

Train Your Brain - 60 days to a better brain

Ryuta Kawashima | Summary | Boost Mental Performance

The book *Train Your Brain More* by Dr. Ryuta Kawashima. It presents a 60-day brain-training program focusing on simple, quick calculations and oral reading to improve cognitive function. The program includes daily exercises and weekly prefrontal cortex evaluations using counting, word memorization, and Stroop tests to track progress. Dr. Kawashima's research suggests these activities stimulate the brain, enhancing memory and potentially mitigating age-related mental decline. The book provides worksheets and instructions for the program. It also includes an introduction explaining the scientific basis for the exercises and their benefits.

Main Theme

The main theme is the importance of brain exercise for improving cognitive function, particularly in the prefrontal cortex.

- **Brain Plasticity:** The core concept of the book is that the brain is not static and can be trained and improved through consistent exercise, just like any other muscle in the body.
- **Prefrontal Cortex Activation:** The focus of the training is specifically on activating the prefrontal cortex, the area responsible for higher-level cognitive functions like working memory, decision-making, and focus.
- **Simple Exercises, Significant Results:** The book emphasizes that simple arithmetic and memory exercises, performed regularly, can lead to noticeable improvements in cognitive abilities and overall brain health.

Most Important Ideas/Facts

- **Brain Age Measurement:** The book utilizes a "Brain Age" measurement system, which evaluates performance on cognitive tasks and provides a relative measure of brain health.
- **Personalized Training:** The program offers personalized training based on individual performance, with different difficulty levels and tailored feedback.
- **Daily Consistency is Key:** The program emphasizes the importance of daily practice for sustained brain activation and improvement.
- **Stroop Test as a Benchmark:** The book uses the Stroop Test, a classic cognitive test, to assess and track improvements in processing speed and cognitive control.
- **Beyond Calculation and Memorization:** While the primary exercises involve simple arithmetic and word memorization, the program aims to improve broader cognitive functions by engaging the prefrontal cortex.

Quotes from the Source

- **"Like the body, the brain needs exercise."** - This highlights the fundamental premise of the book, emphasizing the need for consistent brain training.
- **"You've boosted your brainpower with Train Your Brain. Now get ready to increase those skills with Train Your Brain More!"** - This suggests that the program offers a progressive approach to brain training, with the potential for continuous improvement.
- **"Two minutes: Bronze Medal. You will be able to attain this level if you set your mind to it - please keep working toward this goal. If you do attain this level, you should be known as a Calculation Master."** - This demonstrates the motivational approach of the program, using achievable goals and positive reinforcement.

Key Takeaways

Dr. Kawashima's "Train Your Brain" program presents a compelling case for active brain training. By focusing on simple yet effective exercises, it aims to empower individuals to improve their cognitive function and maintain brain health. The program's personalized approach, emphasis on daily practice, and use of established cognitive tests like the Stroop Test contribute to its credibility and potential for tangible results.

1. The "Calculation Master" level is the "Expert" level in the division problems section, requiring completion within two minutes.
2. When a division problem results in a remainder, write down the nearest whole number in the answer box and indicate the remainder amount.
3. The "Counting Test" involves measuring the time it takes to count aloud from 1 to 120 as quickly as possible.
4. The "Word Memorization Test" is a recall test designed to assess and improve short-term memory capacity.
5. The Stroop Test involves naming the colour of printed words while ignoring the word itself, evaluating selective attention and cognitive flexibility.
6. The Stroop Test is administered weekly throughout the training program.
7. The recommended duration for memorizing words in the Word Memorization Test is two minutes.
8. You record your performance on the Word Memorization Test by writing down all the words you remember within two minutes on the back of the page.
9. The book suggests that, like the body, the brain requires regular exercise to improve its function.
10. The title of the follow-up book is "Train Your Brain More!"

Conclusion

The program is designed to be concise and manageable. Most exercises take only a few minutes to complete, making it easy to incorporate into your daily routine. Completing the "Train Your Brain" program can lead to noticeable improvements in cognitive function, including:

- **Enhanced working memory:** Remembering information more effectively.
- **Increased attention span:** Focusing better and resisting distractions.
- **Improved decision-making:** Making quicker and more informed decisions.
- **Faster processing speed:** Reacting and responding more quickly.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Prefrontal Cortex:** The front part of the frontal lobes of the brain, responsible for higher-level cognitive functions, such as planning, decision-making, working memory, and attention.
- **Calculation Master:** The "Expert" level achieved in the division problems section, signifying proficient and rapid calculation skills.
- **Counting Test:** A timed test requiring participants to count aloud from 1 to 120 as quickly as possible, assessing processing speed and attention.
- **Word Memorization Test:** A recall test involving memorizing a list of words within a specific time limit and writing down as many as possible, aiming to enhance short-term memory capacity.
- **Stroop Test:** A neuropsychological test that measures selective attention and cognitive flexibility by requiring participants to name the colour of printed words while ignoring the conflicting word itself.
- **Stroop Effect:** The phenomenon where naming the colour of a word takes longer and is more prone to errors when the word itself spells a different colour.
- **Cognitive Flexibility:** The mental ability to switch between different tasks or thought processes efficiently.
- **Selective Attention:** The ability to focus on specific information while ignoring irrelevant distractions.
- **Brain Training:** Programs or exercises designed to improve cognitive skills, such as memory, attention, and processing speed.