CHAPTER II: ART OF MEMORY – THE BASICS

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This part of your handbook contains a mini-course called Art of Memory 101: Basic Memory Training. It is designed to teach you a system to memorize verbatim (exact words) the different lectures of Freemasonry. The lectures usually range from 650 to 3,000 words. After completing this course you will:

* Develop the power to memorize 300 words in an hour.
* Master various tools to retain memorized information for long-term usage
* Avoid the frustration and embarrassment of forgetting ritual.
* Reduce the time you need to learn ritual by at least 75%.
* Most importantly, Masonically training your memory will accelerate your internalizing of the key concepts of Masonry.

It is our belief that the combination of developing your memory skills and the accelerated internalizing of key Masonic concepts will empower you to better build YOUR world.

**Background**

Memory Training is all the rage nowadays, and is turning into a booming industry. However Masonic Memory training is very different than many of the commercial products out there right now. Masonic Memory Training not only develops your memory skill, but it also puts volumes of time-tested wisdom at your fingertips.

Since Ancient times, every society developed specialized or esoteric knowledge. This knowledge, whether it was medical, scientific, mathematical, and/or religious, was usually in quantities large enough to fill several books. Many of these cultures did not have a formal writing system, so they developed various methods of preserving and communicating the secrets of their crafts. Select individuals (we will refer to them as ritualist) in each field of knowledge studied not only their particular subjects, but also the way their memory worked. They became living libraries and achieved high status in their respective society, for their seemingly magical ability. Throughout time having a powerful memory was considered a superpower, and a mark of genius.

The ancient Greeks and Romans differentiated between two types of memory: Natural and Artificial (Trained). The natural memory or natural memorization was your inborn ability to remember information without effort. The artificial memory was the resulting skill developed from training to use memory principles and techniques (mnemonics). This type of training is called the Art of Memory. A trained ritualist through training, creativity, and scientific study would learn to memorize forty times more information than the average person. When combined with a particular craft it became a powerful tool for:

* Mastering Arts and sciences
* Developing one’s character
* Inventing new ideas
* Searching for Divine Truth
* Magic
* Expanding one’s mental horizons.

In England during the medieval period, books, while available, were small in number and expensive to produce. Continuous access to books was not assured and when one came in contact with a book they would have to find a way to record the important information contained in them. Masons, and many other crafts, chose to communicate the majority of the secrets and mysteries of their craft using systems of symbols, legends, songs and ceremonies. This was known to improve the memorization and recall of that which they learned. In Renaissance-era Scotland memorizing the oral knowledge of the craft was highly prized. William Schaw, The Scottish King’s Master of Works (person responsible for all masons and building projects in Scotland) issued an important piece of legislation regarding the role of memory in the craft. This statue known as the the Schaw Statues of 1599 stated that apprentices seeking to become Master Masons had to demonstrate that they possessed a well trained memory, and suitable knowledge of the science of Masonry. It also stated that Master Masons were to be tested yearly on their Art of Memory and the science of the craft, and any who were found to have forgotten any concepts would face hefty fines! We as present day Freemasons continue this Ancient tradition of memory training, and use it for the more noble and glorious purpose of bettering ourselves.

**The Memory Model**

When you first see/hear information to the point when that information is fully memorized and available to be recalled certain things need to happen. The more you train the less you have to consciously think about taking these steps and the easier the whole process becomes. In addition, research and experimentation will also reveal better ways to improve the whole process.

This can be compared to the development of any skill, for example learning to type. When you first learned to type, you went slowly and it was a bit clumsy. As you improved with practice your speed and accuracy improved. You learned new methods and you no longer had to spend as much conscious thought on every action. The same goes with memory. The more you practice using certain techniques the easier and better it becomes.

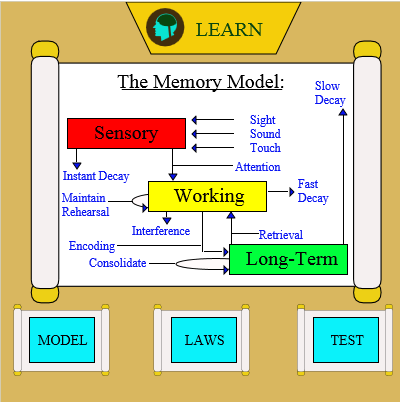
Definitions:

Before we begin, let’s define some terms. The word memory has three popular definitions: A) the mental ability to store and recall information, B) information of the past stored in your brain, and C) the place where memory is stored long term. Unless otherwise noted, when we say memory we mean the first definition of memory.

Your memory consists of a system of neurons and synaptic connections between these neurons. This system consists of:

* Three storage areas : Sensory, Working, and Long-Term
* Four mental processes : Attention, Encoding, Consolidation, and Retrieval
* Two effects : Decay and Interference

These 9 components of your memory can be arranged into a simple model, shown below.



***Let’s see this model in action:***

Our model uses a fictional Brother Bruno. Bro. Bruno is reading his ritual book. The words he reads, the dialogue in his head, the feel of the book, and any smells all reach his senses and is stored in his Sensory Memory (Bonus : Did you know there is a different Sensory Memory storage bin for each sense?!). The information there is sorted by importance. Important information is focused on and automatically stored in the Working Memory. The rest of the information is immediately lost in a process called Decay. The process of focusing, filtering and storing information from the Sensory memory to the Working memory we call **Attention**.

***● First Law of Memory - We can only remember what we pay attention to; everything else is hit or miss.***

The Working Memory (WM), sometimes incorrectly labeled the short term memory, is the

Quarterback of your memory team. The job of the WM is to temporarily hold and process information. In addition to memory it is responsible for reasoning, judgment, comprehension and learning. It has two important characteristics. First, it can only hold information for a short period of time. Once you take your Attention off the information, it will start to rapidly fade, unless you mentally repeat it. Secondly it can only, hold a certain amount of information in your conscious mind at one time. This amount of information is called your memory span and it varies based on the type of information. The more you understand the information, the more of it you can hold in your mind at once, if the information is hard to understand, or unfamiliar to you, you will hold less information. In terms of words, this usually means you can hold 5-16 words at one time.

***● Second Law of Memory - Our Working Memory can only hold a certain amount of words for a certain period of time, if it is not repeated it will slowly decay within a minute or less.***

The WM processes information and converts it into a form that can be easily stored in the Long Term Memory. This processing and conversion is called Encoding. Encoding is the secret of memory, because the better encoded information is, the easier it is to store, and the longer it will last. There are two types of encoding: 1) Maintenance rehearsal, which is the mentally repeating of information, and 2) Elaborative, which is the connecting of new information with other (usually already remembered information). If you become distracted while encoding, information may be lost due to decay, or you may not convert the information in a way that makes it distinguishable from other information stored in your long term memory. This last aspect is called interference or the Ugly sister effect (seriously, look it up).

***● Third Law of Memory - Encoding information by associating it with previous memories or repeating it causes it to be stored (memorized) in our memory banks. Any distractions or two much volume will distort the quality of the memory.***

The Long Term Memory is the storage area we usually are referring to when we say something is stored in your memory. Information stored here decays very slowly compared to the other storage areas, and has no limits to the amount of information it can hold. When a memory decays from the LTM it is called forgetting. Preventing this decay happens through a process called consolidation. Consolidation is a process memory is made stronger and or modified, by causing the brain to form new connections between neurons that represent the new memories. The three best ways to consolidate memory are rest/sleep, representing information and /or using the stored information.

***● Fourth Law of Memory - Things memorized (stored in the Long term memory) will rapidly fade unless the memory is made stronger.***

The final step is a process called retrieval commonly known as remembering.

When Bruno first encodes the information he adds specific cues (hints or triggers) which help him locate information in his Long Term memory (action, question, smell, thought).

An example is hearing a gavel will make him stand up, and maybe even picture the gavel in his mind. If he's used to hearing it at a festive board, the gavel might also make him recall smells and taste from their last meal. Sometimes retrieval involves information from only one sense to be recalled. In my lodge, our Marshall rings a bell six times to open the lodge, and then gives a little speech. Later on when you hearing the bells, his speech is automatically remembered by the Brothers. For Bro. Bruno, the words he memorizes, act as cues for the words that follow. He may also decide to mentally add gestures or visual images by encoding (associating/connecting) it with the words he is memorizing.

***● Fifth Law of Memory – Recalling information is assisted by adding cues that will help you locate the information in your memory.***

This gives us the 5ive Laws of Memory:

● **First Law of Memory** - We can only remember what we pay attention to, everything else is hit or miss.

● **Second Law of Memory** - Our Working Memory can only hold a certain amount of words for a certain period of time, any distractions or two much volume will the distort the quality of the memory.

● **Third Law of Memory** - Encoding information by associating it with previous memories or repetition causes it to be stored into our memory banks.

● **Fourth Law of Memory** - Things memorize will slowly fade unless the memory is made stronger through repetition.

● **Fifth Law of Memory** - Remembering ritual requires you to do two things while encoding. Encode it based on how you'll use the information, and to add cues that will help you locate the information in your memory.

**10 Step Method for Memorizing Ritual**

1. Get a brief overview of the piece you are learning, divided it up into sections, and count how many words are in each section. Then read it from beginning to end. While reading visualizing what you are reading.
2. Go to the first section and read it again, this time reading it to understand exactly what is being said, and familiarizing myself with the wording. Highlight parts which seem tricky.
3. Now each of your sections should be around 50 words (+|-). Break each section into mini-chunks of 5-10 words sentences. Your choice should be based on two things: 1) if the passage is long or difficult make shorter chunks, especially if its words you keep forgetting. 2) If sentences are simple, and easier to remember chunks should be longer.
4. For each chunk you read/hear it, say it in your head a few times, and then say it out loud. As you recite it, count each word on your finger. Your goal is to get 100% accuracy, three times. Then say it three times with delivery.
5. Go to the next chunk and do the same thing as before, only this time test yourself on recalling the first and second chunk together, and then reciting it using delivery. This is called chaining.
6. Follow a specific reciting pattern. For example, let’s say you have 50 words in a section divided into 10 chunks, you would repeat it like this : (Ch = chunk) CH1, CH2, CH1+CH2, CH3, CH1+CH2+CH3, CH4, CH1+CH2+CH3+CH4 etc ...
7. Connect sections using a similar pattern, until you have the whole piece, memorize, and can say it three times accurately. Focus on the sections/chunks you have issues with and re-memorize it. Any words that you commonly forget, (pivot words), pay extra attention to and use a physical action to remind me of it.
8. Lastly setup a plan, where you test your accuracy saying the different sections 3 times in larger and larger intervals (1 hour, 5 hours, the next day, at night, three days later, and 6 days later).
9. Practice your delivery regularly, making sure you sound clear, confident, and impactful. I challenge myself, and play games.
10. Finally mentally practice your part as if it was really happening. Also work with other brothers to simulate game day conditions.

**Questions and Activities**

1. Describe the three storage areas of your memory?

2.What are the 5ive laws of Memory?

3. Define these terms:

1. Attention
2. Memory Span
3. Encoding
4. Consolidation
5. Retrieval
6. Decay
7. Interference

4. What are the two limitations on the Working Memory?

**Activity: Build your Memory power**

1. Memorize a piece of ritual that’s 50-100 words, if you’re using a different system then from above, write out your process of memorization as a list of steps.
2. Make a note of any special issues you have during memorizing.
   1. Develop a solution based on any consistent problems. (a good way to find a solution is to ask others!)
   2. Decide what steps are needed and what steps aren’t. Play with it. See what adjustments you can make while still getting the same or better results.
3. Add/Remove steps based on the information from this chapter, or other resources.
4. Test it out by using it to memorize other pieces of ritual (Historical Lecture wink, wink)
5. Gather your Stats
   1. How many words did you try and memorize? (volume)
   2. Above how much time did it take you? (speed)
   3. How accurate were you? (accuracy)
   4. How much time do you have to spend memorizing to achieve 100% accuracy?
   5. Here’s your formula for your ritual memory power: RMP = Volume X Accuracy/Speed. So if you can memorize 100 words in 20 mins and are 100% accurate (100 X 1.00)/(20) = 5 rmp. (5 rmp should be your goal, by the way).
   6. Practice on a few pieces and find your average.
6. Give it a name. (**Yes name your memory skill**)

g. Memorize the Lecture of reasons, and become a F & AM Hero!!