

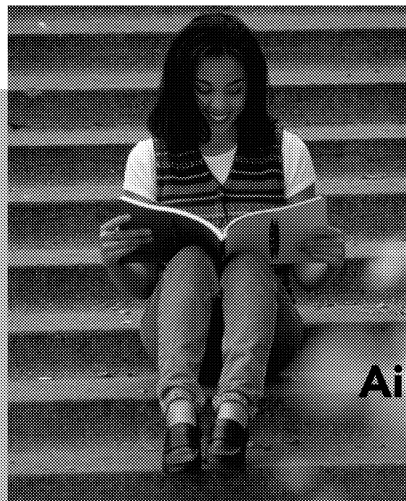


How to

Study Better and *Faster*

Using Individual Learning Styles

Second Edition



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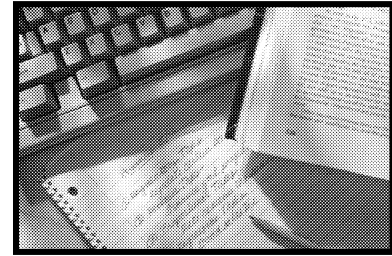
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Tricks of the Trade

Name _____

Date _____

Have you ever watched a TV quiz show and wondered how the contestants can remember information on all sorts of subjects? How about the actor or actress remembering all those lines? Or the successful politician greeting people by name, even though they've met only briefly before? Do all these people have total recall?



Granted, some people do seem to have especially retentive minds. Still, chances are good that all these people have learned a few “tricks,” ways to give their memory a nudge when necessary. You can improve your memory, too, but you might need some help from Mnemosyne.

Mnemonic Devices

You've never heard of her, you say? She was the Greek goddess of memory. (Apparently they had trouble remembering, too.) Certain memory “tricks” are named for her—*mnemonic devices* (pronounced *ne • mo • nick*—the *m* is silent).

For example:

- A. *I* before *E*, except after *C* or when sounded as *A* as in *neighbor* or *weigh*. (That one may already have saved you from making some spelling blunders.)
- B. Spring forward, fall back. (Guaranteed to keep you from getting confused and being too early or, worse, too late because of the seasonal time changes.)
- C. Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November.
All the rest have one-and-thirty, except the month of February;
Twenty-eight are all its store,
Until leap year brings it one day more.
- D. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. (That one is a finger exercise to help you memorize the position of the letters on a keyboard.)

These few mnemonic devices illustrate some of the reasons they make it easy for your mind to retain facts. Look again at A and C. Notice that they rhyme—and rhyme is usually easy to memorize, especially for students strong in musical/rhythmic intelligence. B creates a picture of the clock's hands moving forward in the spring (Daylight Savings Time) and back in the fall (Standard Time). Visual images, of course, work especially well for students with strong visual/spatial intelligence. D also creates a picture, actually an absurd picture, for it is a rare dog who would remain quietly lying down as a fox jumped over him. The absurdity of the picture catches your imagination, though, and makes it easier to remember. To create your own mnemonic devices, first decide what it is that you need to remember. In example A above, there are two important pieces of information: (1) As a rule, when *i* and *e* come together in a word, the letter *i* comes first; and (2) There are two common exceptions to this rule. Once you have identified the key information, put it into a format that suits your learning style—a rhyme, a visual image, and so on.

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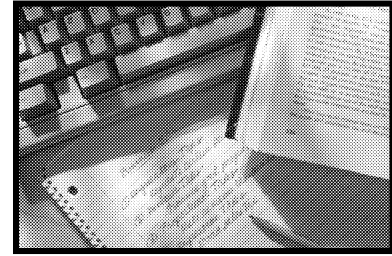
Tricks of the Trade *(continued)*

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Word Association

Let's consider another aid to memory, *word association*. For example, you may have trouble deciding when to use *stationary* (not moving) and *stationery* (writing materials). Remind yourself that there is an *E* in *write*, and you'll never confuse those words again.



To create your own word associations, start by identifying the difference between the two words. In the example above, the difference was one letter—*a* in one word, *e* in the other. Next, make sure you know exactly what each word means. Now try to find a way to connect the difference with one of the meanings. In the stationary/stationery example, another possible connection might have been “*stationary* means ‘staying in one place,’ and there’s an *a* in *stay*.” In that case, your word association would be “stay stationary.” When you decide on the association, be careful that it only matches one of the terms you’re trying to distinguish. If you had chosen “place” as a word association for “stationary,” you might have regretted it. The word *place* includes both an *a* and an *e*. So does it go with *stationary* or *stationery*?

You can also use a variation of this device to associate a picture with a word. The first steps are the same: Identify the difference between the two words, and be sure you know the meanings of both words. Then find a visual association with one meaning. For example, the word *discrete* means “made up of separate elements.” The word *discreet* means “showing good judgment.” One difference between the words is that *discreet* has a double *e*, but in *discrete*, the *e*'s are separated by a *t*. Create a mental image of two *e*'s sitting separately. Then you can remember that when the *e*'s are separate—as in *discrete*—the word means “separate elements.”

Acronyms

Do you know what an *acronym* is? The dictionary defines it as “a word formed from the first letters of several words.” Once you become aware of acronyms, you'll find them constantly in the daily newspapers. They are often designed to create a word association. Specifically, if the acronym suggests something to the people who hear it or read it, they will remember it and the organization it represents. For example:

VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) The intended effect of the acronym is to suggest that the program it represents opens new vistas to people in depressed areas of our country.

PROP (People's Regional Opportunity Program) The image intended here is of a prop or support to people who need it.

You can also use acronyms to remember a list of information. To do this, take the first letter of each item on the list. Then combine the letters to make a word. A well-known example of this is HOMES, used to recall the names of the Great Lakes. If you can't remember all the names, this acronym will remind you of

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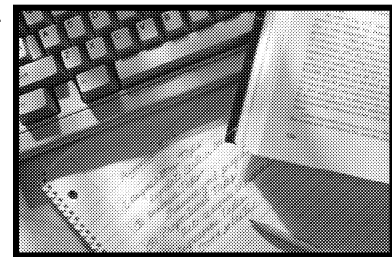


Tricks of the Trade *(continued)*

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the first letter of each one. This memory nudge can sometimes be enough to help you recall the whole word—in this case, Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior.



Categorizing

A third way to help your mind retain information is to categorize. To do this, you set up a mental system by which you put similar ideas, things, even people in the same “file folder.” Have you ever had the experience of recognizing a person but being uncertain where you saw him or her before? Was it in church, at a supermarket check-out counter, at a game? If you picture the stranger in each of those settings, you can often remember where the previous meeting took place. In other words, you are able to take him or her out of a particular file folder!

Many essay test questions that require you to compare and contrast—actually, to see similarities and differences—are in a sense asking you to draw on those file folders. For example, if you were told to describe the similarities and differences between the American and French revolutions, you’d draw on previously filed facts about the century in which they occurred, the reasons for each revolution, the opposing forces, the victors, and the aftermath.

Whenever you are reading any textbook, it is a good idea to pause occasionally and try to see how new information relates to what you already know. Again, you’ll be making associations, adding to your files and, not incidentally, strengthening your memory.

Memorization

An effective method of recalling facts (or anything else) is plain old *memorization*. Many of us try to avoid any kind of memorization, whether it involves the multiplication tables, French irregular verbs, or lines from Shakespeare’s plays. Still, a certain amount of memorization is necessary in the process of becoming educated. It’s best to accept that fact and go on from there.

Memorization seems easier if you can see an immediate reward for doing it. For example, you don’t mind studying to master the rules of the road if your effort brings you closer to getting a driver’s license. In that case, you have a strong motivation to learn. Maybe you can’t bring the same amount of enthusiasm to those irregular verbs, but at least you know that if you master them, you will be taking a giant step toward improving your grade and becoming proficient in French.

Memorization is actually a form of repetition, repeating the material often enough to make a permanent impression in your mind. To make it less tedious, divide the material into manageable chunks. If it is a poem, try learning five or six lines at a time. Add five or six more lines when you think you really know the first group. Each time you give yourself a memory check by reciting or writing the lines, go back and start with the first five. Then as you add lines, you will be reinforcing your memory of the original ones you learned. Before too long, what may at first have seemed an impossible task will be done.

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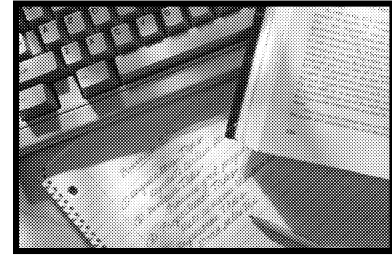


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Other methods of memorization include working with a friend. Have him or her listen as you recite and, if necessary, prompt you. Then you return the favor by listening to your friend's recitation. A few of you might also decide to prepare flash cards. These are very helpful for reviewing vocabulary, math formulas, history dates, and so forth. Take turns holding up cards and supplying the required information.



All of these methods for improving your memory will help you. Some may work better than others, depending on how you learn. If you are the logical/mathematical type of learner, you probably use categorization to help you remember since you like to proceed in an organized manner. If you have the naturalist intelligence, you too categorize and list. That habit is an excellent aid to memory. If your preference is for the linguistic intelligence, word or idea association comes naturally to you, and you probably enjoy imaginative mnemonic devices. Students who rank high in spatial intelligence may also enjoy word associations and mnemonic devices because of the images or pictures they bring to mind.

All students can improve their memories by becoming aware of as many aids to memory as they can. In certain study situations one method may work better than another. Of course, whatever learning trick you choose, the more diligently you apply it, the better the results will be. If you are lucky, you might get a little help from Mnemosyne. You do remember her, *don't* you?

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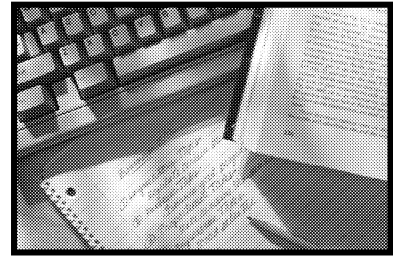
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QUIZ

The first few questions below use the same format as a TV quiz show; that is, instead of giving an answer to a question, the answer is supplied for you, but you are expected to supply the question!



EXAMPLE: *Answer:* Igloo (You are given this.)

Question: What is the name of an Eskimo's house? (You supply this.)

1. *Answer:* Mnemosyne

Question: _____

2. *Answer:* Acronym

Question: _____

3. *Answer:* A technique that helps people remember things. (Four were discussed in this unit.)

Question: _____

4. *Answer:* The category to which "Spring forward, fall back" belongs.

Question: _____

5. *Answer:* Trait that actors, politicians, and quiz-show contestants have in common.

Question: _____

Remember, in the discussion about certain aids to memory, the assertion that it is relatively easy to remember rhymes. Let's test that statement. Questions 6–10 are based on nursery rhymes. Can you answer them?

6. How many blackbirds were "baked in a pie"? _____

7. At what time does the ten o'clock scholar now arrive? _____

8. Where was the speaker in the rhyme going when he "met a man with seven wives"? _____

9. Who joined Miss Muffett on her tuffet? _____

10. How many bags of wool did the black sheep have? _____

If you've ever read or heard nursery rhymes, that was easy. You probably didn't consciously memorize those rhymes, but you remembered them because they did rhyme and because you heard them over and over. Repetition helps, you know.

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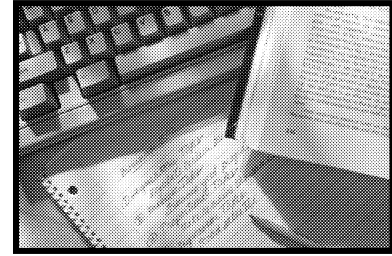


Tricks of the Trade *(continued)*

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Try categorizing now. Following are three words (categories) and their definitions. List as many animals as you can that fit into each category. (People are animals, too, remember.)



11. *Carnivore*—meat-eating animal _____

12. *Omnivore*—an animal that eats both meat and vegetables _____

13. *Herbivore*—an animal that feeds mostly on grass or other plants

14. Can you devise a trick to distinguish between this pair?

Capital—a city or town that is the official set of government

Capitol—the building in which the U.S. Congress or a state legislature meets

What about this pair?

Principal—the chief, head, or presiding officer, especially of a school

Principle—a fundamental truth, law, or doctrine

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