

In A Nutshell
April 2019

Cognition (it's not "where did I leave my keys")

I did a "In A Nutshell" on cognition in May of 2013. And there was another article on "Brain Fog" in the March 2017 issue. Time for an update. Cognition and brain fog are different.

Cognition refers to a range of high-level brain functions including the ability to learn and remember information, organize, plan and problem-solve, focus, maintain and shift attention, understand and use language, accurately perceive the environment, and perform calculations.

Brain fog is not a medically recognized term but is a commonly used phrase that sums up feelings of confusion, forgetfulness, and lack of focus and mental clarity.

More than half of all people with MS will develop problems with cognition. Cognitive dysfunction is one of the major causes of early departure from the workforce.

The first signs of cognitive dysfunction

- Difficulty finding the right words
- Difficulty remembering what to do on the job or during daily routines at home
- Difficulty making decisions or showing poor judgment
- Difficulty keeping up with tasks or conversations
- Difficulty with job performance, including informal or formal disciplinary action
- Difficulty with school performance, including falling grades and social challenges

Cognitive rehabilitation includes a combination of restorative and compensatory activities.

Restorative activities can include learning and memory exercises:

- **Combine modes of learning:** You will be more likely to remember something if you "see it, say it, hear it, write it, do it." It's okay to give yourself extra time.
- **Repeat & verify:** Repeat what you hear and verify that it is correct to improve your attention and memory.

- **Spaced rehearsal:** Repeat and practice information at intervals spread out over time to improve your ability to store information.
- **Build associations:** Use memory aids! For example, to remember the name of someone you just met, associate her/his name with a friend or family member of the same name, or with a place, color or event that sounds like the new name.

Compensatory activities that help make up for functions that are no longer working well may include:

- **Consolidate and centralize!** Designate one place in your home as the “Grand Central” information center. Include your master calendar, mail, bills, phone messages, to-do lists, keys, wallet, shopping lists and more.
- **Plan:** Post a calendar large enough to display everyone's appointments, activities and social engagements, and reminders! Keep pens or markers hanging right beside it. Or use a computer program set up with reminders for routine tasks (synchronize it with your mobile devices so you have your appointments with you while on the go).
- **Record:** Dictate your to-do list, notes or other things to remember on a digital voice recorder (available on many phones).
- **Remind:** Use checklists, the alarm on your watch or phone, your kitchen timer, and more.
- **Eliminate or remove yourself from distractions.** Turn off the TV, music and whatever else is “on” when speaking with someone in person or on the phone. Background visual and noise distractions can make learning or remembering more difficult. If you can't eliminate the distraction (for example, people talking at a party) then ask, “Can we talk in a quieter place?”
- **Take a break.** If you are having difficulty concentrating, take a breath and refresh.
- **Do one thing at a time.** Avoid switching back and forth from one topic or task to another. Finish or find an appropriate stopping place in what you're working on before you switch to something else.

Just For Fun

Apps To Improve Cognition Skills:

[What's the Difference](#) – Look and analyze what is the difference is between 2 objects.

[Thinking Time Pro](#) – Thinking Time trains memory, attention, reasoning and key cognitive skills through scientific games.

[Fit Brains Trainer](#) – Train your brain with over 360 brain games designed to target memory, processing speed, concentration, problem solving, and visual -spatial skills.

[Constant Therapy](#) – The app can be used to improve speech, language, cognition, memory, reading, attention and comprehension skills with 65 categories of tasks, over 60,000 stimuli, and 10 difficulty levels.

[Lumosity](#) – Challenge your Memory, Attention, and more. Used by over 70 million people worldwide, Lumosity combines 25+ cognitive games into a daily training program that challenges your brain. Games adapt to your unique performances — helping you stay challenged in a wide variety of cognitive tasks.

[CogniFit](#) – Improve cognitive abilities, such as memory and concentration, with sleek, fun and addictive games designed by neuroscientists.

[Eidetic](#) – Eidetic uses a technique called spaced repetition to help you memorize anything from important phone numbers to interesting words or facts.

<https://www.nationalmssociety.org/Symptoms-Diagnosis/MS-Symptoms/Cognitive-Changes>

<https://www.nationalmssociety.org/About-the-Society/News/Managing-Cognitive-Impairment-in-People-with-MS>

<https://www.neurorehabdirectory.com/top-7-stroke-apps-cognitive-deficits/>