

Success Services TIP SHEET

Memory Tool: Mnemonics

What are Mnemonics?

- Mnemonics are memory tools that serve as bridges to help you recall information and concepts from long-term memory.
- They involve creating some form of an association.
- Best if used only for information that is difficult to recall.

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Kinds of Mnemonics:

1. **Acronyms –**

An acronym is a word or phrase made by using the first letter of key words in a list of items to remember.

Example:

HOMES = Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior (the five Great Lakes)

2. **Acrostics –**

An acrostic is a sentence made by using the first letter of key words in a list of items to remember.

An example:

oPlease excuse my dear Aunt Sally =
parentheses, exponents, multiplication,
division, addition, and subtraction
(represents the order of operations in math problems)

3. **Word Associations –**

Word associations are jingles, rhymes, short songs, and raps that work as memory tools to recall information.

Examples:

- ♦ Use i before e except after c or when sounded like a as in neighbor and weigh.
- ♦ Righty tighty, lefty loosy (to remember which way to turn a bolt or to tighten a jar)
- ♦ In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.

4. **Picture Associations-**

Picture associations are visual suggestions to help you to easily remember and recall information.

Example:

Term: Mao Tse-tung

Definition: Leader of the Chinese Revolution

Visual Association: Draw a person mowing the lawn, a person saying something, and a tongue.

5. **The Loci Method –**

The loci method is a mnemonic technique that involves associating items or topics with specific rooms in a familiar building.

Example:

Assume you have to give a speech or write an essay for a history class about the end of the economic boom in the 1970s.

Visualize walking through a building on campus, like the student union:

At the front door, picture a poster that says, "350 percent increase in oil prices."

In the hallway, picture rows of oil barrels with large Xs on them for Arab oil embargo

In the cafeteria, picture food prices:

hamburgers \$7.50, milk \$3.00, for high retail prices.

In the lounge, picture posters on the walls of closed auto factories for slump in auto industry

In the hall as you leave, picture people lined up for job interviews for high unemployment.

Sources:

①Szarlan, John, Suman Singha, and Scott Brown. *Striving For Excellence: A Manual for Goal Achievement*. Boston: Pearson, 2011. Print.
②Wong, Linda. *Essential Study Skills*. 6th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2009. Print.

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The enemy of Concentration is Procrastination and Stress. Use the following tips to help overcome a habit of procrastination:

- **Get to know how you procrastinate and remove temptation.** Be honest with yourself and get clear around how your procrastination manifests. Change your environment to help eliminate temptations.
- **Aim for "good enough".** Perfectionism pressures us to procrastinate, so we need to be okay with good enough so that we can get things done.
- **Be nice to yourself.** Shame is not going to help you accomplish your goals. Be honest with yourself, act, and move forward. Don't let negative self-talk slow you down.
- **Whatever you do, do it with intention.** If you're having a difficult time focusing and being productive, consider just giving yourself permission to do whatever you're doing with intention, and become skilled at determining how it's meaningful for you. When we shift from autopilot to intentionality, we're empowered to make a change in behavior that doesn't serve us.

Concentration

The ability to stay focused on a single task for a substantial length of time requires understanding the techniques of concentration.

Most college students experience periods of low concentration. Many distractions can interrupt a student's focus while in class or studying. Traditional students living in a residence hall can be easily distracted by noise, talk from roommates or suite mates, phones, music, and general residence hall noise. Non-traditional students experience distraction in their home atmosphere. Both types of students will benefit from the following strategies:

1. Find a quiet place to study

Isolate yourself from distractions to maintain commitment to the task at hand. Find a quiet, solitary study corner in which to stay focused and concentrate. Make sure you are comfortable but alert. If you study in your room put a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your door.

2. Do the most difficult task first

Optimum concentration occurs when you are fresh and relaxed.

Assignments such as complex, lengthy readings or difficult math problems should be tackled early in your study time. Save easier, more enjoyable tasks for when you are growing tired and less concentration is required.

3. Understand what distractions to avoid

If you know that concentration can be a problem, the following suggestions will help you stay focused:

- Sit at the front of class.
 - Sit with students who are focused on the professor and class material.
 - Get enough rest and nutrition to stay alert during lecture and while studying.
 - Relate uninteresting subject matter to something that has an impact on your life. This connection will help you stay focused.
 - When reading a textbook, make a check in the margin every time your concentration wanders. When done, count the number of times you have made a mark. Set a goal to have a lower number of marks during your next reading assignment.
- ## 4. Develop active study techniques:
- ◇ Use a highlighter when reading textbooks and notes.
 - ◇ Take notes from your textbook while reading assignments and use the SQ4R reading method.
 - ◇ Make flashcards, diagrams, study matrixes, charts and drawings. Tape-record your notes or textbook and listen to the tape while exercising, driving or just taking a walk.
 - ◇ Never study in bed.



STUDY SKILL DEVELOPMENT

IMAGINE WHAT YOU CAN ACHIEVE
BY IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE
COLLEGE STUDY SKILLS!