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Insider's Guide to Studying Tip 2: Mnemonic Devices

Students of all ages can hone their study skills with these tips that teachers wished that they knew when they were students!

Tip 2: Mnemonic devices

The term “mnemonic device” is just a fancy way of saying, “trick to help you remember.” While understanding is always better than memorizing, there are times when you’ll need a few tricks to help the brain remember. Usually these times involve long lists, dates, or examples.

Do you remember the names of all five of the great lakes? Ummm, Ontario...Superior.... The mnemonic acronym **HOMES** will help you remember them all, lickety-split! H.O.M.E.S (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior.)

What about the planets? **My Very Educated Mother Served Us Nuts** (Mars, Venus, Earth, Mercury, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune.)

Mnemonics generally work on word associations, or are built on acronyms, but there can be other forms as well, such as poems and rhymes.

There are plenty of classic mnemonic devices that exist, but students shouldn't be afraid to come up with their own—it will help them remember. Memorizing a pre-existing list is helpful, but creating one of your own is better!

Here's how:

1. Take the first letter or a key word of the item to remember and write it down
2. Repeat for all items
3. Create a sentence. Pick the first words that pop into your head. It doesn't have to make sense!
4. Write the sentence out a few times while saying the words that the acronym refers to.
5. Practice reciting the items and the created sentence together until you've got it memorized!

Tip! Keep the mnemonic device simple. There's no point in creating extra work trying to remember a device that is more complicated than what you set out to remember in the first place. Don't worry if the acronym that you created doesn't make sense—if you remember it, go with it!