



# MEMORY MNEMONICS

## Student Activity Pack

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# **Why Memory Matters**

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What is the number one cause of stress before an exam? Normally it is the fear of forgetting information. Similarly, what normally takes up the majority of your time before an exam? Memorising your notes, right? Memorising your notes is both one of the most time consuming and stressful tasks you have to do across high school.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be. The reason why it takes ages to memorise our notes, and why we forget them so quickly is that we tend to use fairly basic memory skills that we developed back at the start of school. However, as your presenter discussed with you in the Memory & Mnemonics seminar, there are a range of higher level memory skills available to you, that most students never use.

However, this is the challenge: you need to actually USE the skills. It isn't good enough knowing about them, you have to put them to use. In a test done with university students, students using the higher level memory skills discussed in this workbook, managed to recall more random words and objects than students using standard rote-learning tools. The students who used rote-learning were then introduced to a range of higher level skills, but next time around, didn't put them to use. Even though they knew they were better and had seen other students out-perform them using the skills, they still didn't use them. Why? Because it was uncomfortable and difficult at the start. These students fell back on rote-learning because it appeared to be easier, not because it was better.

This booklet has been designed to help make the use of these memory skills much easier. Rather than trying to use the memory skills for the first time in an exam, you can trial them while filling out this workbook.

## **Activity 1 - Mnemonics**

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In the Memory & Mnemonics seminar, your presenter introduced you to a memory skill called mnemonics. Realistically, you are not going to use mnemonics to memorise all of your notes – it would be very time consuming. Mnemonics are a great system to use to memorise the information and areas of your notes that you struggle to remember. This will provide you with a safety net so that you are less likely to forget anything in the exam room.

Let's start with an easy example. In the Memory & Mnemonics seminar, your presenter used the example of matching random words to the rhyming words from the mnemonic system, so let's start with a similar example. Have a look over the words on the next page and make an image by combining the random word with the rhyming mnemonic word. The first one has been done for you:

## Mnemonics – Activity 1

Mix the 'rhyme' word with a 'memory' word to create a mental picture that will be hard to forget – then test yourself to see how you go!

| Number | Rhyme Words | Memory Words | Memory Image   |
|--------|-------------|--------------|--|
| 1      | BUN         | Sand         | <i>You bite into your KFC Zinger, and there's beach sand between the two bread buns.</i> |
| 2      | SHOE        | Path         |  |
| 3      | TREE        | Table        |  |
| 4      | DOOR        | Trumpet      |  |
| 5      | HIVE        | Ball         |  |
| 6      | STICKS      | Plane        |  |
| 7      | HEAVEN      | Kite         |  |
| 8      | GATE        | Crab         |  |
| 9      | WINE        | Rock         |  |
| 10     | PEN         | Cricket      |  |

## Activity 2 - Mnemonics

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Mnemonics can help you remember random words like those on the previous page, but as your presenter showed you they are also really useful for memorising content you learn in class. If you need to learn a tricky set of facts or a process that has lots of steps, mnemonics might just save you in an exam while other students forgetting one fact after another.

Below is an example set of notes for Business Studies. These notes outline different stages in a product life-cycle (like an iPhone) and then list different steps companies can use to market the product at the different stages. Have a look through them:

**Product Life-Cycle**

**INTRODUCTION**

- Improve product
- Price high
- Create awareness

**GROWTH**

- Introduce variations
- Price reduction
- Heavy advertising

On the next page, combine the rhyme word with the points from the page of Business Studies notes into an image. Remember, the goal is to be as creative as you possibly can. The funnier, weirder and generally more emotionally charged you make the image, the easier it will be to memorise. The first point has been done for you as an example:

## Mnemonics – Activity 2

Mix the 'rhyme' word with a 'memory' word to create a mental picture for the business studies notes above. If you can't think of any mental images, look on the next page for some ideas. Once you're done, cover the page and test yourself on for all words.

| Number | Rhyme Words | Memory Words      | Memory Image  |
|--------|-------------|-------------------|---|
| 1      | BUN         | Introduction      | <i>I introduce myself to a hamburger who introduces himself back to me, then I eat him.</i> |
| 2      | SHOE        | Improve product   |   |
| 3      | TREE        | Price high        |   |
| 4      | DOOR        | Create awareness  |   |
| 5      | HIVE        | Growth            |   |
| 6      | STICKS      | Variation         |   |
| 7      | HEAVEN      | Price reduction   |   |
| 8      | GATE        | Heavy advertising |   |

## Mnemonics – Activity 2 cheat sheet

If you get stuck for mental image examples, have a look at some ideas below:

| Number | Rhyme Words | Memory Words      | Memory Image  |
|--------|-------------|-------------------|---|
| 1      | BUN         | Introduction      | I introduce myself to a hamburger who introduces himself back to me, then I eat him.            |
| 2      | SHOE        | Improve product   | A TV show called "Pimp my Shoe" with a team of experts working on the shoe to make it better.   |
| 3      | TREE        | Price high        | Walking past a tree with a Louis Vuitton brand stamped onto it and a \$25,000 price tag.        |
| 4      | DOOR        | Create awareness  | A door with a sign on it reading "This is a door"   |
| 5      | HIVE        | Growth            | A bee hive which keeps growing until it explodes and hundreds of bees swarm down and attack me. |
| 6      | STICKS      | Variation         | 10 sticks laid out on the ground which are all of different length.                             |
| 7      | HEAVEN      | Price reduction   | A cloud with a sign on it saying "for sale – prices dropped"                                    |
| 8      | GATE        | Heavy advertising | A gate with hundreds of advertisements stuck all over it making it so heavy it can't open.      |

# Activity 3 – Boosting Attention

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As your presenter discussed with you in the **Memory & Mnemonics** seminar, attention is critical to the memory process. However, when most of us sit down to study we put ourselves in environments where we are surrounded by a range of distractions. Beyond limiting how much we actually remember, these distractions also increase how long it takes to get the work done. Start by surveying your study space and identifying how many distractions you have around you.

## The Room

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*Tick the most appropriate answer.*

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Do you study in a quiet room?            |  |
| 2. Do you study sitting at a desk or table? |  |
| 3. Is the desk or table completely clean?   |  |
| 4. Do you have plenty of light?             |  |

Now, score yourself. Give yourself 1 point for every tick. How many points did you score? If you scored 3 or less, it's time to make some changes. Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. **Find a quiet room:** When it comes to study, anything that can divert your attention will. TV, Facebook, music, parents, brothers and sisters will all act as distractions. It is essential that you find a quiet place to study. If you can't find a space like this at home think about a local library, school library, or friend's place.
2. **Sit up:** Lying down tells your brain to go to sleep. Find a desk or table to work at.
3. **Clean the desk:** Anything that is within reach or visible will distract you, so get a clean space.
4. **Light:** Straining your eyes is both draining and secondly, distracting. Make sure the study space is well lit, preferably with a desk or table lamp as well.

## What's your study environment like?

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Tick the most appropriate answer.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Do you study with a laptop or tablet near you?   |  |
| 2. If you study with a laptop or tablet, do you find yourself jumping on to websites like Facebook and YouTube? |  |
| 3. Do you study with music on in the background?  |  |
| 4. Do you study with the TV on in the background?   |  |
| 5. Do you study with your phone next to you?  |  |

Let's calculate your score again. This time give yourself a 1 for every tick. If you scored 3 or less, have a look at some of the changes you may want to make.

- Laptops and Technology:** Traditionally, the old advice when it came to study was don't use a laptop or don't work in front of a computer as it will only distract you. However, this is much harder to do today, as a lot of your study might be done on a laptop. However even though laptops and tablets have become necessary, they are still distractions that we need to master. One great way to do this is to use apps like **Cold Turkey** or **SelfControl** which allow you to block distracting websites for an amount of time that you choose.
- Music & TV:** Don't have music on in the background. The lyrics and the changing tempo can be massive distractions. Radio is even worse. Finally, TV is worst of all. Your study environment should be as quiet as possible. But if you absolutely *have* to have some background noise, try downloading an app like **Study** – it's proven to help students boost their concentration when studying in noisy environments.
- Phone:** Turn your phone-off. It may be hard to believe, but the world is not going to turn upside down in the next 60 minutes. We all know that study isn't that hard once you get going. Unfortunately, the hardest part is just picking up a pen and starting. If it takes you 10 minutes to get into the swing of study, each text message that you read takes you back to the start, and it takes another 10 minutes to settle back in and get into a rhythm.



## Your Physical State

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Tick if any of these apply to you:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Do you do something physical before you start studying?         |  |
| 2. Do you take regular breaks every 50-60 minutes?                 |  |
| 3. Do you use these breaks to stretch or to do something physical? |  |
| 4. Do you avoid watching TV in a study break?                      |  |
| 5. Do you have a bottle or glass of water on hand?                 |  |
| 6. Do you avoid coffee, or caffeine products?                      |  |

Score yourself again. 1 point for a tick. If you got 4 or less, have a look below at some changes you may make to your physical state before and during study.

- 1. Get pumped up!** Yes – weird advice we know, but our energy levels dictate the amount of mental focus we have and the amount of information we retain. Put on some music, dance around, do press-ups, run on the spot, shadow box, skip. Try and do something intensely for 60 seconds before you study. As soon as you hit 60 seconds, sit down at a desk or a table, sit up straight and start studying. Give it a try and see if it makes the study easier. When you find your attention beginning to wander, take a 60-second timeout and do the same activity again and then sit back down and get straight back into the study. If you do this every 15-25 minutes, you would be amazed at how long you can study without needing a long break.
- 2. Study breaks:** Even if you are keeping your energy levels high, you will need to take regular study breaks across the day or evening. The research is very divided as to how long you can go without your attention lapsing, but generally people tend to suggest that 50-60 minutes is about the maximum. Use this as a guide, but if you find yourself flagging, take more regular breaks. But be careful how you use these breaks. Ideally use them to do something physical such as going for a walk around the block. Try not to use the time as a TV break. Plonking yourself in front of the TV is normally a great way to ensure that you don't get off the couch for the rest of the night.
- 3. Avoid Caffeine:** As we all know, caffeine is a stimulant, which means it is harder to get to sleep having just had a coffee. Lost sleep may not immediately distract you, but it catches up with you. Research shows that it only takes 8 hours of lost sleep to negatively impact memory and attention, while people who haven't slept for 19 hours tend to have lower mental and motor skills than a child! As such, avoid relying on coffee to get you through an evening's work. Instead, keep a bottle of water nearby and make sure you regularly hydrate. Even slight dehydration can lead to sluggishness, lack of focus and impairment of thought and memory.

## Activity

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Based on your answers above, write down 5 things you are going to change to improve your attention while studying:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 3 |  |
| 4 |  |
| 5 |  |

# Activity 4 – The Visual Journey

As your presenter covered in the Memory & Mnemonics seminar, the Mental Journey is one of the most powerful memory tools you can use to remember large chunks of information. Again, you are not going to use this technique to memorise all of your notes, but rather focus the technique on the areas of your notes you find the most difficult to memorise.

Let's start with an easy example – 10 random words. As your presenter discussed with you in the seminar, you want to create an image which links each of these words with a room in your house to create a mini-story for what the image is doing in the room. Try and picture the story as if it is a movie, and try and make the movie as weird or as funny as possible. If you are stumped for ideas, have a look at the examples on page 15 and 16.

| Room in house | Points from your notes | Mental image   |
|---------------|------------------------|--|
| Front Door    | Coffee mug             | <i>It's light outside, but when you open your front door everything becomes super dark</i> |
|               | Ice cream              |  |
|               | Train                  |  |
|               | Boat                   |  |
|               | Spade                  |  |
|               | Snowboard              |  |
|               | Planes                 |  |
|               | Hens                   |  |
|               | Cards                  |  |

Now test yourself. Cover the table above and see how many of the words you can remember by completing the table below:

| Room number | Points from your notes |
|-------------|------------------------|
| One         |                        |
| Two         |                        |
| Three       |                        |
| Four        |                        |
| Five        |                        |
| Six         |                        |
| Seven       |                        |
| Eight       |                        |
| Nine        |                        |

## Practice Activity

Now that you've got the hang of it, let's look at turning an actual page of notes into a visual journey. Have a look at the page of English notes on the book *Heart of Darkness* below:



Now create an image for each of these themes by combining them with a room in your house.

| Room in house | Points from notes | Mental image |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|
|               | Darkness          |              |
|               | Madness           |              |
|               | Fog               |              |
|               | River             |              |
|               | Civilisation      |              |
|               | Evil              |              |

Now cover up the table on the previous page, and see how many of the points you can remember by completing the table below:

| Room number | Points from notes |
|-------------|-------------------|
| One         |                   |
| Two         |                   |
| Three       |                   |
| Four        |                   |
| Five        |                   |
| Six         |                   |

## Practise Activity 2

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Let's try another one. Have a read through these notes from Modern History about the rise of the Nazi Party in the 1930s:

### **Nazi Seizure of Power**

- **Hitler appointed chancellor**
- **Reichstag fire**
- **Dissolution of parliament**
- **Night of long knives**
- **President Hindenburg dies**

Now create an image for each of these themes by combining them with a room in your house.

| Room in house | Points from notes                | Mental image |
|---------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
|               | <b>Hitler Chancellor</b>         |              |
|               | <b>Reichstag fire</b>            |              |
|               | <b>Dissolution of Parliament</b> |              |
|               | <b>Night of Long Knives</b>      |              |
|               | <b>Hindenburg dies</b>           |              |

Now cover up the table above, and see how many of the points you can remember by completing the table below:

| Room number  | Points from notes |
|--------------|-------------------|
| <b>One</b>   |                   |
| <b>Two</b>   |                   |
| <b>Three</b> |                   |
| <b>Four</b>  |                   |
| <b>Five</b>  |                   |

## Activity 4 – Cheat Sheets

If you're having trouble thinking of some mental images for Activity 4, here are some ideas:

| Room in house | Points from notes   | Mental image  |
|---------------|---------------------|---|
| Front Door    | <b>Darkness</b>     | It's light outside, but when you open your front door everything becomes super dark   |
| Hallway       | <b>Madness</b>      | In your hallway the mad hatter springs out of nowhere and starts babbling.            |
| Kitchen       | <b>Fog</b>          | You're making breakfast and all of a sudden a fog fills the kitchen completely.       |
| Bedroom       | <b>River</b>        | You find a river running right down the middle of your bedroom,                       |
| Backyard      | <b>Civilisation</b> | You find an ant nest in your garden that is a civilization with roads, buildings etc. |
| Bathroom      | <b>Evil</b>         | You go into your bathroom and Dr Evil is standing there laughing maniacally           |

| Room in house | Points from notes                | Mental image   |
|---------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Front Door    | <b>Hitler Chancellor</b>         | You hear a knock on your front door and when you open Hitler is standing there                     |
| Hallway       | <b>Reichstag fire</b>            | You walk into the hallway and it is on fire  |
| Bedroom       | <b>Dissolution of Parliament</b> | You walk into your bed is dissolving and disappearing  |
| Kitchen       | <b>Night of Long Knives</b>      | You walk into the kitchen and open the dishwasher – it only contains knives as long as swords.     |
| Backyard      | <b>Hindenburg dies</b>           | You walk into your backyard and the Hindenburg airship is crashing down and blows up on your lawn. |

| Room in house | Points from notes | Mental image  |
|---------------|-------------------|---|
| Front Door    | <b>Coffee mug</b> | Someone is banging on the front door with a mug yelling "I want coffee!"                  |
| Hallway       | <b>Ice cream</b>  | The carpet is a sea of ice cream with hundreds of spoons sticking out.                    |
| Bedroom       | <b>Train</b>      | A train comes smashing through your bedroom in the middle of the night.                   |
| Bathroom      | <b>Boat</b>       | The shower floods the bathroom and a boat drifts in through the door.                     |
| Study         | <b>Spade</b>      | A pile of books in the study fall on your mum and you need to use a spade to dig her out. |
| Kitchen       | <b>Snowboard</b>  | You go into the kitchen and open the freezer and there are miniature people snowboarding. |
| Living Room   | <b>Planes</b>     | While watching TV, you notice miniature planes buzzing around your head.                  |
| Backyard      | <b>Hens</b>       | You walk into the backyard and notice a chicken farm with hundreds of hens.               |
| Roof          | <b>Cards</b>      | You go onto the roof of your house and find a casino there, so you start playing cards.   |