



Today's Collegian



Mr. Breitsprecher's Edition

July 14, 2005

FREE!

Memorizing Information



Learning is a much higher-level process than memorizing facts and figures. Getting a grasp of details, however, is a start. We all have different learning styles and needs. Finding strategies that work is an important part of being successful in college. Here are some techniques that help people remember information.

Repetition

Repeating information, either by reading, saying, or writing it a number of times can be an effective memorization strategy. For the most part, this works best for information that is not very detailed or complex. Most of us can remember algebraic procedures through the repetition of practicing. On the other hand, not many of us will memorize Einstein's **Theory of**

Relativity by writing it out repeatedly on a chalkboard. Try reading information aloud, closing your eyes and repeating it, and then writing it down from memory. Repeat these steps until the information is memorized.

Mnemonics.

When information involves more details than is feasible to memorize through repetition, one of these mnemonic techniques can be helpful.

Acronyms. There are words formed by using the first letter of the material to be memorized. Nonsense words can work, as long as they are pronounceable.

Abbreviations. The first letter of words that are to be memorized can be used to create an abbreviation or short representation

of something that can more easily be remembered. Unlike acronyms, abbreviations do not form pronounceable words.

Acronymic Sentences. Using words that begin with the first letter of words to be memorized (acronyms), sometimes we can form a complete sentence. Remembering that sentence can help us remember a series of words or concepts.

Pegwords. Building associates with words that rhyme with numbers can help learn ideas and concepts that are sequential or numbered. This can be a powerful memory tool.

Keywords. Often, we can find familiar words that sound like the words or terms we need to memorize. These can create mental images that will help remember new words and their meanings.

Rhymes. Creating verses or poems can be an effective way to remember information that is too detailed to remember by simple repetition.

Graphic Organizers

When information contains a great deal of details, too much to memorize with repetition or mnemonics, a visual presentation can be helpful. This can involve creating flowcharts or concept maps. These can be drawn by hand, with common productivity software like Microsoft Word, or specialty software like *Inspiration*.

Apply Knowledge: Memorization Techniques.

Repetition. Reach each of the following statements about ideas that need to be memorized and decide if the information contains few enough detail to effectively apply repetition strategies.

1. The date of an important Civil War battle.
2. The states that are west of the Mississippi.
3. The person that invented an important scientific discovery.
4. The structure of the US government and its "checks and balances."
5. Three features of democratic government.
6. The definition of a word that is easily pronounced and commonly used.
7. Nine elements in a section of the Periodic table.

Check It Out!



Mind Tools: More on Memory

Here are 2 *Mind Tools* Websites with good information on strategies to improve memory:

<http://www.psychwww.com/mtsite/memory.html>

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_TIM.htm

More on Mnemonics

When information is more detailed, repetition is not an efficient strategy. There are six basic mnemonic techniques to help remember information.

Acronyms. Creating a word out of the first letter of information to be remembered is called an acronym. While it does not have to be a real word, it does need to be something that rolls off the tongue easily – something pronounceable. A common example is the acronym, **HOMES**, which can be used to memorize the names of the Great Lakes (**H**uron, **O**ntario, **M**ichigan, **E**rie, and **S**uperior).

Abbreviations. The first letters of important information will not always form an easy to pronounce word. Often, we can use those letters to create an abbreviation. Use this instead of an acronym. If we needed to memorize the names of presidents since Richard Nixon, we can identify the letters of each president's last name: **N**ixon, **F**ord, **C**arter, **R**eagan, **B**ush I, **C**linton, and **B**ush II. Because there are no vowels, it will not be possible to form a pronounceable word, but we can memorize the abbreviation NFCRBCB. Now that we have this information down

to a smaller, more manageable "chunk," we can use repetition, if necessary, to help remember the abbreviation.

Acronymic Sentences. Instead of creating a word with all the letters of some information (acronym) or a set of letters that stands for each concept or term (abbreviation), we can take the first letter of items to be remembered and find words that start with each letter that will form a coherent, short sentence. The names of the oceans, for example, are: **A**tlantic, **P**acific, **I**ndian, **A**rtic, and **A**ntarctic. These letters are not likely to form a word most of us can pronounce (apiaa). They could be used as an abbreviation, (APIAA), but many of us will memorize the names of the oceans better with a simple acronymic sentence, "**Alice and Alan played inside.**"

Pegwords. When items are associated with each other or numbered, using words that rhyme with numbers can help. Here are some common pegwords for the numbers 1-10.

Number	Pegword
One	Run
Two	Shoe

Three	Bee
Four	Door
Five	Hive
Six	Sticks
Seven	Heaven
Eight	Gate
Nine	Vine
Ten	Hen

When one needs to remember more than 10 items, simply pick more pegwords that rhyme with the other numbers. **The Bill of Rights** grants 10 freedoms. We can use pegwords to remember each of the 10 rights. The first right is **Freedom of Religion**. Our pegword for 1 is run. Imagine people running from a church – associate the first right with this image.

The second right is **State's Right to Have a National Guard**. Our pegword with the number 2 is shoe. Imagine the boots that soldiers wear, those shoes are kept a shiny polished black. Let this image help you remember that the second right relates to state's national guards.

The third right relates to citizens not having to give food or shelter to soldiers on demand during peacetime. Our pegword for 3 is bee. Imagine an army of bees demanding honey from you; you are not required to give it to them. Use that image to help associate the number 3 with that right.

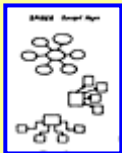
Getting the picture? Let's skip to the 10th right, States Run Public Schools. Our pegword for 10 is hen. Imagine mother hen taking care of her chicks – we can use that to help make the association between the 10th right and state run schools.

Rhyme. Many of us can remember poems that we learned years ago. This can be a powerful memory tool. Common rhymes that serve as memory tools include: "**Thirty days has September, April, June, and November**"; or "**In fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.**"

Don't worry about the quality of your poetry here – just be sure that it is something that helps you remember. If you feel shy about writing poems, you do not need to explain your rhyme to anyone; just use it to help remember important information.

Concept Mapping

A concept map presents or organizes detailed or complex information visually. For many people, this is a most effective way to gain understanding and learn. There are different types of concept maps – they can be identified by their form (or formats) or their function (or purpose). Let's look at some typical forms of concept maps:



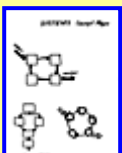
Spider Concept Map. The "spider" concept map is organized by placing the central theme or unifying factor in the center of the map. Outwardly radiating sub-themes surround the center of the map.



Hierarchy Concept Map. The hierarchy concept map presents information in a descending order of importance. The most important information is placed on the top. Distinguishing factors determine the placement of the information.



Flowchart Concept Map. The flowchart concept map organizes information in a linear format.



Systems Concept Map. The systems concept map organizes information in a format, which is similar to a flowchart with the addition of 'INPUTS' and 'OUTPUTS'.

Learn MORE about concept maps: <http://www.graphic.org/concept.html>