

Train your brain

Your brain has everything to do with who you are and what you do. It's important to challenge your mind to keep it fit and healthy.

How the brain works^{1,2}

The brain is your body's control center and it controls all human activity. It is made up of several different parts that all work together.

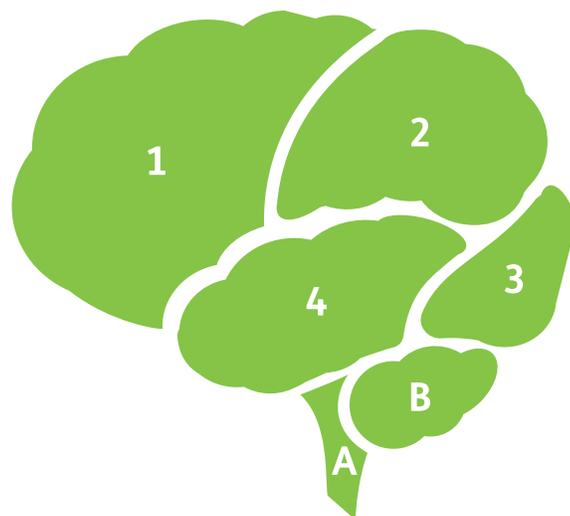
Your brain has four lobes, which make up the cerebrum:

1. The **frontal lobe** is responsible for thinking, planning, problem solving, reasoning and motor skills.
2. The **parietal lobe** controls sensory information like taste, touch and pain.
3. The **occipital lobe** receives and interprets information from the retinas.
4. The **temporal lobe** helps with memory and understanding sounds; it contains the hippocampus.

Your brain also includes your:

- A. **Brain stem**, which controls vital functions like heart rate, breathing and blood pressure.
- B. **Cerebellum**, which helps coordinate balance and posture, as well as all voluntary movements.

The brain is connected to the rest of the body by a complicated system of nerves. Nerve cells, also called neurons, communicate with one another to send signals all over the body. Neurons communicate with one another via synapses; these allow each brain cell to connect to tens of thousands of other brain cells.



The aging brain: What's normal and what's not?

Normal age-related changes ³	Abnormal age-related changes ⁴
Small declines in memory	Being unable to remember recent events
Slower processing speed	Forgetting how to use common objects or words
Increased reaction time	Getting lost in familiar locations
Decrease in speed of learning	Being unable to follow directions
Difficulty doing more than one task at a time	Neglecting safety, hygiene and nutrition
Difficulty ignoring distractions	Decline in the ability to socialize

Note: If you or someone you love notice any signs or symptoms of dementia, it's important to talk to your doctor right away.

Tips to help keep your brain healthy

There are many things you can do to keep your brain working its best.

Train your brain^{5,6}

Keeping your mind fit may have short- and long-term benefits for your brain, helping reduce your risk of dementia.

Try these activities to challenge your mind:

- Do a variety of puzzles to train different parts of your brain.
- Learn new things and take on new challenges and projects.
- Break out of your routine and do things differently than you normally do.

Tip: You should find your brain training activities challenging, but not impossible.

Socialize to stay connected⁵

Being social may delay the onset of dementia and lower your risk of depression.

Consider these ideas for staying connected:

- Volunteer for a good cause. Think about how your interests and skills could help others.
- Join a club or take a class. Check out special interest clubs, as well as fitness and education classes.
- Keep in touch with friends. Make weekly dates with friends and call or email long-distance friends regularly.

Eat brain-friendly foods⁷

Following the MIND diet may lower your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. It is a mix of two diets: the DASH diet and the Mediterranean diet.

The MIND diet focuses on 10 brain-healthy food groups:

- Leafy green veggies
- Other vegetables
- Nuts
- Berries
- Beans
- Whole grains
- Fish
- Poultry
- Olive oil
- Wine

The MIND diet recommends avoiding or limiting:

- Red meat
- Cheese
- Butter and stick margarine
- Pastries and sweets
- Fried or fast food

continued –

Tips to help keep your brain healthy (continued)

There are many things you can do to keep your brain working its best.

Get moving for brain power

Research shows that being more active is linked to a lower risk of Alzheimer's disease and a slower rate of cognitive decline.⁸

This may be because physical activity helps promote cognitive resilience, which is the ability to function despite brain damage from Alzheimer's disease.⁹

Try to get 30 minutes of exercise per day, most days of the week.¹⁰

Talk to your healthcare provider for specific recommendations.

Get plenty of sleep¹¹

Your brain needs regular, high-quality sleep to function at its best. Not getting enough sleep can leave you feeling irritable and unenergized, but it can also make it harder to think clearly, solve problems and store and recall memories. Deep, slow-wave sleep helps the brain store and retain new facts and information.

How much is enough? Try to get about eight hours of sleep each night. A short afternoon nap may help, too.

Note: If you are having trouble sleeping, talk to your healthcare provider.

Train your brain—Let's practice

These three common sayings have been rewritten using really big words. Can you figure out the original saying?

It is not advantageous to place the sum total of your barnyard collections into the same wicker receptacle.

Feathered bipeds of a kindred mind in their segregated environment associate with a high degree of amiability.

Deviation from the ordinary or common routine of existence is that which gives zest to man's cycle of existence.

Can you solve this murder mystery?

It's a hot August afternoon. In the living room of an old Victorian mansion, the 7-foot window is open and the curtains are blowing in the breeze from a thunderstorm that just passed by. On the floor lies the unclothed body of Joe, surrounded by puddles of water and broken glass.

How did Joe die?

How many squares can you find in the figure to the right?

Can you solve this sports-themed brain teaser?

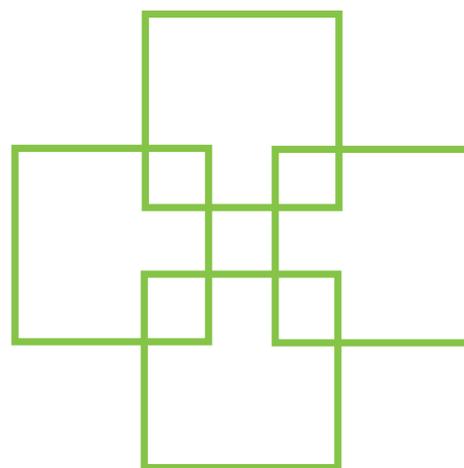
A woman leaves home and makes three left turns, then returns home again. Along the way, she passes two women in masks.

Who were the two women?

Can you do arithmetic to see how much something costs?

Your local grocery store has put your favorite yogurt on sale for 20% off. The yogurt costs \$1.50 before the discount.

How much does the yogurt cost now?



References

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- ¹⁰Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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This is for informational purposes only and does not replace treatment or advice from a healthcare professional. If you have questions, please talk with your doctor. Talk to your doctor before beginning an exercise program or making any changes to your diet.