

Squirrel

Forgetting things quickly

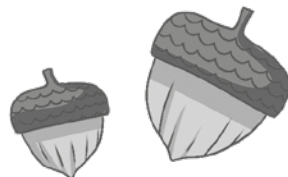


Struggle

Squirrels are the quick, clever acrobats of the animal world, scurrying up tall tree trunks and leaping between high branches in search of the best nuts. However, scientists have found that – after all that hard work – squirrels may leave up to three quarters of their nut stash in the ground! Experts think some nuts might be abandoned deliberately, but squirrels almost certainly just forget where others are buried!



Many people with ADHD can likely relate to this, as we often experience memory differences. In fact, forgetfulness and losing or misplacing things are core **traits** that experts look for when **diagnosing** ADHD.



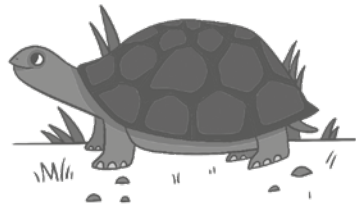
There are many types of memory. For instance, prospective memory is used to remember future tasks you need to do (like going to appointments), whereas recalling recent facts or events after a short period of time has passed is part of delayed memory. Lots of people with ADHD experience differences with various memory types, and our biggest and most common difference appears to be with **working memory**.

Working memory is how we hold recent information in our minds, often for only a short time, and then use it to complete a particular task. For example, you use your working memory when a teacher tells you which materials you need to go and collect for an art project.



Tortoise

Making slow progress



Struggle

A tortoise is an impressive animal for all sorts of reasons – from its tough, beautiful shell to its outrageously long lifespan. However, speed is not exactly its strong suit.

On average, a tortoise seems to take around 3 hours to travel one kilometre. A human can typically walk this far in 10–12 minutes, and a cheetah at top speed would be able to run it in 30 seconds flat!

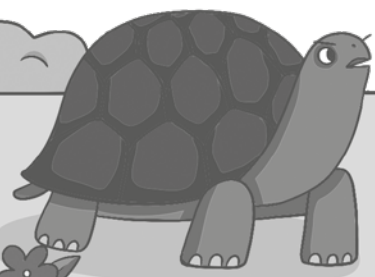
Sometimes, it can feel like we're taking ages to get things done or learn new information and skills. It can be pretty disheartening, especially when we're trying really hard but others still seem to be zipping ahead of us, making it all look so easy and effortless!

There is evidence that people with ADHD can sometimes take longer to process information. Sometimes, this may

be due to slow processing speed (SPS). This is when the brain needs a bit more time to take in, make sense of, and respond to information. Many people with ADHD seem to have SPS, but it isn't an ADHD **symptom** and people without ADHD can have it, too. Processing speed isn't the same as intelligence, and SPS doesn't limit what someone can understand and learn – it just means that it can take a bit longer.

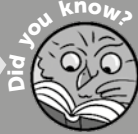


Messages in the brain are carried along fibres, like TV cables, made of long cells called **neurons**. When we grow up, these fibres become coated with a fatty substance called **myelin**. Although scientists aren't entirely sure what causes slow processing speed, it has been suggested that a thinner myelin coating may make these fibres slower when they are carrying messages.



Brain break

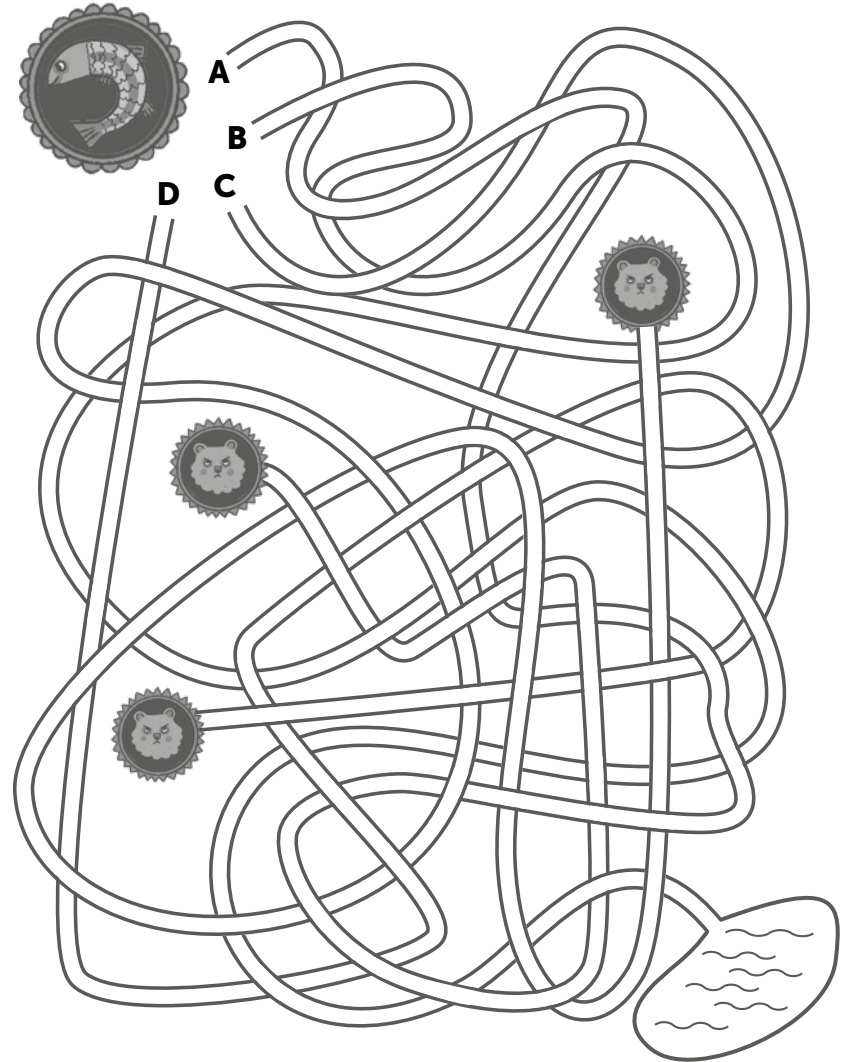
Facts, games and ADHD-friendly activities to give your brain a rest



Salmon and flamingos get their famous pink colour the same way: they both eat tiny creatures that contain a substance called astaxanthin. Without astaxanthin, salmon flesh and flamingo feathers would be white or grey. Farmed salmon and flamingos in zoos have astaxanthin mixed into their food so they stay pink!



Can you help this salmon choose the stream that leads to the lake rather than the hungry bears?



Answer: B



Draw a big, looping scribble. Then colour in all the completed loops!

Meditation

Meditation is a kind of peaceful exercise for the mind, where people aim to clear their thoughts for a while and enjoy a sense of quiet calm. Some people think that regularly meditating – even for just a couple of minutes each day – can also help get your brain more used to being directed in certain ways. Over time, it could help you stay focused on the present and redirect negative thoughts towards more positive ones.

Ask a trusted adult to help you look up some ADHD-friendly meditations that you could try, including walking meditations and guided breathing.

Enjoy getting lost!

If you enjoy getting lost in your thoughts and daydreams, when the time feels right try just letting your mind wander! You never know what your brilliant brain could come up with.

Brain break

Facts, games and ADHD-friendly activities to give your brain a rest



Don't be fooled by a slow loris's cute, fuzzy, dreamy-eyed little face – it can be deadly, even to humans! It oozes venom (that stinks of sweaty socks!) from glands on the insides of its upper arms. It licks these glands to transfer the venom to its mouth, and then bites down with its sharp, strong teeth.

When slow loris mums leave their babies to look for food, they lick these glands and then groom the babies' fur so they're covered in venom. This is thought to put off predators, such as sun bears and clouded leopards.



Working with your brain

After a sprint, a cheetah needs to lie down and rest for an hour or more until they've recovered. This is something worth keeping in mind when it comes to **hyperfocus**. Such an intense state of concentration takes a lot out of us, and too much of it – especially if it isn't being balanced with proper rest – can lead to mental and physical exhaustion.



Hyperfocus seems to be related to an imbalance of **dopamine** and **noradrenaline** – chemicals in the brain that help with focus and **motivation**.

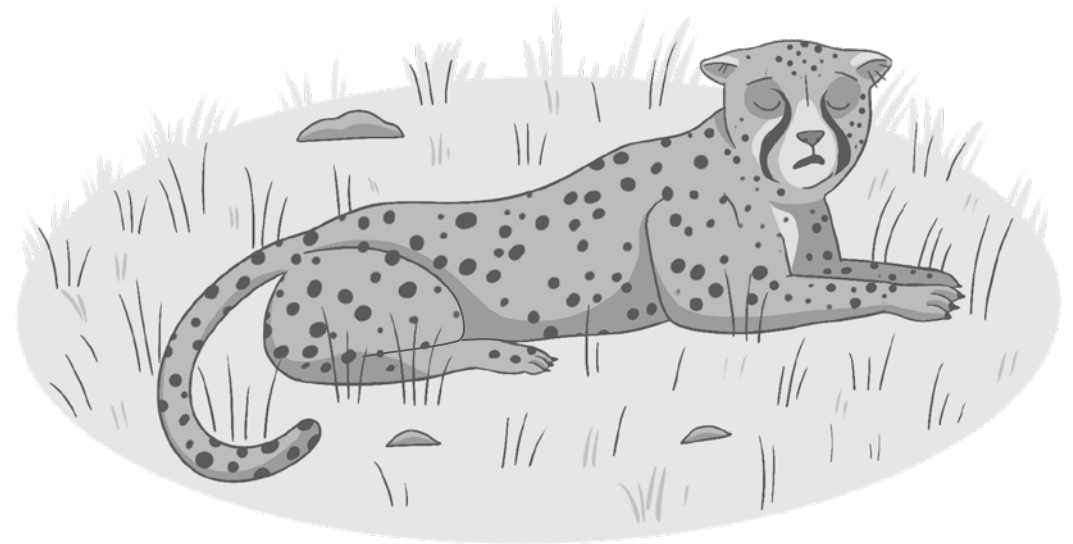
When something feels really fun or interesting, the brain can zoom in and focus super hard on it.

Strangely, this is also what makes it hard to pay attention! It can be tricky for us to 'switch gears' – both to stop doing things that we find enjoyable and to start tasks that we find less interesting.

Give yourself a break

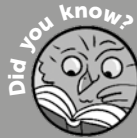
Pulling yourself out of hyperfocus might not be easy because you may *want* to keep pushing through necessary tasks – perhaps to make up for time when you were distracted. You may feel like you don't have time to rest, or that you'll risk 'falling behind' if you do.

However, if the expectations on you require this kind of exhausting effort, maybe *they* need to change – or perhaps you need a lot more support to fulfil them in a healthy, **sustainable** way. You and your wonderfully wild brain need and deserve rest.

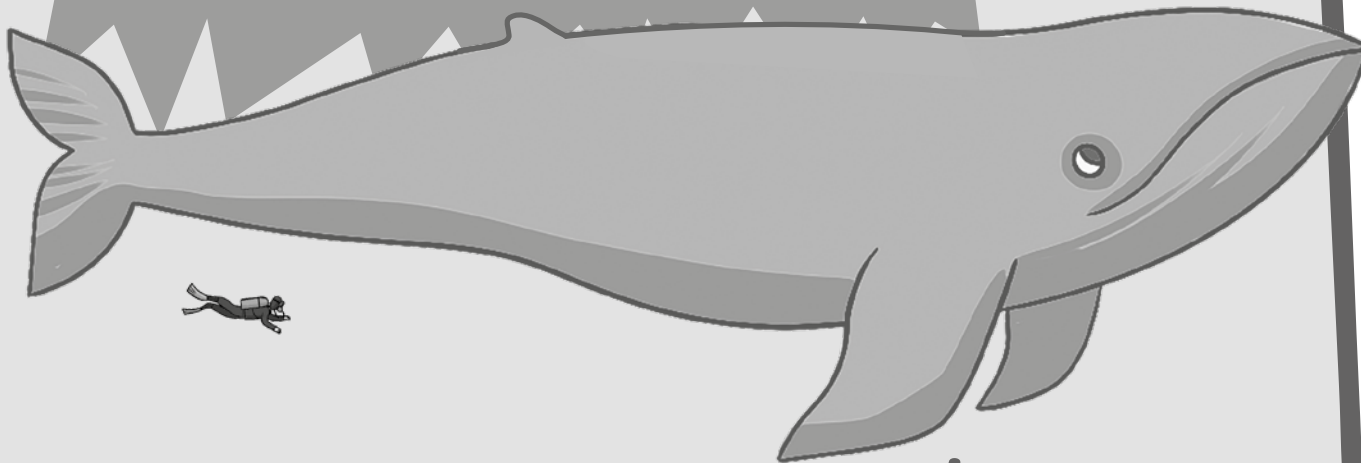


Brain break

Facts, games and ADHD-friendly activities to give your brain a rest



Blue whales mostly eat teeny-tiny crustaceans called krill – but they eat a lot of them! In fact, they eat as much food in a single day as an average human might in 30 years or more.



Set a timer for one minute. Before it goes off, how many words can you think of that start and end with the same letter – like 'roar', 'pip' or 'silliness'?
Count on your fingers as you go!

IRRITATING ADHD QUESTIONS:

It feels like everyone has ADHD! Isn't it overdiagnosed now?

Experts actually think that ADHD is still underdiagnosed, even in countries with higher rates, despite an increase in ADHD **diagnoses** in recent years. It's more that ADHD was so underdiagnosed in the past that, to some people, this increase seems like it must be an incorrectly big jump.

Some reasons for this recent increase are thought to include a wider awareness of ADHD and its **symptoms**, a better understanding of how ADHD shows up in girls and women, and improved methods for diagnosing ADHD.