



Exercise your Mind

If you want to strengthen your muscles, you exercise. But what if you want to improve your memory or exercise your brain? Just like any other muscle in the body, if you don't exercise it, it can deteriorate. So, how do you go from brain drain to brain gain? If you want to increase your brain power, you need to do frequent brain training exercises.

Recently, scientists have discovered that people produce new brain cells throughout their life. 'Think of it like having many internet hubs dotted around your town or city. The more internet hubs in your area, the faster and better your internet connection is,' says Dr P. Manning, a neurologist at the York Medical Centre. In other words, the more you challenge your brain, the more cells you make and the faster you are able to process information.

So how can you increase your brain power? One word: 'Change'. Change, and learning to adapt to that change can increase your brain power. Our brains have an amazing way of adapting to new information. That's why we should train our brains to thrive on change, so we can grow and adapt to an ever-changing world. One effective strategy to train our brains to adapt is the colour words exercise. You spell out different colours on a piece of paper, but write the letters in a different colour. You could write the word *blue* but it must be written in another colour, like red. The person then has to simply say the colours they see, but not the words. Finn Redmond, one of Dr Manning's students, took on the challenge. 'The test is actually quite confusing. You start off by saying the colours but after a while you start reading the words.' Dr Manning says that the brain has to deal with conflicting information. It's reading one colour but seeing another. The brain is then forced to grow, which then increases brain power.

Brain exercises are the same as taking the stairs instead of the lift. It's not going to make you a marathon runner, but it is going to help.

- 1 Brain training exercises done occasionally can increase brain power.
- 2 Scientists have known for a long time that people produce new brain cells throughout their lives.
- 3 Dr Manning compares the activity in our brains to the way the internet works.
- 4 Dr Manning is an expert in the field of communication.
- 5 To increase our brain power, we need to learn how to adapt to change.
- 6 One way of testing ourselves is by doing exercises that make us use our brains in different ways.
- 7 The colour word exercise simply involves reading out colour words in black.
- 8 Finn found it difficult to say the colour he saw without reading the words.
- 9 Dr Manning says the exercise is challenging because the brain has to deal with too much information.
- 10 Brain exercises are going to make your brain as fit as a marathon runner.

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2 Read the article again and complete the sentences with information from the text.

- 0 Doing brain training exercises can *improve your memory and increase your brain power*.
- 1 Dr Manning believes that challenging the brain helps _____.
- 2 Teaching our brains to adapt to change can increase _____ and help us _____.
- 3 The colour words exercise involves saying _____ on a page.
- 4 Dr Manning believes the colour words exercise activity is beneficial to your brain because it has to _____ and is then forced _____.
- 5 Brain exercises are the same as _____ instead of _____.

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1 Read the article and decide if the sentences are true or false. Justify your answers with evidence from the article.

- 0 The brain can get stronger without exercise, unlike other muscles.
False – The brain will deteriorate without exercise, like other muscles do.