

At the store or work, a to-do list helps

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(HealthDay)—You're less likely to forget grocery items if you take a list when shopping rather than relying on your memory, a new study finds.

The study included 700 people in different shopping scenarios. In one experiment, shoppers were asked to predict how many items they would remember to buy after they spent 10 minutes reading a story and then shopped.

The participants couldn't correctly predict the items they were apt to forget, which shows the need to use a grocery list, according to the study, which was published online recently in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* and will appear in the July print issue of the journal.

"One of our key findings is that people don't correctly anticipate when they are more likely to forget items. When we have something in our mind, it is hard to imagine that we will forget it," researcher Daniel Fernandes, an assistant professor of marketing at Catholic University of Portugal, said in a journal news release. Only about half of shoppers use lists, he added.

The findings are also applicable to work, he said.

"We often rely on our memories to perform familiar tasks at work, and those tasks will come easily to mind, but unfamiliar tasks are hard to recall," Fernandes said. "To maximize our effectiveness on the job, it's important to pay special attention to those less familiar tasks and put them on the agenda."

The researchers also found that when [people](#) are [shopping](#) for items they don't buy regularly, they were more likely to remember them if they walked up and down all the store aisles.

"For unusual purchases, this is a more effective approach because seeing the product will trigger the memory," Fernandes said.

More information: The U.S. National Institutes of Health talks about

[forgetfulness.](#)

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