

Required Student Instrument: Part 3

Write a 600 word essay on one of the following:

- The best tips you have found in your research (be sure to cite your sources).
- How helpful the practice session/feedback was.
- **The best talk you have ever seen (in person, or on the Web/TV). Why was it so effective? What did you learn from it that was actionable?**

ANS:

The best talk that I have seen is a TED talk by Joshua Foer called “Feats of memory anyone can do” (<https://youtu.be/U6PoUg7jXsA>). Foer is a freelance science journalist who begins his talk by immediately capturing the audience's attention with an extraordinary imaginary scenario that he is describing and seemingly creating on the spot. He then describes his experience at the United States Memory Championship where he was expecting to meet exceptionally intelligent people that had amazing memories. But what he discovers instead is that everyone there would claim to have an average memory, yet were able to train themselves to perform incredible feats of memory.

Foer discusses how the advent of recent technologies such as computers and smartphones have almost made our own memories obsolete as we can simply externalize certain details to these devices instead of remembering for ourselves. He describes how not too long ago it was completely normal for people train and cultivate their memory with special techniques that have been around for thousands of years. All of these different techniques including new ones that are designed specifically for the memory championship come down to one central idea of elaborative encoding. This simple idea is that to make information more memorable, you need to convert it from a random fact to something with meaning and context within your own mind.

Foer then reveals how the seemingly random imaginative story at the beginning of his speech was actually a interpretation of elaborative encoding called the memory palace in which you imagine and correspond certain topics to weird and bizarre images which you will most likely not forget. He explains how this story was actually the series of images of his “memory palace” that he used to memorize the very speech that he is currently giving. This revelation is

very interesting as he explains how all of these random series of events and unusual images correlate to his well thought out speech.

I have heard that giving speeches can be facilitated by trying to look at the bigger picture instead of trying to memorize every single detail, but I have never seen it explained in the way that Foer presented it in this TED talk. Everything that he said made complete sense and had me captivated from start to finish as he himself was when he came across this discovery. He became so intrigued that he started training his memory, entered and surprisingly won the USA Memory Championship a year later in 2006.

I believe this speech was so effective and actionable because not only is Foer engaging the audience with interesting stories, they actually have meaning and describe his own personal journey in cultivating his memory and then applying those experiences to his current speech and demonstrating how effective this knowledge is to him. I will attempt to apply this technique to my own presentation and try to imagine corresponding images for each of the main topics I want to discuss. I previously thought that the opposite approach was better where you try to memorize every detail but clearly it becomes a more engaging presentation to flow with your imagination than recalling certain sentences in a correct order.

***** Since our group presents on week 9 - 5/23/16, we have yet to prepare our presentation slides + have a person critique our presentation *****