6 Recognition Rather Than Recall

Definition Minimize the user's memory load by making elements, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the interface to another. Information required to use the design should be visible or easily retrievable when needed.

Humans have limited short-term memories. Interfaces that promote recognition reduce the amount of cognitive effort required from users.

Tip: Let people recognize information in the interface, rather than having to remember (“recall”) it.

Tip: Offer help in-context, instead of giving users a long tutorial to memorize.

Tip: Reduce the information that users have to remember.

1 Lisbon
People are more likely to correctly answer the question “Is Lisbon the capital of Portugal?” rather than “What's the capital of Portugal?”

2 Comparison table
Comparison tables list key differences so that users don’t need to remember them to make comparisons.

3 Search
Search queries are presented together with the results as a reference.