How good are you at remembering names, dates, PIN and telephone numbers? It is not an easy process for all. Memory is one of the most interesting functions of the human brain, which is why scientists spend so much time studying how it works.

Studies have shown that when we learn something new, it stays in our memory for 20-30 seconds. This is our short-term memory and it can hold up to seven bits of information, for example a 7-digit phone number. If we repeat it and use it often, this information can move from short-term to long-term memory, which is the place where memories are stored for a long time. Scientists say that long-term memory will never fill up completely with memories in one lifetime!

Then why do we forget things? Forgetting things that are not important helps our brain to remember things that are. Our brain is always "cleaning out" useless information to make room for something more useful.

There is no limit to the possibilities of memory. There are many people throughout history who had incredible memories.

Winston Churchill, a former prime minister of the UK, knew almost all of Shakespeare's works by heart. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, one of the best composers ever, wrote down Gregorio Allegri's composition *Miserere* after only hearing it once.

There are even competitions for memory. One of them is the annual World Memory Championship, which was first held in 1991. The winner that year was Dominic O'Brien and he went on to win seven more times. In 1993, he broke the record by memorizing 900 random numbers in an hour. However, the current record is 2,660 by Wang Feng from China. O'Brien has written several books on the techniques he uses to improve his memory.

If you are interested in improving your memory, apart from using memory techniques, there are lots of simple things you can do, like eating healthily, sleeping well and exercising daily. Challenging your brain also helps you keep it healthy and active. So, why not start doing puzzles and crosswords, playing mind games, learning a musical instrument or studying a new language?



I. Read again and write T for True, F for False or NM for Not Mentioned.

1. Our short-term memory can't hold information for more than half a minute. ☐
2. Most phone numbers contain seven digits because people can't remember more than that. ☐
3. There is a limit to how much information our long-term memory can hold. ☐
4. Our brain remembers important things by 'cleaning out' useless information. ☐
5. Mozart composed *Miserere*. ☐
6. Dominic O'Brien has won the World Memory Championship 8 times since 1991. ☐
7. Dominic O'Brien isn't good at memorising words. ☐
8. Learning how to play the guitar can help improve your memory. ☐

LIVEWORKSHEETS