

MNEMONICS: THE ART OF MEMORY

Pi: 3.14159265358979323846264338327950288419716939937510

Memory Training is one of the most rewarding self-improvement courses you can ever embark upon, because an efficient memory can help you in so many other areas of self-improvement :- learning foreign languages, studying, learning how to give speeches or presentations, and so on. Apart from the practical rewards of improving your memory skills, mnemonic systems can also be fun. You will be using your powers of imagination and creation in a way you probably haven't done since your early childhood.

The Peg Method

In the simplest version of this technique, a peg word is associated with each of the digits 1 to 20. It is then possible to associate the peg word with things-to-remember, for example, a shopping list or a speech. Variants include peg systems for the alphabet and months of the year. Peg mnemonics allow more advanced mental filing than the basic mnemonics. Most of these techniques can be learned in 20 to 30 minutes, although it requires some practice to get the most use out of them.

1. bun
2. shoe
3. tree
4. door
5. hive
6. sticks
7. heaven
8. gate
9. wine
10. hen
11. leaven
12. shelve
13. hurting
14. boarding
15. fitting
16. Sistine
17. setting
18. waiting
19. knighting
20. plenty

The Link Method

The Link Method is one of the easiest mnemonic techniques available, but is still quite powerful. It is not quite as reliable as a peg technique, as images are not tied to specific, inviolable sequences. It functions quite simply by making associations between things in a list, often as a story. The flow of the story and the strength of the visualizations of the images provide the cues for retrieval.

How to use

Taking the first image, imagine associations between items in a list. Although it is possible to remember lists of words where each word is just associated with the next, it is often best to fit the associations into a story: otherwise by forgetting just one association, the whole of the rest of the list can be lost.

As an example, you may want to remember a list of counties in the South of England: *Avon, Dorset, Somerset, Cornwall, Wiltshire, Devon, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Surrey*

This could be done with two approaches, the pure link method, and the story method:

The Link Method

This would rely on a series of images coding information:

- * An AVON (Avon) lady knocking on a heavy oak DOoR (Dorset).
- * The DOoR opens to show a beautiful SuMmER landscape with a SETting sun (Somerset).
- * The setting sun shines down onto a field of CORN (Cornwall).
- * The CORN is so dry it is beginning to WILT (Wiltshire).
- * The WILTing stalks slowly fall onto the tail of the sleeping DEVil (Devon).
- * On the DEVil's horn a woman has impaled a GLOSSy (Gloucestershire) HAM (Hampshire) when she hit him over the head with it.
- * Now the Devil feels SoRRY (Surrey) he bothered her.

Note that there need not be any reason or underlying plot to the sequence of images: all that is important are the images and the links between images.

The Story Method

Alternatively this information may be coded by vividly imaging the following scene:

An AVON lady is walking up a path towards a strange house. She is hot and sweating slightly in the heat of high SUMMER (Somerset). Beside the path someone has planted giant CORN in a WALL (Cornwall), but it's beginning to WILT (Wiltshire) in the heat. She knocks on the DOoR (Dorset), which is opened by the DEVil (Devon). In the background she can see a kitchen in which a servant is smearing honey on a HAM (Hampshire), making in GLOSSy (Gloucestershire) and gleam in bright sunlight streaming in through a window. Panicked by seeing the Devil, the Avon lady panics, screams 'SoRRY' (Surrey), and dashes back down the path.

Given the fluid structure of this mnemonic, it is important that the images stored in your mind are as vivid as possible, and that significant, coding images are much stronger than ones that merely support the flow of the story. See the section on using mnemonics more effectively for further information on making images as strong as possible.

The Major System

The Major Memory System is one of the two most powerful memory systems currently available. It requires an investment of time to learn and master, however once it is learned it is extremely powerful. It is the application of mainly this system that forms the basis of some of the extraordinary, almost magical, memory feats performed by magicians and memory technicians.

How to use

The system works by converting number sequences into nouns, nouns into images, and linking images into sequences. These sequences can be very complex and detailed.

The building blocks of the system are the association of the numbers below with the following consonant sounds:

0 - s, z, soft-c - remember as 'z is first letter of zero'

1 - d, t, th - remember as letters with 1 downstroke

2 - n - remember as having 2 downstrokes

3 - m - has three downstrokes

4 - r - imagine a 4 and an R glued together back-to-back

5 - L - imagine the 5 propped up against a book end (L)

6 - j, sh, soft-ch, dg, soft-g - g is 6 rotated 180 degrees.

7 - k, hard-ch, hard-c, hard-g, ng - imagine K as two 7s rotated and glued together

8 - f, v - imagine the bottom loop of the 8 as an eFfluent pipe discharging waste (letter image of F in alphabet system)

9 - p, b - b as 9 rotated 180 degrees.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
z	t	n	m	r	l	sh	k	f	p
s	d					ch	hard-c	v	b
soft-c						soft-g	hard-g		
						j	q		

These associations really must be learned before proceeding.

The system operates on a number of levels, depending on the amount of time a user is prepared to devote to learning the system. The first level, the coding of single digit numbers into consonants and small words, functions almost as a poor relation of the number/rhyme system. It is at higher levels that the power of the system is unleashed, however this level must be assimilated first.

The trick with the conversion into words is to use only the consonants that code information within the word, while using vowels to pad the consonants out with meaning. By choosing letters for your word in the preferential order AEIOU you stand a better chance of being able to reconstruct the image word if you forget it. Examples:

letter
514

winner
24

stone
012

mummy
33

circus
0470

barrel
945

PEG WORDS BASED ON THE MAJOR SYSTEM

1. tie hat
2. noah hen
3. Ma ham
4. rye hair
5. law hill
6. shoe shoe
7. cow hook
8. ivy hoof
9. bee hoop
10. toes dice
11. tot deed
12. tin den
13. tomb dam
14. tire deer
15. towel doll
16. dish dish
17. tack deck
18. dove dove
19. tub dope
20. nose news

Using Mnemonics to Learn More Effectively

When you are creating a mnemonic, e.g. an image or story to remember a telephone number, the following things can be used to make the mnemonic more memorable:

- * Use positive, pleasant images. The brain often blocks out unpleasant ones.
- * Exaggerate the size of important parts of the image
- * Use humour (perhaps linked with point 2)! Funny or peculiar things are easier to remember than normal ones.
- * Similarly rude or sexual rhymes are very difficult to forget!
- * Symbols (e.g. red traffic lights, pointing fingers, etc.) can be used in mnemonics.
- * Vivid, colourful images are easier to remember than drab ones.
- * Use all the senses to code information or dress up an image. Remember that your mnemonic can contain sounds, smells, tastes, touch, movements and feelings as well as pictures.
- * Bringing three dimensions and movement to an image makes it more vivid. Movement can be used either to maintain the flow of association, or can help to remember actions.
- * Locate similar mnemonics in different places with backgrounds of those places. This will help to keep similar images distinct and unconfused.

The important thing is that the mnemonic should clearly relate to the thing being remembered, and that it should be vivid enough to be clearly remembered whenever you think about it

Books:

Super Memory - Super Student : How to Raise Your Grades in 30 Days by Harry Lorayne

The Memory Book : The Classic Guide to Improving Your Memory at Work, at School, and at Play
by HARRY LORAYNE, JERRY LUCAS

Web:

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

<http://www.vlaardingen.net/~tom/Mainmenu.htm>



Paul Cezanne
1895



