

5.6 Physical Memory Tricks

Use objects and your body as reminders.

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Memory objects are useful reminders to your future self of something related to a physical location. While digital reminders exist, they are limited because in some situations, you may not be able to check your phone, or by the time you do, it's too late. A classic example is remembering to do something or take something with you as you leave the house. Often, a strategically placed unique object that catches your eye is the best reminder.

Similarly, you've probably been in a situation where you've been having a conversation and something you want to remember crosses your mind. One way to handle this is to write yourself a note (see "Capture" in Tool 1.7: Getting Things Done). However, you may not have a notepad available, or it might not be appropriate to use one during the conversation. A tool you can use in this situation is to simply cross your fingers and keep them crossed until the conversation is over. This will remind you that you had something important on your mind.

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- Offloading the task of recalling something to physical objects frees up your mind.
- You can use a variety of objects and methods according to the situation.
- Your fingers are always available for crossing, no matter where you are.

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- If someone moves your object, you might miss the reminder.
- If you have to maintain crossed fingers for a long time, it can get uncomfortable and even painful.

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Here are a few things you can try, depending on the situation.

If you want to remember to take something with you when you leave for work, the simplest way is often to place that object by the door in a way that you can't miss when you walk out. It's best if the object physically obstructs your path. However, that's not mandatory. If you can't do this (e.g., for fear of small kids moving or damaging the object), you can place a secondary memory object in a visible place to remind you to take the first one.

Sticky notes can also serve as useful ad hoc reminders. Advanced users of this tool might even purchase some colored Plasticine to serve as memory objects, which can be shaped in various ways for different purposes.

Crossing your fingers to remember is as easy as it sounds. Simply cross two fingers and keep them crossed until you are done with the conversation. When you get a spare moment and notice that your fingers are crossed, this will trigger you to remember and note down your original thought. If you find that your fingers uncross without you noticing, try tightening up your fingers and solidifying

your awareness.