



RETAINING

COGNITIVE SKILLS

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Retaining cognitive skills

People perform hundreds of cognitive tasks every day without being aware of the effort involved or the attention that each requires. Think of the vocabulary needed to give meaning to situations, noticing colours, remembering names and even just looking at a clock to tell the time. Different areas of the brain are constantly active, depending on the task being performed or the focus that it demands. We have many distinct types of cognitive abilities that we use to give meaning and provide enrichment in our lives.

Mental abilities change throughout life, as a result of brain maturation and the aging of cells and their complex interconnections. People move more slowly with age and hearing and vision become less acute.

An enormous amount of research has been conducted on the aging brain and the results have been overwhelmingly positive. It has been suggested that engaging in a number of activities can reduce cognitive decline and allow people to retain mental acuity. These activities include socializing, taking up new hobbies, physical activity, a healthy diet, meditation – basically engaging in the world in an active and significant way.

Included in these activities is cognitive stimulation. According to some researchers, leisure activities that demand memory and reasoning allow older adults to maintain cognitive skills, attention and focus far longer than those adults who do not challenge their mental abilities. Exercising neural pathways ensures that they remain active and enhances the speed at which they function.

Following comprehensive research, Boston Language School has developed a programme of activities to challenge participants in an environment that is entertaining and enriching. This programme includes Reading for Results, to stimulate reading fluency and enhance memory abilities, and numerous games including Crossword Puzzles, Find the Words, Improve Vocabulary, Improve Vocabulary in Different Contexts and Following Instructions and Vocabulary. Each of these have been developed to stimulate mental functioning and provide leisure activities that inspire and are fun to complete.



Reading for Results

Reading rate is the number of words a person can read accurately in a minute. It is important for people to be able to read correctly and at a consistent rate as this improves their reading fluency. If people are unable to read fluently, their engagement with the world will be compromised.

The Reading for Results course has been designed to improve people's reading skills and fluency. There are 80 reading extracts, each having been written in an accessible and academic style to give people practice in reading. The extracts are followed by questions to test recall of facts that have been read. This is to encourage focused reading for meaning and enhance memory skills.

The reading extracts differ in length: Level 1 has 300 word extracts; Level 2 has 400 word extracts; Level 3 has 500 word extracts and Level 4 has 600 word extracts.

Participants are able to monitor their own reading rate as the reading of the extract will be timed. Following this, they will be required to answer the questions from memory without access to the extract. This will allow participants to assess themselves in terms of reading rate and memory skills.

There are numerous benefits to this course including:

- Improving memory skills
- Progressing at an individual pace
- Monitoring personal progress
- Improving comprehension and understanding of extracts
- Assessing different styles and registers



Language Games

Most of the games have three levels: Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3, each level being more challenging than the previous one. Each level consists of 10 exercises that are designed to inspire participants to have fun and improve their cognitive functioning.

Crossword Puzzles:

Not only do crossword puzzles improve logic and reasoning, but they boost executive brain functioning in terms of recollection of words and improving vocabulary. Finding a specific six letter word can be frustrating but reaching for a dictionary for assistance is beneficial as this also enhances reading and deciphering abilities. There is a sense of satisfaction when a crossword puzzle is completed which leads to improved self-confidence and being ready to begin the next one!



Drag and Drop:

Drag and drop exercises are a fun way to improve vocabulary and grammar skills. Words or groups of words have to fit into sentences or phrases in such a way that they are correct within specific semantic contexts but also in terms of grammatical structures. This enhances memory and vocabulary skills but choosing the correct word or words to drag and drop also stimulates sorting, ordering and organising pre-listed items.





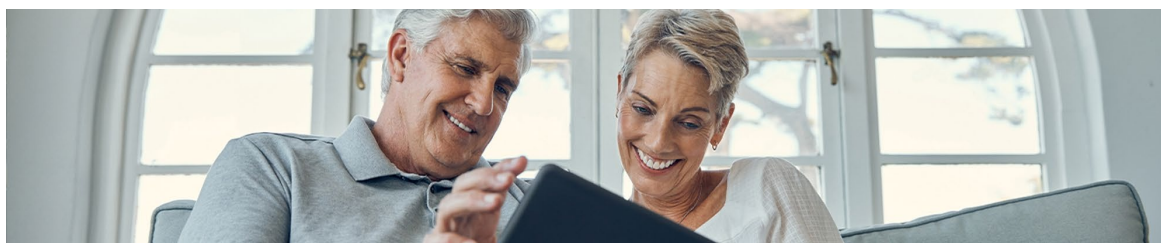
Word Recognition:

Trying to find words within a maze of letters improves word recognition which is a vital skill in reading fluency. These games also improve memory recall and vocabulary.



Complete the Sentences:

These exercises challenge participants in that they need to find the correct words that fit into sentences in terms of semantic contexts but also correct grammatical structures. These are fun activities that stimulate sorting, ordering and organising pre-listed items, thus improving memory and vocabulary.



Following Instructions and Vocabulary:

These exercises are challenging in that they assess vocabulary but also the participant's ability to remember instructions and follow them. This involves cognitive skills of sorting, ordering and organising listed items.



Definitions and Vocabulary:

These word cards give participants the meanings of challenging words and the answers to general knowledge questions, and then there are quizzes to test recall. These games increase general knowledge and improve vocabulary and memory skills.

Timetable

The timetable is merely a suggestion that includes all the reading extracts, speaking and reading activities and the games. Participants can accelerate or decelerate their progress through the platform.

Week	Reading extracts	Games
Week 1	Level 1: Reading extracts 1-4	Drag and drop Level 1: 1-5
Week 2	Level 1: Reading extracts 5-8	Drag and drop Level 1: 6-10
Week 3	Level 1: Reading extracts 9-12	Crossword puzzle Level 1: 1-5
Week 4	Level 1: Reading extracts 13-16	Crossword puzzle Level 1: 6-10
Week 5	Level 1: Reading extracts 17-20	Word recognition Level 1: 1-5
Week 6	Level 1: Reading extracts 21-24	Word recognition Level 1: 6-10
Week 7	Level 1: Reading extracts 25 Level 2: Reading extracts 1-3	Complete the sentences Level 1: 1-5
Week 8	Level 2: Reading extracts 4-7	Complete the sentences Level 1: 6-10
Week 9	Level 2: Reading extracts 8-11	Instructions and Vocab Level 1: 1-5
Week 10	Level 2: Reading extracts 12-15	Instructions and Vocab Level 1: 6-10
Week 11	Level 2: Reading extracts 16-19	Drag and drop Level 2: 1-5
Week 12	Level 2: Reading extracts 20-23	Drag and drop Level 2: 6-10
Week 13	Level 2: Reading extracts 24-25	Word recognition Level 2: 1-5
Week 14	Level 3: Reading extracts 1-2	Word recognition Level 2: 6-10
Week 15	Level 3: Reading extracts 3-4	Complete the sentences Level 2: 1-5
Week 16	Level 3: Reading extracts 5-6	Complete the sentences Level 2: 6-10
Week 17	Level 3: Reading extracts 7-8	Instructions and Vocab Level 2: 1-5
Week 18	Level 3: Reading extracts 9-10	Instructions and Vocab Level 2: 6-10
Week 19	Level 3: Reading extracts 11-12	Drag and drop Level 3: 1-5
Week 20	Level 3: Reading extracts 13-14	Drag and drop Level 3: 6-10
Week 21	Level 3: Reading extract 15-16	Crossword puzzle Level 3: 1-5
Week 22	Level 3: Reading extracts 17-18	Crossword puzzle Level 3: 6-10
Week 23	Level 3: Reading extracts 19-20	Word recognition Level 3: 1-5
Week 24	Level 4: Reading extracts 1-2	Word recognition Level 3: 6-10
Week 25	Level 4: Reading extracts 3-4	Complete the sentences Level 3: 1-5
Week 26	Level 4: Reading extracts 5-6	Complete the sentences Level 3: 6-10
Week 27	Level 4: Reading extracts 7-8	Instructions and Vocab Level 3: 1-5
Week 28	Level 4: Reading extracts 9-10	Instructions and Vocab Level 3: 6-10
Week 29	Read aloud 1-4	Definitions and Vocabulary Level 3: 1-2
Week 30	Speak solo 1-4	Definitions and Vocabulary Level 3: 3-4
Week 31	Read aloud 5-7	Definitions and Vocabulary Level 3: 5-7
Week 32	Speak solo 5-7	Definitions and Vocabulary Level 3: 8-10

Reporting

Participants can see their results immediately after completion of each game. These results are recorded and participants can then also receive a report with a summary of results of each section of the programme.

Benefits of participating in the programme:

- Enhanced memory
- Improved vocabulary
- Improved sorting, ordering and organising information
- Increased reading speed and fluency
- Improved logic and reasoning
- Improved general knowledge
- Progress at individual pace

Duration

There are 150 games, 14 speaking and reading aloud activities and 80 reading extracts for participants to complete. If participants proceed at the pace of the suggested timetable the programme should take approximately 8 months to complete.

