

## 9 Types of Mnemonics for Better Memory

**Mnemonics** are memory devices that help learners recall larger pieces of information, especially in the form of lists like characteristics, steps, stages, parts, etc. We knew back in 1967 from a study by Gerald R. Miller that mnemonics increased recall. He found that students who regularly used mnemonic devices **increased test scores up to 77%**! Many types of mnemonics exist and which type works best is limited only by the imagination of each individual learner. The 9 basic types of mnemonics presented in this handout include **Music, Name, Expression/Word, Model, Ode/Rhyme, Note Organization, Image, Connection, and Spelling Mnemonics**.

### 1. Music Mnemonics

How many lyrics to songs do you remember? How did you come to remember them? Music is a powerful memory technique and it can work just as well in school, also. Many learners have made songs out of information when a list of items must be learned. Advertising on radio and TV uses this technique to help potential customers remember their products when shopping. You can make a song or jingle using any type of music you choose for any list of items. **Music Mnemonics** work best with long lists. For example, some children learn the ABC's by singing the "ABC" song. Other children learn all the states in alphabetical order using the "50 Nifty United States" song.

### 2. In a **Name Mnemonic**, the 1st letter of each word in a list of items is used to make a name of a person or thing. An example is:

- a. **ROY G. BIV** = colors of the spectrum (**R**ed, **O**range, **Y**ellow, **G**reen, **B**lue, **I**ndigo, **V**iolet.)

### 3. **Name of Expression Mnemonics**

This is by far the most popularly used mnemonic. To make an **Expression or Word** mnemonic, the first letter of each item in a list is arranged to form a phrase or word. Examples include:

- a. For physical laws dealing with gasses, try these:

**Charles' Law:** For a constant volume, pressure is directly proportional to temperature.

**The simple way to remember Chuck is if the tank's too hot, you are out of luck.**

**Henry's Law:** The solubility of a gas increases with pressure.

**The way to remember good old Hank is think of bubbles in the Coke you drank.**

Adapted from: Congos, Dennis H. (2011) *Starting Out in Community College*. Chicago, IL: McGraw-Hill

**Boyles' Law:** At constant temperature, pressure is inversely proportional to volume. **Boyle's law is best of all because it presses gasses awfully small.**

- b. In English, the 7 coordinating conjunctions are **For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So = FANBOYS.**
- c. The order of operations for math is **Parentheses, Exponents, Multiply, Divide, Add, and Subtract = PLEASE EXCUSE MY DEAR AUNT SALLY.**
- d. The categories in the classification of life are **Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species, Variety = KINGS PLAY CARDS ON FAIRLY GOOD SOFT VELVET.**
- e. For those who have to remember the order of color coding on electronic resistors: **BLACK, BLUE, RED, ORANGE, YELLOW, GREEN, BROWN, VIOLET, GRAY, WHITE, SILVER, GOLD.**
- f. Almost every anatomy class has to remember the eight small bones in the wrist:
- g. **SCAPHOID, LUNATE, TRIQUETRIUM, PISIFORM, TRAPEZIUM, TRAPEZOID, CAPITATE, (and) HAMATE**

**Bad Boys Rile Our Young Girls, But Violet Gives Welts (to) Silly Guys**

**Sally Left The Party To Take Cathy Home**

#### 4. **Model Mnemonics**

In a **Model Mnemonic**, some type of representation is constructed to help with understanding and recalling important information.

Examples include a circular sequence model, a pyramid model of stages, a pie chart, and a 5-box sequence. Models should be used in addition to words and lists because they make recall at test time much easier.

#### 5. **Ode or Rhyme Mnemonics**

An **Ode or Rhyme Mnemonic** puts information to be recalled in the form of a poem.

Examples include:

- a. A commonly used **Rhyme Mnemonic** for the number of days in each month is:
  - i. 30 days hath September, April, June, and November. All the rest have 31,  
Fine! February 28 except when 29.
- b. You'd probably like your doctor to know the difference between cyanate and cyanide: **Cyanate "I ate" and Cyanide "I died."** Cyanide is a deadly poison.
- c. **In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.**
- d. **I before e except after c  
or when sounding like a  
in *neighbor* and *weigh***

- e. Here is an easy way to remember the nerves: olfactory, optic, oculomotor, trochlear, trigeminal, abducens, facial, acoustic, glossopharyngeal, vagus, spinal accessory and hypoglossal.

- i. **On Old Olympus' Towering Tops, A Finn And German Viewed Some Hops**

## 6. **Note Organization Mnemonics**

The way textbook and lecture notes are organized can inhibit learning and recall or promote it. In the sense that the organization of notes can promote recall, it is a memory device.

Three examples of organizing note formats that promote recall are as follows:

### a. **Notecards**

- i. Notecards are an easy way to organize main ideas and relevant details to be recalled. If main ideas are formatted into possible test questions, notecards can give learners practice in seeing questions and recalling answers as they must do on exams.

### b. **Outlines**

- i. Outlines clearly separate main ideas from details. This helps organize the information in the mind making it easier to remember.

### c. **Cornell System**

- i. The Cornell System is another way to use a **Note Organization Mnemonic** to promote recall. A vertical line is drawn 3 inches from the left margin of notebook paper. Main ideas or questions from them are placed to the left of the line and details or answers placed to the right.

## 7. **Image Mnemonics**

The information in an **Image Mnemonic** is constructed in the form of a picture that promotes recall of information when you need it. The sillier the **Image Mnemonic** is, the easier it is to recall the related information. These images may be mental or sketched into text and lecture notes. Don't worry about your artistic ability. As long as you know what your sketch means, **Image Mnemonics** will help you learn and remember.

Examples include:

- a. You can use an **Image Mnemonic** to remember **BAT** (the depressant drugs mentioned above - Barbiturates, Alcohol, and Tranquilizers). Visualize or sketch in your notes a limp, depressed bat that took **B**arbiturates, **A**lcohol, and

Tranquilizers.

- b. Picture meeting someone new at a party named John Horsley. Use an **Image Mnemonic** to help you remember his name. Visualize a horse sitting on a john: not pretty but effective in recall.
- c. **What is a numismatist?** Visualize an image of a new mist rolling onto a beach from the ocean and beach is made of coins. Silly? Of course, but sillyography makes it is easier to remember that a numismatist is a coin collector.
- d. How about using a bad joke to help you remember? Picture an image of two numismatists having a drink for “old *dime’s* sake.” Corny? Yes, but cornography often makes things easier to remember.

#### 8. **Connections Mnemonics**

In this type of mnemonic, the information to be remembered is connected to something already known.

Examples include:

- a. Remembering the direction of longitude and latitude is easier to do when you realize that lines on a globe that run North and South are long and that coincides with **LONG**itude. Another Connection Mnemonic points out that there is an **N** in **LONG**itude and an **N** in **N**orth. Latitude lines must run east to west, then. There is no **N** in latitude.
- b. Another Connection Mnemonic is related to sound. The 1st part of the word **latitude sounds like flat** and **flat runs horizontal or East and West**.

#### 9. **Spelling Mnemonics**

- a. Here is an example of a spelling mnemonic: A princip**al** at a school is your **pal**, and a princip**le** you believe or follow is a **rule**.
- b. Another commonly used **Spelling Mnemonic** is combined with an **Ode/Rhyme Mnemonic**.
  - i. **I before e except after c  
or when sounding like a  
in neighbor and weigh**
- c. A third example deals with the problems some learners have remembering that there is an “a” in the middle of separate and not an “e.” A **Spelling Mnemonic** combined with an **Image Mnemonic** may be used to spell the word sepArate using an exaggerated “a.”
- d. To spell Mississippi, many learners combine a **Rhythm Mnemonic** with a **Spelling mnemonic: M-iss-iss-ipp-i**.



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- e. Here are some more examples of spelling mnemonics:
- Geography: George Edwards Old Grandma Rode A Pig Home Yesterday.**
  - Arithmetic: A Rat In The House May Eat The Ice Cream.**
  - Saskatchewan: Ask At Chew An** with an **S** in front of it.

Take the 1st letter of **each type of mnemonic listed above** and print them below on the line.