

Top Tips for Brain Blips



Forget where you put your keys or why you walked into a room?

Learn simple steps to triumph over these and other common "Brain Blips!"

Dr. Michelle Braun

What is a “Brain Blip?”



A “*Brain Blip*” is a temporary inability to remember information. Most people, including memory champions, experience Brain Blips several times per week, and sometimes multiple times per day. Common Brain Blips include forgetting names, misplacing frequently-used objects, forgetting why you walked into a room, and word-finding difficulties. If Brain Blips get progressively worse and interfere with daily life, evaluation by a healthcare provider is recommended.

However, rest assured that for most of us, Brain Blips are temporary roadblocks that can be surpassed with simple tools based on the science of brain functioning.

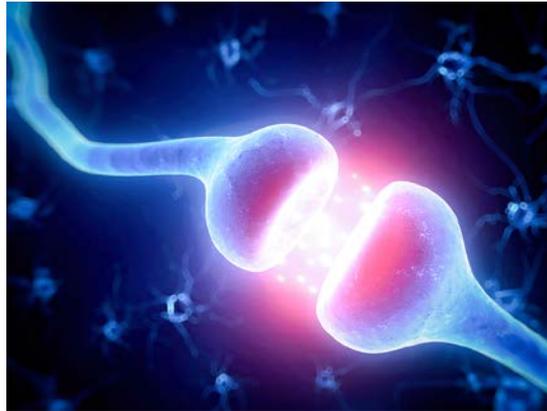
The 3-P's: Pause, Piggyback, Practice



The **3-P's** are science-based strategies that counteract multiple *Brain Blips*. The 3-P's include:

1. **Pause** to ensure you are paying attention to the information you want to remember,
2. **Piggyback (link)** new information to information that is already stored in your brain. This speeds up the process of creating a new memory.
3. **Practice (repeat)** the newly-learned information. This strengthens your neuronal connections and improves your memory of the information.

Forgetting Names



There are few things more frustrating than forgetting the name of an acquaintance, or a person you just met. This often occurs when you do not create a strong, memorable link to remember the name *when you first learn it*.

Top Tips

1. **Pause to pay attention to the person's name. Then repeat it out loud after you are introduced (e.g. "Nice to meet you Joe")**. By saying the new name out loud, you allow the person to correct it if necessary (believe it or not, this step is a common stumbling block!)
2. **Piggyback/link the person's name to another person you already know with that name, or to a famous person with that name**. You are more likely to remember the new name if you link it to a name that is already well stored in your brain. For example, you might picture the face of your cousin "Joe" as you look at the new "Joe" you just met.
3. **Practice/repeat the new name and link you created**. Throughout your conversation with Joe, repeat his name to yourself several times while picturing the face of your cousin Joe.

Misplacing Objects



You are most likely to misplace commonly-used objects such as keys, glasses, and purses/wallets. This occurs because you use the objects in multiple settings, often while engaged in other activities that may distract you from remembering where you put them.

Top Tips

1. **Pause to place the item in its “home space.”** A “home space” is a place where you consistently put common objects. This might include a hook by the door for keys, a table or shelf for your purse/wallet, or a pocket for your glasses. Make sure your “home space” is convenient, so that you are likely to use it.
2. **Piggyback/visually link the object to its surrounding area.** If you are in a location where there is no “home space,” or choose not to use the “home space,” study the visual scene around where you placed the object. What room is it in, and what surface is it on? (e.g. “My keys are in the living room on the table by the door”).
3. **Practice/repeat the location to yourself – *while you picture it* - at least 3 times.**

Forgetting Why You Walked Into a Room



Walking into a room occurs so frequently that the odds are high you will sometimes forget why you did so (as compared to actions you do less frequently).

Top Tips

1. Take a 10-second **“Pause Point”** to verbalize your **“Mission”** out loud before walking into the other room. Your **“Mission”** is what you intend to look for/do, where, and why (e.g. “I’m getting my laptop from the bedroom so I can write an email to Mary”).
2. On the way to the other room, **Piggyback**/link your **“Mission”** to the action you intend to take with it (e.g. imagine yourself writing an email to Mary).
3. **Practice**/repeat your **“Mission”** several times on the way to the other room.
4. If other thoughts come to mind, take note of them, but quickly return your thoughts to your **“Mission.”** When you are en route to take action, it is common to think about other things related to that action (e.g. thinking about writing an email may lead you to wonder, “Did I respond to that email last week from Mike?”). If that happens, simply repeat your Mission, and write down the new information after your Mission is complete.

Word-Finding Difficulties



Word-finding difficulties occur when you cannot think of the word you want to say. The strategies to triumph over this tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon are different than The 3-P's.

Top Tips

- 1. Keep Talking!** Think of alternative words to describe what you want to say. Don't worry if you are not as succinct as you intended. By continuing to talk, you may activate the neuronal pathways in the same geographic neighborhood of the brain where your target word is hiding, which may bring it to mind more quickly than if you paused.
- 2. Substitute a Synonym.** Let's say you want to say the word "sublime," but you cannot think of it in the moment. Try substituting a word that is close to it ("superb"), or a more generic word that still gets the point across ("terrific," "amazing," "wonderful").
- 3. Percolate and link.** Your brain will often automatically search for and find the intended word (often when you least expect it!). If you cannot think of the word after several minutes, look it up. Then link it to similar words or pictures to strengthen your memory of it. For example, you might imagine a picture of submarine next to a lime to recall the word "sublime." Use the target word often in the following days to strengthen your ability to remember it.

Next Steps!



You can triumph over future Brain Blips more quickly and easily by boosting your brain health with scientifically-proven tips. To obtain personalized strategies, take my [Brain Health Quiz](#).

“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.”

Chinese proverb



Dr. Michelle Braun is a Yale- and Harvard-trained board-certified neuropsychologist who is passionate about empowering individuals to boost brain health, reduce the risk of Alzheimer's, and triumph over Brain Blips. You can learn more about her work [here](#).