

11
L E S S O N

Memorizing Techniques

It's All in the Mind!



Where Do You Stand?

"A man's real possession is his memory. In nothing else is he rich, in nothing else is he poor."

Alexander Smith (1830–1867)

Most people have a few things that they just can't seem to remember—like the spelling of a particular word, the date of their grandmother's birthday, or the names of the Great Lakes. Make a list of things you know you have trouble remembering.

Do you realize that you use your memory in hundreds of ways each day? When you get up in the morning, you remember who you are and where you are. You remember how to get dressed, where the kitchen is located, and how to get to school.

Wouldn't it be great to be able to remember facts and formulas as easily as you remember how to tie your shoes? One way to memorize something is to repeat it over and over—like tying your shoes. But to remember facts you learn in school, it's often simpler to make them stand out in your mind by linking them to something unusual or extraordinary. This lesson will teach you some memorizing techniques, or mnemonic (*ni MON ik*) devices, that will help make facts you learn in school unforgettable.

After you complete this lesson, look back at your list. Use what you've learned to find ways to remember the pesky facts on your list.

Memory Tricks

Work with a partner to write the answers to the following questions. If you used a special memory technique to remember the answer, explain it.

1. In what year did Christopher Columbus set sail for the Americas?

How did you remember?

2. In the spring, do you set the clock ahead or behind an hour for daylight savings time?

How did you remember?

3. What are the names, in order, of the colors of the rainbow?

How did you remember?

Picture Perfect

Do you know the saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words?” Sometimes it’s easier to remember a picture than a lot of facts and words.

One way to use pictures as a memory aid, or mnemonic device, is to create a word picture.

Choose words that sound like parts of the word you want to remember and make them part of a word picture. For example, to remember that Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania, you could picture a hamburger with a hairy beard writing with a pen.



Hamburger and *Harrisburg* both begin with *H* and include the word part *burg*. *Hairy* sounds something like *Harris*. The pen will remind you of the state of Pennsylvania.

Draw word pictures to help you remember the definitions of the words below. Don’t be afraid to draw a wacky picture. The sillier the picture, the easier it will be to remember.

1. *Mitosis* is the process of one cell dividing into two.

2. *Détente* means “an agreement between nations.”

Four Ways to Remember

1

Detailed Descriptions

When you read about an event, try to imagine yourself in that time and place. Don't use just your sense of sight. Imagine what you'd be hearing, smelling, feeling, and tasting if you were there. Suppose you were studying about the pioneers crossing the mountains on their way out west. What would you feel like after walking all day in the dust behind a wagon? Feel the heat of the sun on your back. Smell the campfire as people get ready for dinner.

2

Rhymes and Songs

Advertisers spend a lot of money to create songs, called *jingles*, to help you remember the name of the product they want you to buy. You can use simple rhymes or tunes to help you remember, too. In this lesson, you're learning about mnemonic devices. *Mnemonic* is a hard word to say and a hard work to spell. A little jingle, sung to the tune of *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* can help you remember:

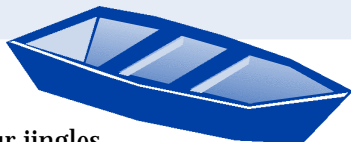
M-N-Then an E

M-O-N-I-C

Mnemonic, mnemonic, mnemonic, mnemonic—

That's the trick for me!

As you can see, your jingles don't have to be great works of art. If they help you remember, they're fine!



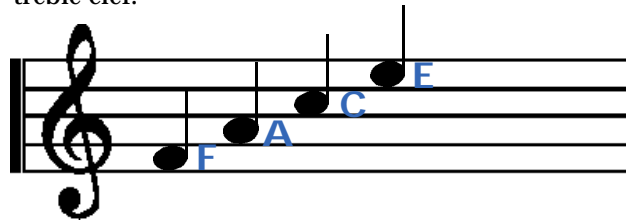
3

Acronyms

An *acronym* is a word created from the initial letters or syllables of a series of words. Some acronyms look something like abbreviations. How many of these acronyms have you heard?

- ◆ *radar*: radio detecting and ranging
- ◆ *OPEC*: Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
- ◆ *zip code*: zone improvement plan code

Make up your own acronyms to help you study. Arrange the first letters of the words you want to remember to make another word. If you take music lessons, for example, you may know that beginning music students use the acronym FACE to remember the names of the spaces on a treble clef.



4

Creative Sentences

You can make up a sentence using the first letter of each word in a list or sequence of things. For instance, here's another way to remember how to spell *mnemonic*.

Mutant newts eat mostly old nuts in cake.

It doesn't matter that a self-respecting newt wouldn't touch nuts or cake. After all, you're not studying biology right now. You're studying spelling. And it doesn't matter if your sentence doesn't make much sense. Just thinking about a mutant newt will start you off with the correct sequence of letters. Sometimes all your mind needs is a little hint to remember a much larger piece of information.

Practice Memorizing Techniques

In this lesson, you've learned several memorizing techniques that can help you study for tests. Use these ideas to make up your own memory aids to help you remember the following information.

1. Detailed Descriptions

The soldiers who were at Valley Forge with George Washington during the winter of 1777–78 faced many hardships.

2. Rhymes and Songs

On July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was approved by the Second Continental Congress.

3. Acronyms

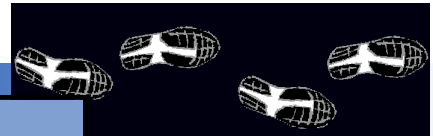
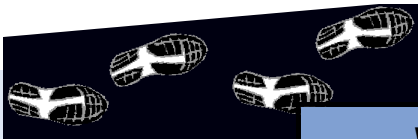
The names of the Iroquois Indian tribes that made up the confederacy of the Five Nations were the Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Onondaga, and Cayuga.

4. Creative Sentences

The names of the seven continents are: North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Antarctica, and Australia.

5. You CAN Remember!

Look back at the hard-to-remember names, dates, or ideas you listed back on page 44. Choose one fact and write a memory aid you can use to make sure you never forget it again!



Where Are You Going?

Summarize what you learned in this lesson. _____

Now use your summary to write a **Take Charge!** goal that will help you become a better student.

