



Nine Types of Mnemonics for Better Memory



Mnemonics are memory devices that help learners recall larger pieces of information, especially in the form of lists like characteristics, steps, stages, parts, phases, etc.

Many types of mnemonics exist and which type works best is limited only by the imagination of each individual learner. Nine basic types of mnemonics presented in this handout include: **music**, **name**, **model**, **expression/word**, **ode/rhyme**, **note organization**, **connection**, **image**, and **spelling**.

Music Mnemonics

How many lyrics to songs do you remember? How did you come to remember them? The same method you used to recall song lyrics also can work just as well in academics. Advertising on radio and TV uses music to help potential customers remember their products when shopping. With sufficient repetition of commercials, advertisers have discovered that when shoppers see their product in the stores that often the shopper will start reciting an oft repeated phrase from the commercial or start singing the lyrics to the promotion melody. The result has been increased sales of the product.

You can make a song or jingle using any type of music you choose for any list of items. Music Mnemonics work best with long lists. For example, some children learn the ABC's by singing the "ABC" song. Other children learn all the states in alphabetical order using the "50 Nifty United States" song.



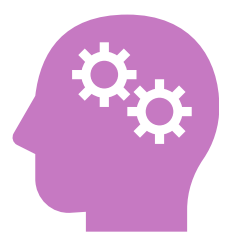
Name Mnemonics

In a Name Mnemonic, the first letter of each word in a list of items is used to make a name of a person or thing. The items can be rearranged to form something more memorable.

Examples include:

Roy G. Biv = colors of the spectrum (**R**ed, **O**range, **Y**ellow, **G**reen, **B**lue, **I**ndigo, **V**iolet)

Pvt. Tim Hall = essential amino acids (**P**henylalanine, **V**aline, **T**hreonine, **T**ryptophan, **I**solucine, **H**istidine, **A**rginine, **L**eucine, **L**ysine)



Model Mnemonics

In a Model Mnemonic, some type of representation is constructed to help with understanding and recalling important information.

Examples include a circular sequence model, a pyramid model of stages, a pie chart, and a 5-box sequence. Models should be used in addition to words and lists because they make recall at test time much easier. With a large model such as the Krebs Cycle, it is easier to learn and remember if it is divided into quarters and learned one quarter at a time.

Expression/Word Mnemonics

This is by far the most popularly used mnemonic. To make an Expression/Word Mnemonic, arrange the first letter of each item into a word or phrase.

For physical laws dealing with gasses, try these:

Charles' Law = for a constant volume, pressure is directly proportional to temperature. *The simple way to remember Chuck is if the tank's too hot, you're blown to muck.*

Boyles' Law = at constant temperature, pressure is inversely proportional to volume. *Boyle's Law is best of all because it presses gasses awfully small.*

This mnemonic can help with remembering things in order:

The order of operations for math is **P**arentheses, **E**xponents, **M**ultiply, **D**ivide, **A**dd, and **S**ubtract (in that order) = **P**lease **E**xcuse **M**y **D**ear **A**unt **S**ally.

For those who have to remember the order of color coding on electronic resistors: **B**lack, **B**lue, **R**ed, **O**range, **Y**ellow, **G**reen, **B**rown, **V**iolet, **G**ray, **W**hite, **S**ilver, **G**old = **B**ad **B**eer **R**ots **O**ur **Y**oung **G**uts **B**ut **V**odka **G**oes **W**ell (in) **S**ilver **G**oblets.

Other examples include:

The 7 coordinating conjunctions in English are **F**or, **A**nd, **N**or, **B**ut, **O**r, **Y**et, **S**o = **FANBOYS**.

The eight small bones in the wrist: **S**caphoid, **L**unate, **T**riquetrum, **P**isiform, **T**rapezium, **T**rapezoid, **C**apitate, **H**amate = **S**ally **L**eft **T**he **P**arty **T**o **T**ake **C**athy **H**ome.

Ode/Rhyme Mnemonics

An Ode/Rhyme Mnemonic puts information in the form of a poem.

A commonly used Rhyme Mnemonic for the number of days in each month is:

30 days hath September, April, June, and November. All the rest have 31 except February, my dear son. It has 28 days and that is fine, but in leap year it has 29.

You'd probably prefer your doctor to know the difference between cyanate and cyanide:

Cyanate "I ate" and Cyanide "I died." (Cyanide is fatal.)

How is your spelling?

"I" before "E" except after "C."



An easy way to remember the 12 cranial nerves (in order):

Olfactory, **O**ptic, **O**culomotor, **T**rochlear, **T**rigeminal, **A**bducens, **F**acial, **V**estibulocochlear, **G**lossopharyngeal, **V**agus, **A**ccessory, **H**ypoglossal = **O**n old **O**lympus' towering top, a friendly viking grew vines and hops.

Note Organization Mnemonics

The way textbook and lecture notes are organized can inhibit learning and recall or promote it. In the sense that the organization of notes can promote recall, it is a memory device.

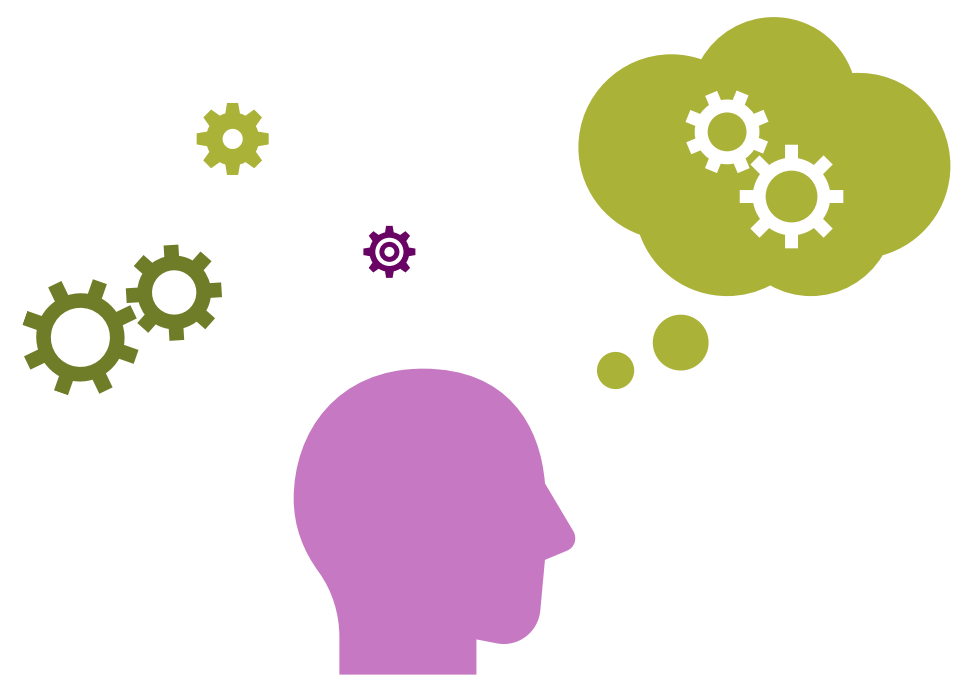
Notecards

Notecards are an easy way to organize main ideas and relevant details to be recalled. If main ideas are formatted into possible test questions, notecards can give learners practice in seeing questions and recalling answers as they must do on exams.

Outlines

Outlines clearly separate main ideas from details. This helps organize the information in the mind making it easier to remember. See below:

- I. PIAGET'S THEORY
 - A. Four stages
 - 1. Sensorimotor
 - 2. Pre-operational
 - 3. Concrete Operational
 - 4. Formal Operational
 - B. Definition of each stage
 - 1. Sensorimotor *means...* etc.



The Cornell System

A vertical line is drawn 3 inches from the left margin of a piece of notebook paper. Main ideas or questions are placed to the left of the line, and details or answers are placed to the right.

Connection Mnemonics

In this type of mnemonic, the information to be remembered is connected to something already known.

Remembering the direction of longitude and latitude lines on a globe is easier to do once you realize that the lines running North and South are long, and that coincides with the word "long" in **long-itude**. Another connection mnemonic points out that there is an **N** in **loNgitude** as well as an **N** in **North**. There is no **N** in **latitude**, so you can remember that latitude lines run East to West.

Yet another connection mnemonic is related to sound. The first part of the word *latitude* sounds like "flat." Flat runs horizontally, or East to West.

Image Mnemonics

The information in an Image Mnemonic is constructed in the form of a picture that promotes the recall of information when you need it. The sillier it is, the easier it is to recall. These images may be mental or sketched onto lecture notes. Don't worry about your artistic ability. As long as you know what your sketch means, image mnemonics will help you learn and remember.

A **B**actrian camel's back is shaped like the letter "**B**."

A **D**romedary's back is shaped like the letter "**D**."

Species of salmon can be remembered through the fingers on the hand:

Chum is the thumb, Sockeye is your index finger (like poking someone in the eye), King is your middle finger (the largest of the fingers), Silver is your ring finger, Pink is the pinky finger.

"DOC" represents phases of the moon by shape, as viewed from the northern hemisphere:

"**D**" is the waxing moon, "**O**" the full moon, and "**C**" represents the waning moon.

In the Southern Hemisphere, the moon phases appear in reverse, spelling "COD":

"**C**" is the waxing moon, "**O**" the full moon, and "**D**" the waning moon.



Spelling Mnemonics

Here is an example of a spelling mnemonic:

A **principal** at a school is your *pal*, and a **principle** you believe or follow is a *rule*.

Another example deals with the problems some learners have remembering that there is an "**A**" in the middle of *separate* and not an "**E**." A spelling mnemonic combined with an image mnemonic uses an exaggerated "**A**" to spell the word *sep**A**rate*.

To spell *Mississippi*, combine a rhythm mnemonic with a spelling mnemonic: M-iss-iss-ipp-i.

Another commonly used spelling mnemonic is combined with an rhyme mnemonic:

"I" before "E" except after "C" or when sounding like "A" in neighbor and weigh.

Geography = **G**eorge **E**dward's **O**ld **G**randma **R**ode **A** **P**ig **H**ome **Y**esterday.

Arithmetic = **A** **R**at **I**n **T**he **H**ouse **M**ay **E**at **T**he **I**ce **C**ream.

Saskatchewan = **A**sk **A**t **C**hew **A**n with an **S** in front of it.



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