

Mnemonic Devices

MNEMONIC DEVICES ARE USED FOR REMEMBERING information that needs to be memorized, but not necessarily understood. A general rule for any type of mnemonic device is that it must be simple, clear and vivid. We tend to remember the unusual, the funny, or the personal.

Grouping

Classify lists on the basis of some common characteristic. Remembering the key element of the group is a key to remembering all the items. An example would be grouping minerals by metals or stones.

Rhymes

Set what you need to remember to a common rhyme. One example is: "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two Columbus sailed the ocean blue."

Acronyms and Acrostics

Use acronyms to help you remember lists of words. The first letter from each word in a list forms a key word, name, or sentence. One example is in music, "every good boy does fine" are the lines on the treble clef (EGBDF). FACE stands for the spaces on the treble clef. Acronyms are now part of our language. Consider IBM, AT&T, CIA, MGM, USU, and FBI.

Visual Association

Association involves linking two ideas. When you are memorizing lists of words, you can link words by using images. The PEG system allows you to remember sequences of ten unrelated items in the appropriate order. It requires you to first remember 10 "peg words."

one = bun	six = sticks
two = shoe	seven = heaven
three = tree	eight = gate
four = door	nine = vine
five = hive	ten = hen

If you have ten words that you need to remember you visualize each word interacting with the "peg word" that you already know.

Loci

Greek and Roman orators who had to remember long speeches used the method of "loci" to trigger their memories. In using the method of loci, visualize a room or route that is familiar to you. Then place each item you wish to remember in a location along that route and "pick it up" as you take a mental walk around that room.

This is especially helpful in giving speeches or having to remember lists of important points in a correct sequence. For example, if you wish to memorize the presidents of the United States in order, you might deposit a dramatic image of each president in strategic locations around your house.

Remember that mnemonic devices increase your ability to recall information. They should be abandoned as soon as you know the material so well you do not need them. Mnemonics also have certain drawbacks. They do not help you to understand the material, they can be time consuming to learn, and under stress you may forget the mnemonic and be unable to retrieve the information you need.



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