

A stack of four smooth, dark grey stones is balanced on a beach. The background is a soft-focus view of the ocean and sky at sunset or sunrise, with warm light reflecting on the water. The stones are stacked from largest at the bottom to smallest at the top.

Interpreting: Memory and Recall

How to achieve reliable recall and maximum memory
to excel
in your interpreting practice and performance

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Strategies for Developing Reliable Recall and Maximum Memory

The ability to remember and recall information is important in our lives. Imagine if a surgeon couldn't remember the proper way to tie a knot during the middle of your surgery. Scary isn't it? *As interpreters we know that we need to enhance our memory and concentration on a daily basis.*

Concentration is a key component of memory. You have to be able to concentrate if you wish to recall the information at a later time.

Think of concentration as a finite entity. You only have a limited amount of concentration. *If you expend all your concentration when surfing the internet or watching TV, you'll have less of it for other, more meaningful things.*

So I suggest you enhance your memory and focus with these tips:

Clear your mind. It's challenging to concentrate if you're hungry, thirsty, restless, or tired. Always take care of yourself first. Avoid forcing yourself to work through discomfort. Remove the discomfort so you can concentrate. Eat a snack or take a walk if that helps clear your mind.

- Clear your mind. It's challenging to concentrate if you're hungry, thirsty, restless, or tired. Always take care of yourself first. Avoid forcing yourself to work through discomfort. Remove the discomfort so you can concentrate. Eat a snack or take a walk if that helps clear your mind.
- Space out your memorization sessions. Attempting to memorize complex information in one sitting doesn't work well for most people. It's much more effective to review the information several times spaced out over the course of several days.

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- Remembering what you like and are interested in, is easier. Perhaps you can spend every day for a week memorizing something that is useful for your future interpreting career. For example, if you want to specialise in medical interpreting, why not learn the bones and muscles to start off with? Or if you are interested in legal matters concerning real estate learn more about sales, offers, mortgages, for example, as well as about the related concepts and stock phrases most commonly used. Then organise yourself to practice 2-3 days a week for the next two weeks. Eventually, you'll only have to spend one day per week when you are not working in that field. If you have an assignment on a particular topic, next week, then you will only need to intensify your practice sessions. Don't worry, there isn't a hard and fast rule. The complexity of the information will dictate the schedule.



- Peg items to your memory. Here is an easy way to remember a list of items. It is also called the link method. Even if you feel your memory is horrible, you can easily remember a list of 20+ things with minimal effort.
 - Think of the number one. What does it remind you of? Let's say it reminds you of a tree or a telephone pole. If you're trying to remember a shopping list, the first item might be milk. Picture in your mind a cow that is up in a tree being milked by a farmer. Something outrageous like that is easy to remember.
 - A few suggestions: 2=light switch, since it has two positions, 3=stool (3 legs), 4=car (4 doors, 4 wheels), 5=glove (5 fingers), and so on. Make up your own memory pegs.
 - Adapt pegging to the topics and concepts you are studying and find relationships between them.
- Do shadowing exercises with a twist. *This way useful interpreting techniques as well as vocabulary and stock phrases are recalled more easily.*
- For example, if you have decided to shadow speakers in your B or C language, why don't you listen to the speaker for a minute, then stop the video or recording and try to repeat what the speaker has said improving on the original if necessary?
- Use recordings with background noises, gaps/silences and bad quality audio to finetune your focus and concentration skills.

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- Read short biographies of famous people. Try to repeat their life stories to someone or record yourself and listen to your recording. Choose biographies with many details, to challenge yourself further. *This is also a very useful exercise for our profession, as it builds our knowledge and skills.*
- Learn proverbs and common sayings in your different working languages. Use them as often as you can.
- A twist on the previous exercise to continue building your memory and recall skills would be learning useful texts or speeches. You can begin by memorising 50-word paragraphs during the first week, 100 words, the second week and once you reach 250-300 words, memorise a text every 2 or 3 days. *You will notice that your memory and recall improve drastically.*
- Another variation on the two previous exercises would be learning statements and quotes by famous people in your different working languages. Start with easy ones like “to be or not to be...”, “I think, therefore I am”; “keep calm and carry on”, “I came, I saw, I conquered”, etc
- Learn mindfulness. *Mindfulness is excellent for clearing the mind and teaching you how to concentrate.* Mindfulness is all about maintaining your focus on a single thought or point. You can also focus fully on what you are doing at one particular time, avoiding distractions.



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- **Begin by seeing how long you can sit and focus entirely on your breath. It probably won't be very long at first. But when your mind wanders, let the thoughts flow and pass by you. Simply bring your mind back to your breath.**
 - **Mindfulness practice can be a great way to take a break. After working for an hour, take a 10-minute mindfulness break. Your mind will stay focused and relaxed. You'll find that you can work longer, too.**
 - **Just before a practice or study session, try to spell a long word or say a sentence backwards correctly. Identify the level of concentration required and try to always reach that state when you work.**

Finally, working on your memory is a great way to keep your brain young and active. *Many studies have shown that boosting your memory helps to prevent many degenerative brain diseases.* So please remind yourself of this when you are putting these tips into practice!

Why don't you join me for an exciting adventure and learn Simultaneous Interpreting from English into Spanish?

Get in touch with me at interpretersvoice2020@gmail.com or DM on Instagram [@the_interpreter_s_voice](https://www.instagram.com/the_interpreter_s_voice)



Clementina Persaud is a conference interpreter and interpreter trainer. She has worked for both public and private institutions since 1989. Clementina has experience in teaching English as a foreign language (Linguarama TEFL Diploma), and is also a graduate in Translation and Interpreting (Granada University). As language and interpreting are her passion, she studied a Master Degree in Advanced Studies in Interpreter Training (Geneva University) as well as a Terminology Master (IULA/UPF -Pompeu Fabra University), to further her knowledge in these two fields. Clementina finally completed a Ph.D. in Modern Languages (Universidad Pablo de Olavide), in order to do the full circle of academic training and enjoy the views of both the professional and academic world. Being a member of AICE (the Spanish Association of Conference Interpreters) guarantees an ethical and professional approach to her work.

