

HOW TO REMEMBER THINGS

IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY WITH GIMMENOTES



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INTRODUCTION

Do you have a reliable memory? If you had a passage to memorize, how long would it take you to know it word for word? Ever wondered why repetition doesn't always guarantee success when recalling certain things? We are talking about that textbook you have been cramming for your exam, that easy test you failed even after studying for it or the oral exam that had you rambling even after you thought you were prepared for it. Have you ever wondered how and why your memory lets you down when you most need it?

At one point or another, we have all wondered how some people are able to handle work, multiple projects, classes, relationships and maintain a successful social life, while we struggle to get through a few exams. Fortunately for some, having learnt to retain information early in life has awarded them in using it effectively. So, how do you ensure that you are also capable of doing this?

How to remember things is your answer!!! The main focus of this book is to teach you techniques that will improve your memory. We will teach you how to learn information quickly, use your memory to recall information effectively and to remember what you have learnt for longer. These memory techniques are not exclusively for scholars, but for everyone who wants to improve their memory and be more efficient in their daily lives. It doesn't matter what grade you are doing in school or whether you are currently studying or working. Improving your memory will help you excel in your studies and learn important information for your current or future job position faster.

When we were putting this eBook together, we decided to get straight to the point and give you the tools required to get started. We have shared techniques that have worked successfully for us in both studies and work. We have also realised that a lot of people are struggling with tasks they could excel in if they knew the right methods.

Lastly, we would like to state that it is your responsibility to constantly improve, practice and build on what you learn in this book. We **strongly** recommend that you make an effort to find out more about the mentioned techniques. Improving your memory should not be seen as a challenge with limits, but the beginning of a journey that can help you reach higher goals.

STUDY SKILLS, TIPS AND TOOLS

The key to studying requires one to be practical and you will soon learn that most of these suggestions are not new to you. By now, you must have learnt that there are no shortcuts to the basics of learning. Well, not until some genius invents a magical pill that will give us super brains or that allows us to learn in our sleep.

And talking about sleep, one of the most important aspects of learning is getting enough sleep. When you are awake your body creates toxic products in your brain and when you are asleep, your cells shrink, increasing the space in between your cells. Researchers have also shown that after people sleep, they tend to retain information and perform better on memory tasks. Our bodies all require long periods of sleep in order to restore and rejuvenate, to grow muscle, repair tissue, and synthesize hormones. Trying to learn new concepts with a tired mind is the same as working against progress.

We know that it can be extremely frustrating trying to understand something that your peers or colleagues seem to grasp quicker than you do. Don't be frustrated by this. This is normal and at some point happens to every single one of us. Unfortunately, we are not taught at a young age that it is okay to be different people with different skills.

Understand that **nobody** is born with skills. Everything that we know right now at this point in our lives was learned at some point in our lives. Some people tend to be better at naturally learning certain skills and concepts faster than others, but this does not mean that the skills cannot be learned.

If you are struggling to grasp new concepts or remember them just after you understand them, you can do the following:

- **TAKE BREAKS** - Focusing too much on a problem can make it difficult to see it in its entirety. One of the helpful tasks you can do is as simple as taking a walk or doing an activity that does not require your full attention. We **do not** recommend watching TV or browsing the Internet because this break cannot be more than 5 to 10 minutes. Should you find yourself watching TV or browsing the Internet, we recommend that you set a timer and stick to it.
- **SPACED REPETITION** - Repetition helps information move from your working memory to your long-term memory. This will make it easier to retain information and recall it. We will dig more into this later in the book.
- **OVERLEARNING** - One of the definitions of overlearning is “to continue studying or practising something after initial proficiency has been achieved so as to reinforce or ingrain the learned material or skill”. Basically, aim for the information learned to come naturally and simply. To overlearn, practice and recall the information until you have mastered it. Overlearning could be the difference between a **60%** grade and that **100%**. We really want to emphasise the importance of overlearning as overlearning is the 1st step to mastery. Education is about mastering material and not simply being able to recite it. •
- **CHUNKING** - well what are chunks? Chunks are pieces of information bound together through meaning. Let’s say you need to remember a telephone number that you got from a handsome guy or a girl you met at the mall. He/She gives you their number “**My number is 0328-1473**”. What you normally do is chunk it ... ” **03-28-14-73** ”. So you break it up into smaller groups. **That’s all chunking is.** You break down the information you want to learn or remember and you focus on those small groups. This is an extremely effective way of remembering new information. Once you have all your chunks, piece them together and then revise

them. Learning an entire chapter at one go seems like a mountain to climb, but if you break it up it is more manageable.

- **ACRONYMS** - Acronyms help you remember short lists and phrases. In short, they are shortcuts that help you remember things easier. To create an acronym you must take the **first letter** of each word in the phrase or list you want to remember. Arrange them in such a way that is funny, smart and/or cute way that will stick to your brain. I am sure you have heard the acronym **ASAP (which means As Soon As Possible)**. You can use acronyms to remember things that need to be in order. Acronyms are especially helpful and powerful when things have to be in a particular order. Another example:

STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics

- **ACROSTICS** - It is very important to note that in all forms of learning, there is no progress without **first understanding** what you are learning. Understand first and then find simple ways of remembering. Acrostics are making silly sentences. You arrange the initial letter of random words into a sentence. An example of this would be arranging the first letters into words that can form a sentence. **E.g. A C E G = A Cow Eats Grass**. Be warned, this might be time-consuming in some aspects but this will force you to spend more time on the material you are trying to learn.

- **RHYMES** - Most of us first came across rhymes from nursery rhymes and poetry. Do you still remember the alphabet song? Chances are that when you were little, you learned the alphabet using a very popular song. Can you hear the song while reading this in your head? **A B C D E F G..... H I J K L-M-N-O-P....** Songs and rhythms are catchy. They stick to the mind extremely well. That is why you can remember the lyrics to your favourite song with ease. Use this to your advantage. Try turn the information you want to learn into a catchy tune or make them the lyrics to your favourite song. This also helps boost your creativity and a very powerful study skill to have. Repeat the tune or song as much as possible in order to better retain the information you are trying to memorize.
- **POMODORO TECHNIQUE** - If you struggle with time management and procrastination the Pomodoro technique might be your answer. This technique was developed by Francesco Cirillo in the 1980s, it uses a timer to break down work into intervals. Traditionally it is a **25 minutes** length technique separated by short breaks of up to **5 minutes**. How it works is you would write down a task that has to be done with a certain time, set a timer for 25 minutes or 35 minutes, then begin your task. Should you be distracted by a thought, idea or task, write it down, then continue with your original task. After completing 4 Pomodoro timer rings you can take a longer break of between 15 and 30 minutes. This is the time you will use to work through the notes you wrote down. You can adapt this system in a way that works for you, but it is very important that your sessions are of complete concentration and focus. This is an extremely powerful tool. We highly recommend that you use it.

THE GOLDEN KEYS TO MEMORY

People often try to learn information by repeating it a number of times, hoping to memorize it. More often than not, the day after learning this information they cannot recall any of what they learnt the day before. This method is called Rote Learning and unfortunately, this is how most people are taught to learn and it is considered to be the most inefficient and time-consuming way of remembering new information.

It is very important that you learn the **basics**, most importantly understand and practice them. This is the only way these techniques can work for you. There really is **no quick fix** when it comes to improving your memory. The better you are at the basics, the more you will get from these techniques.

The 3 keys to remembering information efficiently are:

1. IMAGINATION

When learning we use words and numbers, and without context these two are boring to the mind. Let us show you how to learn any type of information and have fun while doing it.

The first golden key to memory is **imagination**. This is probably the most important of the 3 keys. To make information stick, you would be required to convert the information into images and wild stories that you can see, feel, touch, and smell. The **wilder** the images, the easier the information will stick.

Example: An elephant in your room, wearing pink glasses and walking in heels.

We know that chances of this happening are nil, but we can imagine it and entertain ourselves with that image. That is the power of imagination! Human beings remember images, stories and spaces naturally. It is far more challenging

remembering numbers, words and symbols. As of now, try to convert the information you want to learn into an image.

A great way to expand your imagination and get your creative juices flowing is to write stories. Take a piece of paper and write or type whatever comes to mind. Imagine the wildest stories you possibly can and continue adding to them. Chances are you will be able to remember every detail a day or a few days after writing them. There are no rules, there are no limits.....so **GOOOOOOOOOO WILDDDDDDDD!!!** After creating these images in your story you then place them in a location.

Visualisation and Association are effective because images are full of texture and associations that stick in the mind's eye, whereas numbers and words are abstract. In the visualisation and association technique, abstract information is assigned to a visual image that is easier to remember, to eventually be retrieved from your long-term memory. It is important to focus when you visualise these images. Focus on the details.

Let's say you are trying to remember someone's name. Let's say the person's name is Sandile. The first thing you need to do is turn the name into a **picture**. Because the first part of Sandile sounds a little like sand and the second part like lay, we will imagine 'a person laying on the sand by the beach'. If possible, you must then connect Sandile with another person. Someone that you know. After you say it out loud a few times and you visualise "person laying on the sand by the beach" you should be able to remember the person's name.

Here are a few tips on using visualisation and association effectively: -

- **Make the image extremely big, or very small.**
- **Make the image as crazy as possible. GO WILD!!**
- **Make sure your images have actions**
- **Use your creativity and create a story with the image**

YOU MUST PRACTICE VISUALISATION AND ASSOCIATION AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. THIS IS THE KEY TO REMEMBERING INFORMATION A LOT FASTER THAN YOU CURRENTLY DO.

2. LOCATION

Have you ever had the answer to something, but could not recall it although it was on the tip of your tongue? Have you ever asked yourself where information is stored after you have learnt it? Your memory's location is any place you can picture in your mind's eye (mental picture formed by your imagination). This can be the house you grew up in and in certain places or objects within that house. The way to use the second golden key is to place the images of the wild stories in the different locations.

Exercise: Close your eyes and imagine that you are in your room. Now make up a story with 5 images of information that you want to learn. Place each image of your story on a different location: Image A on the door, image B on the bed, image C on the window, image D on the desk and image E in your wardrobe.

Now try to recall them and see how many you remember.

Your imagination is one of your most pivotal keys to remembering information, make your stories as exciting and as animated as possible. Do this often enough and see how far your imagination takes you!

The memory tool we are talking about here is called the method of loci. The **method of loci** (*loci* being Latin for "places") is a method of memory enhancement which uses visualizations with the use of spatial memory, familiar information about one's environment, to quickly and efficiently recall information. The method of loci is also known as the **memory journey**, **memory palace**, or **mind palace technique**. This method is a mnemonic device adopted in ancient Roman and Greek rhetorical treatises.

To use the Method of Loci, you simply need to **visualize a location** through which you can take an imaginary walk. If you are memorizing a speech, it is helpful for the location to have a beginning, middle, and an end, perhaps similar to a route you have memorized on your way to work. You will 'store' parts of what

you need to memorize throughout each space of the location you have chosen.

If you are using your work route as an example for a walk-through, you might mentally store the introduction of your speech in the mailbox near your front door, symbolizing the beginning of your speech. Continue throughout your imaginary walk, and in each new location, mentally store another element from your speech until you have completed your mental walk and reached the end of your speech.

The Method of Loci can help with **memorizing lists, scripts, and important speeches**. It is important to stress that mental imagery leads to the effectiveness of the Method of Loci. Creating a vivid mental picture helps the mnemonic become clear and solid in your mind. Rehearsing the association between the location and the material that needs to be memorized also adds to the mnemonic's effectiveness.

3. CONCENTRATION

Before we teach you about the importance of concentration, let us dispel a popular myth connected to it. The myth we are going to dispel is **multitasking**. Understand this now, multitasking does not exist. Our brains are only able to concentrate on one activity at a time. We can shift our attention from one task to another efficiently, but this is simply shifting our attention, not paying attention to everything at once. Some people do it well but most of us do not.

When we meet people, we often forget their names less than 30 seconds of hearing them. The reason for this is that we do not pay attention when people are introducing themselves. The other reason is that we do not concentrate on the person's name. The same thing happens when we are studying. We are doing the work but we are not completely focused on the work. **Paying attention to the things we do produces a lot more results than doing them mindlessly**. This is why concentration is important when learning.

THE LEARNING METHODS

The following methods are some of the best ways you can retain and focus on the information you want to learn.

THE LINK METHOD

The Link Method is a powerful memory tool you can use to focus on the information you want to memorize. This method changes unrelated or listed information into mental images that are easy to remember. You **create a visual connection** between the abstract facts to represent the concepts you want to remember. Images are generally easy to remember and that is what makes this method work.

The most useful and most important tip we can give you about this method is that the more bizarre the visual, the easier it will be to memorize. Basically, allow your imagination to go wild. A grocery list is an example of how you can apply the Link Method.

Examples:

1. Eggs
2. Bread
3. Shoe Polish
4. Coffee
5. Soap
6. Bananas
7. Pens

Imagine all these items competing to get your attention. What would each item do to stand out? If they could move, how would they impress you and how would you put them in a sequence that links all of them? Come up with a few funny and crazy stories to help you remember this short list. Remember the each item must be linked to the next item.

Tip: *Take the first image, create a connection between it and the next item (perhaps in your mind smashing them together, putting one on top of the other, or suchlike.) Then move on through the list linking each item with the next.*

THE STORY METHOD

The Story Method means developing a story about items in a particular order. This method puts information that **relates to each other in a sequence**. It works by creating a connection between each piece of information that you would like to remember. The story you create starts with the first piece of information and progresses with each new piece. A vivid and imaginative story, with silly events, is the easiest to remember.

Example:

Socks, Song, Pen, Tree, Ice Cream and Heater.

He had never considered buying pink socks before, but these particular ones reminded him of a band called 'Pink & The Lost Socks'. His mother loved singing along to their songs. Afterwards, she would grab her pen and write under the Apple

tree. She had a peculiar habit of having Ice Cream even when it was cold and as soon as she finished it, she would run to the house and switch on the heater. The best part for him was the funny faces she made when she was cold.

THE BODY METHOD

The Body Method is useful when you need to remember information instantly. This method is effective because it works by associating body parts with mental pictures of the information you would like to learn. Traditionally, the Body Method has 10 points that you can place information on.

They are: Foot, knee, thigh, hand, belly button, chest, shoulder, mouth, nose, and hair.

TRY IT!!

HOW TO REMEMBER NUMBERS

Numbers are abstract and our brains have not evolved to remember this type of information well. To memorize them with ease, we must give them meaning. There are many methods people use to remember numbers and we will highlight the ones we believe to be the easiest to understand. We will also explain advanced methods that enable you to remember more numbers faster.

THE NUMBER RHYME SYSTEM

The number rhyme system is probably the easiest and the quickest one to grasp with ease. You must **create an image for each of the 10 digits** and remember the image instead of the actual number.

For Example:

0 = hero; 1 = bun; 2 = shoe; 3 = tree; 4 = door; 5 = hive; 6 = sticks; 7 = heaven; 8 = skate and 9 = wine.

It is important to find images that work well for you and are easy to remember.

THE NUMBER SHAPE SYSTEM

The number shape system allows you to create shapes that look like the numbers they represent.

Example:

1 looks like a Pencil; 2 looks like a Duck and so forth. (create your own images for all 10 digits)

Once you have decided on your own personal system, then add those images to a story to remember the numbers. A 4 digit date will have 4 images. Play around with this and see how well it works for you.

THE MAJOR SYSTEM

The Major System is a more advanced method and a great investment for your study system. It is also called the Phonetic System and it is a Mnemonic technique used to remember numbers. Each numeral is associated with one or more consonants, vowels and the following consonants are not used in it: w, h and y.

Similar sounds are grouped and the rules for applying the mappings are almost always fixed. Other hooks and mappings can be used as long as the person can remember them and apply them consistently. One of the best ways to use this system is with phone numbers.

One would typically make up multiple words, preferably a sentence, or an ordered sequence of images featuring the owner of the number. The Major System can be combined with a **Peg System** for remembering lists or to generate the pegs. It can also be combined with other memory techniques such as rhyming,

to substitute words or the method of Loci. **Repetition and concentration** are required to use it effectively.

This is what the Major System looks like:

1 = is the " t " or " d " sound

2 = is the " n " sound

3 = is the " m " sound

4 = is the " r " sound

5 = is the " l " sound

6 = is the " j " , " ch " , or " sh " sound

7 = is the " k " or hard " g " sound

8 = is the " f " or " v " sound

9 = is the " p " or " b " sound

0 = is the " z " or " s " sound

SPACED REPETITION

Many memory athletes have tried to figure out the best way to convert information from short-term memory to long-term memory. The most effective way of doing this is called Spaced Repetition. What is Spaced Repetition you ask?

“Spaced repetition is a learning technique that incorporates increasing intervals of time between subsequent reviews of previously learned material in order to exploit the psychological spacing effect”

This means that you have set times and dates to review the information.

Example:

Material that you learned on Monday morning will be recalled in the evening, then the next day, then 3 days later and so forth.

The best way to do this is also to use the Leitner system. The Leitner system was proposed by the German Science journalist, Sebastian Leitner and it is a simple implementation of spaced repetition.

In recent times this process has been made easy and free. We recommend our current favourite application called **CRAM**. This App allows you to create your own flashcards to use for your learning. There are many different types of apps you can pick from online, we recommend a free App instead of paying for one. The free apps are more than adequate to do this.

'How to Develop a Brilliant Memory Week by Week' by **Dominic O'Brien** suggests the following ways of reviewing learnt material:

First review: Immediately

Second Review: 24 Hours Later

Third Review: One week later

Fourth Review: One month later

Fifth Review: Three Months Later

Many people might need more reviews, but this is a great place to start. Remember that the key to learning is finding a system that works well for you. Do not be afraid to modify any system to work well for you.

ONE MORE THING

I am sure that you have heard about the different learning styles. If you haven't, we have listed the 7 most popular ones that are out there.

- **Visual (spatial):** You prefer using pictures, images, and spatial understanding - The occipital lobes at the back of the brain manage the visual sense. Both the occipital and parietal lobes manage spatial orientation.
- **Aural (auditory-musical):** You prefer using sound and music - The temporal lobes handle aural content. The right temporal lobe is especially important for music.
- **Verbal (linguistic):** You prefer using words, both in speech and writing - The temporal and frontal lobes, especially two specialized areas called Broca's and Wernicke's areas (in the left hemisphere of these two lobes).
- **Physical (kinaesthetic):** You prefer using your body, hands and sense of touch -The cerebellum and the motor cortex (at the back of the frontal lobe) handle much of our physical movement.

- **Logical (mathematical):** You prefer using logic, reasoning and systems - The parietal lobes, especially the left side, drive our logical thinking.
- **Social (interpersonal):** You prefer to learn in groups or with other people - The frontal and temporal lobes handle much of our social activities. The limbic system (not shown apart from the hippocampus) also influences both the social and solitary styles. The limbic system has a lot to do with emotions, moods and aggression.
- **Solitary (intrapersonal):** You prefer to work alone and use self-study - The frontal and parietal lobes, and the limbic system, are also active with this style.

Well, we have good news and bad news. The bad news is that if you believe in these learning styles, unfortunately, you are wrong. This is not your fault because this belief has been around for a very long time. The good news is that you are not entirely wrong. Researchers have found no evidence that supports the effectiveness of learning with a particular learning style. However, what has become apparent is that learners can benefit from combining visual, auditory and kinaesthetic senses for meaning based learning, a learner is able to learn new information a lot faster and effectively.

CONCLUSION

Now that you have been exposed to different memory systems you should need to study less, we trust that the information we have shared with you has been and will continue to be helpful for all your learning needs. Play around with them, research different techniques and create your own toolkit. We would also like to stress the importance of understanding what you're learning, instead of memorizing your work like a parrot. You're not a parrot.

We look forward to getting feedback about your experiences reading *HOW TO REMEMBER THINGS* and particularly to hear about the methods which worked best for you. Don't be shy, **TWEET US**.

We will wish you all the best in everything you are currently learning, remember to keep practising and to never stop learning

- **gimmenotes Team**

