

Mnemonic Devices



[nee-**mon**-ik]

Mnemonic devices are great tools for remembering information.

They are not great for understanding the material because they employ memorization, not critical thinking or meaning.

CAUTION: It can be difficult at first to learn the mnemonic device. You may spend more time creating and learning the device than simply recalling information through repetition. And mnemonic devices can be forgotten too. They still require you to be able to remember specific information.

Despite these limitations, mnemonic devices can work quite well.

New Words (Acronyms)

- An acronym is a NEW WORD created by using the first letters of a series of words
- EX: ROY G. BIV for the colours of the rainbow
- **R**ed, **O**range, **Y**ellow, **G**reen, **B**lue, **I**ndigo, **V**iolet
- These work well if a concept is long and difficult or you need to remember a series of steps
- IPMAT is the stages of cell division
- **I**nterphase, **P**rophase, **M**etaphase, **A**naphase, **T**elophase
- BEDMAS is a sequence used in solving mathematical equations
- **B**rackets, **E**xponents, **D**ivision, **M**ultiplication, **A**ddition, **S**ubtraction

Silly Sentences (Acrostics)

- Acrostics are sentences where the first letter of each word stands for something
- Ex: **S**ome **M**en **H**ate **E**ating **O**nions
- This is one way to remember the names of the Great Lakes
- Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, Ontario
- **M**y **V**ery **E**legant **M**other **J**ust **S**erved **U**s **N**achos
- This is the order of the planets extending from the sun
- Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune

Rhymes and Songs

- Rhymes and songs are one of the simplest ways to boost memory
- We've all caught ourselves humming lyrics that can stick with us for DAYS
- By rhyming information, our brains can encode information more easily
- "Leaves of three, let it be" is often taught to children to avoid contact with poison ivy
- "Thirty days has September... April, June, and November"
- A good chunk of us likely remember the number of days each month because of this rhyme
- Rhyming forces you to break the words down into phonemes (the distinct units of sound that distinguish one word from another)
- And think of the alphabet? I guarantee most of us learned our letters through song

The Loci System

- The goal here, is to make associations between information and a physical location
- First, pick a location you are familiar with — your home, school, work, a friend's house
- Some place you know well
- Second, visualize a series of locations in that location
- Ex: You picked your home. Visualize the path you take to the front door, the door itself, the landing on the inside, the hallway that leads to the kitchen, etc.
- Then, attach information you want to remember to each location
- Need to remember the main points of Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection?
- The *path* is variation
- The *door* is inheritable traits
- The *landing* is population – more offspring are produced than can survive
- The *hallway* is traits between offspring vary
- And the list goes on
- By attaching information to a location you already know, you are more likely to remember the information as you take a mental tour of the location you chose

The Peg System

- Here, key words are paired with a number (and notice how they rhyme)
- Each word forms a "peg" on which you can hang a mental association (a picture)

Bun goes with 1
Shoe goes with 2
Tree goes with 3
Door goes with 4
Hive goes with 5
Sticks goes with 6
Heaven goes with 7
Gate goes with 8
Wine goes with 9
Hen goes with 10

- Ex: Need to remember a date?
- WWI began in 1914
- A hamburger bun (**1**) meets up with a bottle of wine (**9**) and another hamburger bun (**1**) at a door (**4**)

It is silly, but silly works and our brains recall pictures easier than words

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