



## Five Simple Steps to Keep Your Mind Sharp

The old saying, "use it or lose it," not only applies to our physical health, but mental health as well. Just as our bodies benefit from a variety of physical activity, our minds too benefit from engaging in various brain exercises. While some memory loss is a normal part of the aging process, engaging in mentally stimulating activities can protect against mild cognitive impairment.



A recent study by the [Mayo Clinic](#) found that older adults with normal cognition who engaged in mentally stimulating activities ranging from computer games to crafts and social activities had a decreased risk of developing mild cognitive impairment later in life. The study also found that participants who engaged in mentally stimulating activities at least one or two times per week had less cognitive decline than those who only engaged in the same activities a couple times a month. So, what can you do to start engaging your mind? Here are five simple steps to keep your mind sharp.

### Take Up a Creative Hobby

Craft hobbies have the ability to focus the brain similarly to meditation. Did you know that the average American spends approximately 10 hours a day staring at screens? Break away from the screen and try a brain-boosting creative hobby. Here are a few to consider: watercolor, pottery, dancing, geocaching, gardening, jewelry design, woodworking, cooking, baking, knitting, needlepoint, building model sets, or playing a musical instrument.

### Vary Your Routine

We all are creature of habits. Keep your brain guessing by varying your day-to-day routine. Brush your teeth using the opposite hand. Take a different route to the post office. Reverse the order in which you shop at the grocery store. Try preparing a meal by using only your non-dominant hand. Change up where you sit to enjoy your morning coffee and newspaper. Varying your routine keeps your mind focused and guessing, instead of remaining on autopilot.

### Engage All of Your Senses

Have you ever caught a whiff of a familiar perfume or heard a song on the radio that instantly transferred you back in time? There is a link between our senses and memory. The more senses you use to learn something or engage in an activity, the more your brain will be involved in retaining that information. Challenge all your

senses as you go about your day. Try activities that simultaneously engage all your senses, such as gardening, traveling, or shopping at a farmer's market.

### **Keep Learning**

It's never too late to learn something new, despite the old saying, "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." Consider your hobbies and sign up for classes or lectures that relate to your favorite activities. Many organizations offer free or low-cost educational seminars, so take advantage of what's going on in your community.

### **Start a Journal**

Regularly writing has mental health benefits. Writing allows us to process and retain information, keeps creativity juices flowing, and has meditative benefits. You don't have to write every day for long periods of time to reap the benefits from journaling. Set aside 15-20 minutes a few times a week and begin by writing about anything that's on your mind. Focus on what you are thinking and feeling and begin to record your thoughts. In doing so, you will be working both the logical and creative sides of your brain.

Did you know that Visiting Angels offers a special [Social Care Program](#) that teaches seniors how to use technology? Learn something new with us and keep your mind sharp. Our team would be honored to work with you and to keep you connected with family and friends using technology. [Give us a call](#) to set up a consultation so that we can learn more about your situation.

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