

MNEMONICS

Mnemonics is the art of developing or sharpening memory. There are as many methods as there are minds. However, through the years, several techniques have been identified as helpful to many. Several of these will be described here.

ACRONYM

This is an invented combination of letters with each letter acting as a cue to an idea or terms you need to remember.

Example:

To remember the four kinds of prayer, remember ACTS for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication

To remember the four spaces in the treble cleff, remember FACE.

To remember the colors of the rainbow: ROY G BIV for Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet

To remember the steps used in target practice, remember BRASS for Breathe, Relax, Aim, Sight, Squeeze

ACROSTIC

This is a creative sentence where the first letter of each word is a cue to an idea you need to remember. When teaching second graders about the plagues that struck Egypt before the great Passover, I used Big Fat Geese Flew Down Behind Houses Lining Darkness Drive. This also provided a mental image. They then could remember Blood (water turned to blood), Frogs, Gnats, Flies, Disease, Boils, Hail, Locust, Darkness, Death.

To remember the lines of the treble cleff, remember Every Good Boy Does Fine. (EGBDF)

To remember the order of taxonomy: KING PHILIP CUTS OPEN FIVE GREEN SNAKES for Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species

To remember the order of the planets from the sun out: MY VERY EARNEST MOTHER JUST SERVED US NINE PICKLES for Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto

To remember the five great lakes: HOMES for Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior.

MUSIC

You can make a song or jingle using any type of music you choose for any list of items. I remember learning the countries of South America using the tune to Jingle Bells.

VENEZUELA, COLOMBIA, ECUADOR, PERU
BOLIVIA, CHILE, AND ARGENTINA TOO
URUGUAY, PARAGUAY, AND BRAZIL
FRENCH GUIANA, SURINAME, AND LASTLY GUYANA TOO.

Just be creative! If a tune helps you remember important facts, then it is the right tune for you.

MODEL MNEMONICS

This expression will be as unique as each individual. Create a diagram or map or drawing that incorporates key term or stages in a pattern that you will remember. Use color if it helps, arrows, geometric figures, whatever represents for you the information you need to remember.

Recently, social studies students and I created a diagram to help remember the first emperor of Rome who began an era called the Pax Romana. The emperor was Augustus, so he was pictured as a Capital A. Caligula and Claudius followed in succession, so each was a lowercase C under each leg of the A. Nero followed these, but because he had an especially bad reputation for persecution of the

Christians, his N was housed in the hollow of the A to imply that he should be imprisoned.

IMAGE MNEMONICS

These are similar to models. However the image used may be commonly known for something else, but provide a background for the memory cue.

Chemistry students have created an image of a bat that appears to have limp wings. To remember the kinds of drugs that are depressants (Barbiturates, Alcohol, and Tranquilizers) the weak looking bat becomes an acronym.