



Memory Development

Techniques in retaining information

1. **Concentrate** – Focus on what is being said. If necessary, close your eyes and clear your mind of any thoughts unrelated to what you are hearing. Learn to silence your own mental voice so that you can hear the voice of the person for whom you are interpreting.
2. **Visualize** the series of events being recounted. For example, the mother says that her son goes to bed at 10:00 p.m., then wakes up two or three times during the night, gets up to go the bathroom each time, tosses and turns in bed, then finally dozes off until 6:00 a.m. While you are listening, picture the child going to bed; the clock in the room reads 10:00. Picture the child tossing and turning and getting up to go to the bathroom. Picture the clock at 6:00 a.m. Playing back this “video” can help you remember the series of events.
3. **Echo** key phrases in your mind. In the following paragraph the bold parts are those you, as the interpreter might want to echo in your mind while you are listening.

“My son, **Juan, came home** from school **crying**. He had a **huge bump** on his **head** and he kept saying that **Tommy**, a boy in his class, had **pushed him** into the slide on the playground. He then **hit him** on his **face two or three times** and **threatened him** and then ran away.”

Echoing does not mean that you only interpret certain words, but by echoing the words as you listen you create a neutral pathway that makes it easier to “find” those words again. Obviously, you should interpret everything that is said.
4. **Count** the key points. The nurse asks, “Have you or anyone in your family ever had a serious illness or disease such as kidney failure, diabetes, heart disease, or cancer?” It may help to count off when you get to the list: one, two, three, four. Now when you get to this list, you know you have four diseases to name.
5. **Write numbers** as they are said so that you can look at them when you interpret. If don’t have paper, try dividing long numbers into short strings of numbers in your head. For example, 389 – 1994 becomes 3, 89, 19, and 94. It is also helpful to picture the number in your mind.
6. **Note-taking**. If you choose to take notes, first ask the parent’s permission. Notes taken should be disposed in order to maintain confidentiality. Most experienced interpreters who take notes develop their own kind of shorthand based on symbols that have meaning only to them. This allows the interpreter to let the speaker continue for a longer time without interrupting the flow of the message. Note taking is a skill that requires much practice.