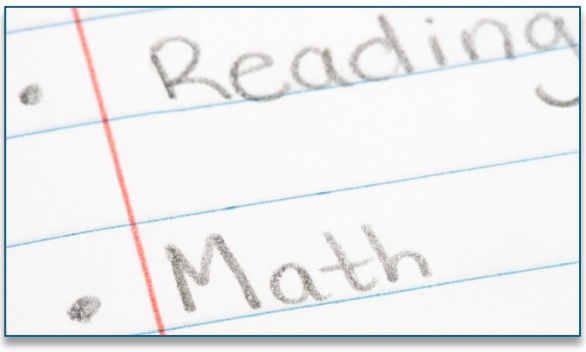
Reading and Math Keep Your Brain Sharp



Want to keep your brain sharp as you age? The secret might be as simple as regularly exercising your math and reading skills – at work, at home, or even while scrolling through this article. A groundbreaking new study led by Stanford University's Professor Eric Hanushek suggests that keeping your mind active with math and reading could help ward off age-related cognitive decline. Their research found that those who regularly engage in these skills – whether through reading emails, crunching numbers, or even reading articles like this – showed no significant decline in cognitive ability over time. This challenges the long-held belief that mental decline is an unavoidable part of ageing.

The study revealed that cognitive skills typically sharpen into a person's forties before gradually declining. However, those who consistently engage in math and reading – whether at work or in daily life – showed no decline at all.

"We find that average skills increase substantially into the forties for both literacy and numeracy. Subsequently, average skills decline slightly in literacy and strongly in numeracy," the paper said.

These findings contradict previous research that suggested cognitive skills begin to decline in early adulthood. Unlike earlier studies, which compared different age groups at a single

point in time, this study tracked the same individuals over multiple years. By doing so, it provided a more precise understanding of how cosgnitive abilities evolve with age.

Hanushek and his team suspected that what seemed like age-related cognitive decline in past research might actually be due to generational differences in skill levels rather than the natural effects of ageing itself.

They analysed data from an assessment test of language and math skills in a German population aged 16-65, re-testing the exact same group 3.5 years later.

Along with performing these tests, participants were asked how frequently they did tasks like reading emails or calculating costs at work and at home.

Interestingly, the study also found that women’s math skills declined more sharply than men’s over time, highlighting potential gender differences. The researchers hope to investigate these variations further in future studies.