

Seven Tricks to Remembering Names

Being able to remember names is a valuable asset in both the business and social arenas. It helps you build instant rapport with new contacts, and, as many companies place a premium on interpersonal and relationship-building skills, it makes a decidedly good impression on employers, too.

The following techniques can help you remember the names of everyone you meet.

1. Be interested

Many of us don't even catch the other person's name when they're being introduced; we're too focused on ourselves. So the first step to remembering a name is to pay attention as you are introduced.

2. Verify

Unless the person has introduced himself to you, verify what he or she wishes to be called. At a conference or seminar, for example, the name tag may have been typed incorrectly or it may be a more formal or informal version of the name they like to go by. Or someone else may have introduced you who doesn't know the person well. Asking what they prefer (e.g. "Jeff introduced you as Debbie, is that what you prefer to be called?") will not only cement the name in your mind, but ensure you are using the name that pleases them.

3. Picture the name written across their forehead

Franklin Roosevelt continually amazed his staff by remembering the names of nearly everyone he met. His secret? He used to imagine seeing the name written across the person's forehead. This is a particularly powerful technique if you visualize the name written in your favorite color of Magic Marker.

4. Imagine writing the name

To take step three even further, neural linguistic programming experts suggest getting a feel for what it would be like to write the name by moving your finger in micro-muscle movements as you are seeing the name and saying it to yourself.

5. Relate the name

Try to associate a person's name with a familiar image or famous person. For example, if a woman's name is Jacqueline, picture her as Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis in a pink suit and pillbox hat. If a man's name is Arnold, imagine him as the "Terminator" or striking a body-builder pose.

6. Use it frequently

Try to use the name three or four times during your conversation. Use it when you first meet, when you ask a question and in your departure, (e.g., "Andrew, it was a pleasure talking to you. Maybe we'll get a chance to chat again sometime.")

7. Record the name in a "new contacts" file

Top sales representatives keep a record of new contact names and information, including where and when they met. Review it now and then, especially when you will be attending a conference or meeting where you may see these individuals again.

Using these techniques will dramatically increase your ability to recall names, but it is inevitable that at one time or another you may slip up. If you do happen to run into someone whom you previously met and can't remember their name, you have two options:

Look delighted to see them, lock eyes and extend a warm "Good to see you again," and then find out their name from a friend or guest list later.

Or, with the same warmth, try the more direct:
"I remember you well, but your name has slipped my mind."

