Memory Skills* by Mark Hill and Katy Hill.

7. Observe and Question

The *Look! Listen! Think! Series* by Jean Edwards contains photo copiable examples of pictures and questions, or make your own quiz using pictures from books/ stills from films. Another variation is to have a member of staff walk into the room and talk to the teacher for a couple of minutes and once they've gone, quiz the class on what the staff member was wearing/ carrying.

AUDITORY MEMORY

Auditory memory ability is vital for developing literacy. We use auditory memory to listen, process, store and recall things we hear. Aside from the obvious requirement to be able to follow verbal instructions and remember information given verbally, the system of phonics relies on auditory memory - learners need to be able to identify/ hold/ process sounds in order to be able to select the appropriate written symbol to represent it on paper. Often learners with specific literacy difficulties may have weaker auditory memory and will benefit from activities which target the building of those skills. The following activities can help to develop auditory memory skills.

1. Verbal treasure hunt

Give a verbal list of items to be collected. Start with three close by and increase complexity/ demand over time by asking for items which are further away (so the learner has to hold the information for longer) and more items (so the learner has to process more information at once.)

2. Chaining/ Listing Games

'I went to the shops and I bought...' and 'I see an Island and on the island is...' type games encourage close listening and using cues and clues to remember a list. A similar activity involves expanding sentences or making up stories, in which learners repeat and add to a sentence given by the previous player, or repeat a story made up by previous players and add another element to it.

3. Following Instructions

Games like Simon Says, Pirate Ship or concentration activities from *Look! Listen! Think!* By Jean Edwards can help to improve the amount and complexity of verbal information a learner can

process. Students can also practise by taking messages to other members of staff, telling a classmate what they need to do or collecting items for an activity.

4. Copying a musical sequence or clapping pattern.

Awareness of music, rhythm and rhyme can be a big help in developing literacy. Not only do students have to listen carefully in the initial stage of learning a piece of music or a sound pattern, but they must store the sequence and then replicate it in a similar way to storing and replicating sounds in words in order to record them in writing. Understanding patterns in music can help with identifying rhyming words and sound patterns.

5. Learning song lyrics/ animal noises/ bird calls

These activities all require careful listening, holding and processing of sound.

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