



# *Memory* **Mnemonics**

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## *Student Activity Pack*

*Putting the skills into practice.*

## Why Memory Matters

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 workshop, 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

In the Memory Mnemonics workshop, 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 workshop, 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:

### 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

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:



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.

**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	

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

## Activity 3: Boosting Attention

As your presenter discussed with you in the **Memory Mnemonics** workshop, 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

*Tick the most appropriate answer:*

- Do you study in a quiet room?
- Do you study sitting at a desk or table?
- Is the desk or table completely clean?
- 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?

*Tick the most appropriate answer:*

- Do you study with a laptop or tablet near you?
- If you study with a laptop or tablet, do you find yourself jumping on to websites like Facebook and YouTube?
- Do you study with music on in the background?
- Do you study with the TV on in the background?
- 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 more, have a look at some of the changes you may want to make.

**1. 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.

**2. Music and 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.

**3. 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

**Tick the most appropriate answer:**

- Do you do something physical before you start studying?
- Do you take regular breaks every 50-60 minutes?
- Do you use these breaks to stretch or to do something physical?
- Do you avoid watching TV in a study break?
- Do you have a bottle or glass of water on hand?
- 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:**

Based on your answers above, write down 6 things you are going to change to improve your attention while studying:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

## Activity 4: The Visual Journey

As your presenter covered in the Memory Mnemonics workshop, 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 workshop, 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	

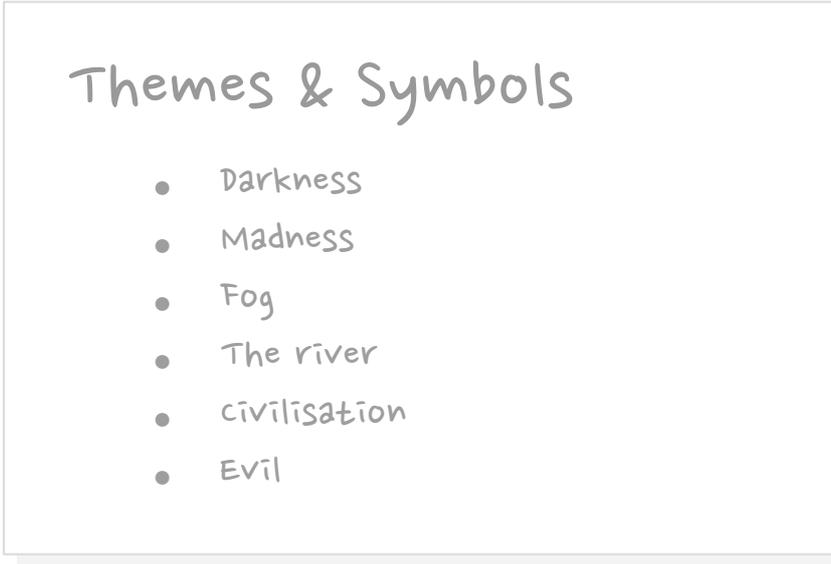
Now test yourself. Cover the table above and see how many of the words you can remember by completing the table below:

Room in house	Points from your notes
One	
Two	
Three	
Four	
Five	

Room in house	Points from your notes
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 your notes	Mental Image
	Darkness	
	Madness	
	Fog	
	River	
	Civilisation	
	Evil	

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

Room number	Points from your notes
One	
Two	
Three	

Room number	Points from your notes
Four	
Five	
Six	

**Practice Activity 2:**

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 your notes	Mental Image
	Hitler appointed chancellor	
	Reichstag fire	
	Dissolution of parliament	
	Night of long knives	
	President Hindenburg dies	

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

Room in house	Points from your notes
One	
Two	
Three	
Four	
Five	

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

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

**Activity 4: Cheat Sheets (continued)**

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



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