

Do you remember your first kiss, or your all-time favorite song? Of course you do. But how about all your passwords and PINs, or your brother's birthday? I can remember the address of the house where I lived when I was six years old, but these days I sometimes forget the code to get into my apartment. Strange how our memory works.

*"I can remember
my first kiss,
but forget all of
my passwords"*

I read recently how important water is for the body, and particularly for the brain. According to the book I was reading, drinking lots of water every day could help prevent Alzheimer's disease. Since I don't want to have memory problems just yet, I began drinking lots of it. But of course that means I have to keep remembering to drink all that water throughout the day.

Knowing that another way to stay mentally fit is to stay physically fit, I joined a gym. I don't know whether the exercise is really helping, but you do need to have a really good memory just to keep up with the instructors.

Take the spinning class, for example. This is a room full of stationary bikes with a drill sergeant instructor ordering us to "bike faster" and "turn up the resistance." And, as we're spinning faster and faster through thin air, we have to remember to bike properly — and breathe!

PLUS

For an exercise on the language in this article, see *Spotlight plus 7-8/2004*

Don't forget to breathe! Yeah, right. As if I could forget to do that.

Speaking of memory, I've often forgotten to set my alarm to wake me at 5 a.m. in order to get to the gym. Or sometimes I can't even remember why I set the alarm, so I simply roll over and go back to sleep.

The company I work for not only demands that we change our computer passwords regularly; it is also very selective about our choices.

The password must have an uppercase and a lowercase letter, a number and one of

those funny symbols like @, #, \$, %, ^, & or *. My first password was easy to remember, but over time, I've had to make up so many different passwords that I can't remember which one I'm currently using.

I have one password to start my computer and one for our portal. I have a PIN for my ATM card, a password for online banking and another PIN for checking my phone messages. You get the picture? And since each of these has different security requirements (fewer than four characters, or more than four but fewer than six, or four letters and three numbers and a symbol, etc.), you can't just use the same password for everything. Just make a list of all your passwords, you say? Sure. The problem is I can never remember where I put the list.

Some of my passwords at work are so complex that I have to use all my fingers to hold down all the special keys like Shift, Ctrl and Alt. I call my cubicle neighbor over and ask him to type in the letters while I hold down all the other keys. Since he then knows my password, it doesn't really make sense.

Perhaps this is really good memory training that will help keep me mentally fit as I age. But please don't ask me to remember the year in which I was born.



alarm [ə'la:rm]	Wächter
ATM (automated teller machine) [ˌɑ:tɪ'ti:'em] JS	Geldautomat
character [ˈkærəktə]	Zeichen
cubicle neighbor [ˈkju:bɪkəl ,neɪbər] US	Büronachbar(in) (im Großraumbüro)
drill sergeant ['drɪl ,sɜ:rdʒənt]	militärischer Ausbilder; hier: kasernenhofmäßig
gym [dʒɪm]	Fitnessstudio
instructor [ɪn'strʌktər]	Trainer(in)
key [ki:]	Taste
lowercase letter ['loʊ:kɛɪs ,lɛtər]	Kleinbuchstabe
mentally [ˈmentəlɪ]	geistig
PIN (personal identification number) [pɪn]	persönliche Geheimzahl
spinning class ['spɪnɪŋ ,klɑ:s]	Spinningkurs
stationary [ˈsteɪʃənəri]	fest stehend
turn up the resistance [ˈtɜ:n ʌp ðə rɪ'zɪstəns]	den Widerstand härter einstellen
uppercase letter [ˌʌpər'keɪs ,lɛtər]	Großbuchstabe
You get the picture? [ju ,get ðə 'pɪktʃər]	Sie verstehen?