

Top Ten Word Retrieval Strategies



1. **DESCRIBE:** Try to describe the word that you are trying to say. For example: "It is cold," "It holds food," "It is in the kitchen." (It is a refrigerator.)
2. **SUBSTITUTE:** Use a synonym or word of similar meaning for the word that you can not say. Or say the antonym or opposite word for the one that you are trying to produce. This may help you to produce the word because your mind is then thinking of words associated with the word.
3. **REST:** Take a break and try it later. Word retrieval is much more difficult when you are tired. Make sure to incorporate a nap into a busy day and try to sleep at least 8 to 10 hours every night.
4. **TAKE IT SLOW:** Word retrieval becomes more difficult if you are nervous, anxious, or feeling embarrassed. Slow down your conversation and maybe even change the topic. You can always try to return to the topic later when you feel better.
5. **WRITE:** Write down words in a notebook that you want to say, but can't verbally produce. Or write down the first letter of the word if that is all that you know. The letter may trigger the word in your mind.
6. **PHONEMIC CUES:** Attempt to say the first sound of a word if it is on the "tip of your tongue." Trying to at least say the first sound of the word, often triggers the production of the whole word.
7. **PRACTICE:** Compile a list of words that you frequently have trouble producing and use that list to practice saying them out loud every day. To help with functional independence, work on naming the objects and people in your own living environment first.
8. **GESTURES:** Use your face, arms and whole body as much as possible to gesture how to use or to describe the word that you are trying to produce. For example, move your arms up and walk forward to gesture what it looks like to push a lawnmower if you can not think of the word "lawnmower."
9. **ASSOCIATE:** Try to think of words associated with the word that you can not produce. For example: Say "orange," "apple," and "banana" out loud to help you produce the word "pear."
10. **DRAW:** Draw the picture of the word that you want to produce. Seeing the picture may help to trigger the word so that you may be able to produce it verbally.