

Memory

Working Memory & Forgetfulness

Working memory is your brain's "workbench", the space where you hold and use information in real time. It helps you learn, solve problems and keep track of what you're doing. It's different from short-term memory because it involves holding information and working with it (like remembering a number long enough to write it down or doing mental maths).

How ADHD Affects Working Memory

Many people with ADHD struggle with working memory. It's not a personal flaw — it's a brain-based challenge that simply means you may need different tools or approaches. You can still achieve the same goals; you just get there using strategies that work for your brain. Common signs include:

- Losing track of the question when reading options
- Struggling with multi-step instructions
- Forgetting details in stories or conversations
- Holding a number in mind long enough to dial it
- Mental maths feeling hard
- Needing to write words down to spell them
- Forgetting routine procedures

ADHD & Forgetfulness

Forgetfulness is also common and can affect work, home life and relationships. Sometimes it's linked to weak working memory; sometimes it's distraction – the information never fully “lands” because your attention has already moved on. Poor sleep, nutrition or stress can make this worse. If you notice sudden or significant memory changes, check in with your GP. Examples include:

- Missing appointments
- Misplacing keys, phone, wallet
- Leaving appliances on
- Forgetting medication
- Missing deadlines
- Forgetting to lock doors

This isn't carelessness – it's part of how an ADHD brain works.

Strategies for Working Memory & Forgetfulness

Working memory challenges and forgetfulness respond well to the same tools. These strategies help reduce overwhelm and keep information where you need it.

- External Supports
- Use calendars (digital or physical)
- Set alarms and reminders
- Use to-do list or organisation apps
- Keep written instructions for repeat tasks
- Use visual cues like sticky notes



Memory Techniques

- Visualise the end goal and list the steps to get there
- Repeat information back (to yourself or others)
- Turn information into a tune or rhythm
- Chunk big bits of information into smaller parts
- Use acronyms to remember phrases
- Create quirky, memorable associations

Environmental Systems

- Put tomorrow's essentials by the door
- Create designated "homes" for keys, documents, medication, etc.
- Use AirTags or trackers for important items

Final thoughts

Many people with ADHD think they have "bad memory" when the real issue is attention, the info didn't get encoded in the first place. Pairing these strategies with distraction-management tools sets you up for success.

Be patient with yourself. Skills build over time, and every small shift makes life run more smoothly.