

## Use of Compensatory Strategies on the Job For Individuals with Brain Injury

Several difficulties can result from an injury to the brain. Imagine the frustration of not knowing how to do something the same way that you've done it many times before. For people who have head injuries, this is often a reality. Individuals must often re-learn and acquire alternate ways of performing job functions due to significant problems experienced in:

- Memory
- Thinking
- Reasoning

Briel (1996) describes approaches that can facilitate and maximize performance on the job site for individuals with a brain injury. Various techniques may be used by individuals (according to their learning style) when completing job duties, such as:

Strategy	Definition	Example
Verbal rehearsal	Repeating cue to help short-term recall	"Stuff, lick, close, stamp" to seal an envelope
Checklist	Written or pictorial steps to show task sequence	A reference sheet for data entry including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Name</li> <li>● Address</li> <li>● Phone number</li> </ul>
Landmark/location markers	A visual cue of where a task is to be done/resumed	Color coded shelving to show where items belong or when they need restocking

Other techniques often used include mnemonic devices, charts, cues, maps, as well as miniature photo albums depicting the sequence of steps to accomplish the work. When the person is not at work, it is important that a location be specified to keep the strategy devices when not being used.

Most importantly, strategies must be individualized. When looking at a job, break the job duties into the steps that must be accomplished to complete a task. Assess how the individual's abilities, skills, learning styles and preferences influence their performance. Observe what the person can do without assistance in home activities and/or work environments.

For instance, in one situation a wife of an individual with a head injury wrote a list of duties for her husband to complete while she was at work. If any compensatory strategies are already employed in daily life, there is a greater likelihood that the person will be receptive to generalizing these to the workplace. In the above situation, when the husband returned to work the employer provided him with a checklist of the sequence of his duties, which he was able to use the checklist to complete his job duties in the appropriate sequence.

People who use compensatory strategies are re-employed more readily and maintain stability in the workforce; employers gain a reliable individual who wants to work and can save them overtime money, and co-workers

can learn new ways to assist themselves in their own jobs. The reality of workforce diversity enriches not only the lives of its consumers, but also anyone who comes into contact with it.

For more information, please consult:

[Lori Briel](#)

Briel, L. (1996). Promoting the effective use of compensatory strategies on the job for individuals with traumatic brain injury. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 7, 151-158.