

Unit 2 Then and now

Synopsis

The video starts by introducing the idea of having a good or a bad memory before going onto a couple of short interviews with people about how good their memories are. We then learn a little about how the brain creates memories and the kind of things that make it easier or more difficult to retain information. The video then gives some tips for improving your memory and finishes with another two short interviews where people talk about how they have managed to improve their memories.

Target Language

Grammar: *used to*, past perfect

Vocabulary: personality types, memory

Language points: talking about remembering things

Procedural Notes

Before you watch

- 1 **In pairs.** Ask the students to discuss together whether they think the statements are true or false. Encourage them to give reasons for their choices.
- 2 **As a class.** Elicit some ideas, but do not confirm or deny their guesses at this stage. Play the video all the way through for the students to check their ideas. Check as a class.

Answer key:

- 1 F (It can be up to five months.)
- 2 T
- 3 F (The video gives lots of suggestions as to how to do this.)

While you watch

- 1 **Individuals.** Ask the students to look at the statements and to consider what parts of speech or kinds of answers might be needed. Play the video to about 2.10 and ask them to complete the sentences using one or two words. They should not need to change the form of the words.

In pairs. Let them check their answers together and monitor to see how much they have understood.

As a class. Check answers.

Answer key:

- 1 phone numbers 2 names 3 vividly
- 4 under stress 5 reliable

- 2 **In pairs.** Ask the students to discuss which of the methods they think might be helpful. This is a subjective task.

As a class. Play the second part of the video again and ask the students to tick which ways are mentioned.

Answer key:

- 1, 3, 4, 6, 7

After you watch

Individuals. Ask the students to read the texts and try to complete them using *used to* + verb, past simple or past perfect. Establish that sometimes more than one form may be possible.

In pairs. Check answers in pairs.

As a class. Go through the answers as a class and clarify any confusion.

Answer key:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 used to learn | 5 had taught |
| 2 had finished | 6 was |
| 3 forgot | 7 didn't speak |
| 4 used to find / found | 8 had forgotten |

Over to you

- 1 **In pairs.** Ask the students to ask and answer the questions together. Encourage them to give examples and reasons.

As a class. Elicit a few examples for the class as a whole.

- 2 **Individuals.** Ask the students to choose one of the personality types and prepare to talk about someone they remember who fits the description.

In pairs. The students tell each other about the person they remember, explaining why they would say they were a *joker*, for example.

Video script

You sometimes hear people say that they have 'the memory of a goldfish'. What they mean is they have a terrible memory, referring to a common belief that goldfish only have a five-second memory. This may be a bit unfair on the goldfish – studies have shown that they can actually recall information for up to five months. But it is true that some of us are better at remembering and memorising information than others.

Woman 1: I'd say I have a pretty good memory. I can memorise friends' phone numbers after hearing them just a couple of times, and I still have vivid memories of things that happened to me when I was very young.

Man 1: I don't know why, but my memory is just really bad. The worst is remembering people's names. One time, I forgot the name of someone I had met one minute before – it was really embarrassing!

Creating a memory is a complex process, with vast amounts of information being processed and stored in the brain. Memory can also be influenced by many factors, such as the emotion we feel and the stimulation to our senses at the time. Most people find that they can recall more vividly very happy, sad or frightening events in their life, or moments that they can associate with their sense of touch, smell or hearing.

Furthermore, actively trying to remember information – for an exam, maybe – is much more difficult if you are under stress at the time. And, to complicate matters even more, memory is just a construct of our brains so, unlike a camera, it is often not 100% reliable. One study found that by asking people to think of an action over and over again – such as smashing a window with their hand – they were more likely to believe they had experienced it in the past, even if it had never actually happened to them.

While it's true that some people have better memories than others, it is possible to increase your ability to recall information. Keeping regular sleep patterns, eating a healthy diet, socialising with other people and exercising are all great ways to improve your memory. You can also exercise your memory by doing activities like crosswords. Or you can try different memory techniques to help you retain information.

Woman 2: I used to have a really good memory, but then I felt like I was forgetting more and more. So, I started doing things to exercise my brain and memory. It sounds boring, but actually just learning to play a musical instrument or solving a puzzle can be really useful. Me, I started knitting. I feel like my memory is getting better, and I have lots of new socks!

Man 2: I used to be bad at memorising anything – especially for tests – but some memory techniques helped me a lot. Here's one I used when I was young to remember the musical notes on a treble clef: 'Every Good Boy Deserves Food': E, G, B, D, F. There – I still remember it after all these years!