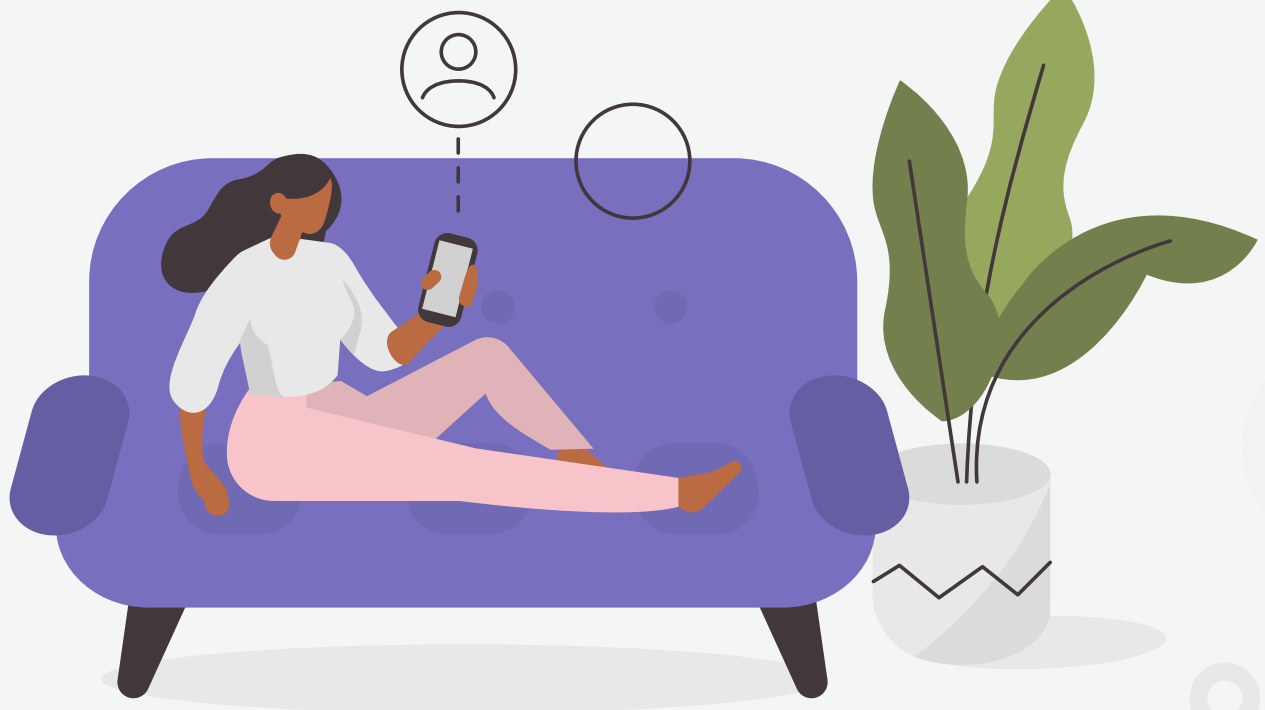


Skillbook

Remember!

Learning
Skills



Mindtools

Remember!

Skillbook

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If you have any queries, please contact us at
mtecustomerservices@mindtools.com.

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1. Introduction

How many times have you struggled to remember someone's name, forgotten a password, or missed a friend's birthday? Given the vast amount of information that we're exposed to every day, it's not surprising that we can't remember everything that we see, read and hear.

However, you can increase both the number of important details that you store in your memory and your ability to recall them, using the simple methods outlined in this Skillbook.

Mnemonic techniques can help you to significantly improve your ability to bring important information to mind, by creating links between something that's easy to recall and the item, person or fact that you want to remember.

By connecting easy-to-remember images, phrases or concepts to key facts, you create associations that will enable you to remember an astonishing number of things.

In this Skillbook we'll look at how to use some key mnemonic techniques. By working through the following exercises, you will:

- Learn specific techniques that will help you to remember useful information.
- Find out how to remember people's names.
- Discover specific methods for remembering numbers.

2. What Are Mnemonics?

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a mnemonic is a device “intended to assist memory.” You probably learned several of these in school, such as “**E**very **G**ood **B**oy **D**eserves **F**un” as an aid to remembering musical notes.

Mnemonics work by replacing a piece of difficult-to-remember information with something that’s easier to recall. This could be a memorable phrase, an association, or an image. The result is a personalized connection between something familiar and something that would otherwise be tricky to recall.

Action:



List the mnemonics that you currently use (or have used in the past) to remember information. Why do you think each one is effective for you?

Mnemonic	Why It Works

An effective mnemonic is one that **you personally** can use. It has to grab **your** attention and ignite a spark in **your** mind.

Some mnemonics are useful for almost everyone, such as **Mom** (Mercury) **Visits** (Venus) **Every** (Earth) **Monday** (Mars), **Just** (Jupiter) **Stays** (Saturn) **Until** (Uranus) **Noon** (Neptune). Others are only relevant for certain people, such as those working in medicine. For example **Little** (Lidocaine) **Boys** (Bupivacaine) **Prefer** (Procaine) **Toys** (Tetracaine), which is useful for recalling spinal anesthesia agents!

So, our mnemonics can be as unique as we are. Follow these tips to make yours more memorable:

- Use vivid images that evoke as many senses as possible.
- Look for strange or odd associations, as these will help you to remember.
- Use positive associations, as the subconscious part of our brain can often block unpleasant ones.



Action:

Create your own mnemonics to help you to remember the following items.
(Try to make them meaningful to you!)

Item	Mnemonic
Colors of the rainbow: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet.	
The countries in the Group of Eight (G8): U.S., Canada, U.K., France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia.	
A selection of Australia's native animals: Platypus, dingo, wombat, kookaburra, koala, kangaroo, Tasmanian devil.	

3. Remembering Names and Faces

Memonics have become less popular because information is now so easily accessible via electronic devices. However, they're still very useful in situations where it's impossible to look up information, such as many exams.

What's more, remembering the names of people we meet still requires solid memory skills.

One of the most obvious (but least-used) ways to do this is simply to pay attention when you're introduced to someone. Unfortunately, we're usually so busy thinking about what we're going to say to our new acquaintance that we don't hear their name properly, or we don't fully take it in.

Practicing active-listening skills is a great way to improve your recall of names and other verbal information. When you hear someone's name, repeat it as soon as you can. For example, "Hi Rashid, it's a pleasure to meet you!" Or, "What do you think, Rashid? Isn't this one of the best conferences you've attended?"

You're actively placing the name into your memory by repeating it. Do this as many times as you can, but don't overdo it and intimidate or annoy people!

Ask the person how to spell their name if it's unusual or particularly difficult to remember. This creates a mental image and gives you even more points of recollection. Write down common names or type them into your phone, as this also builds a connection in your brain.

Does the name remind you of anything? Can it be associated with or linked to something more memorable? For example, if you met someone called Sharaine (pronounced "Shar-an"), you might associate it with Saran Wrap™ – a brand of plastic film.

You can also create associations between the name and the person's face or other features. For example:

- A man named George, who has a habit of raising one eyebrow when he asks a question, could be associated with Curious George®, the children's character.
- You could use the rhyme "Ted, Ted, couldn't get out of bed" to remember Ted, who yawns throughout your meetings!

You can also use a series of links when a single association isn't obvious. For example, you could remember an architect named Meg with this series of links:

- Architects are associated with building...
- Building is associated with Lego® bricks...
- "L'eggo my Eggo®" is a popular slogan for a U.S. brand of instant breakfast waffles...
- So you create the rhyme "Lego my Eggo, Meggo."

Images and stories can also be linked to names. For instance, imagine you're sitting with a very grumpy man at dinner – called Bernie. He reminds you of Oscar the Grouch from Sesame Street®, which makes you think of two other characters from the show, Bert and Ernie. Their names combine to make "Bernie"!

Or maybe you imagine that his food is on fire – "burning" to remind you of Bernie!

Often you only need to remember one part of a name to jog your memory. For example, picturing some cash would likely remind you of Mr Nakashima, as there's KASH in the middle of his name.

Action:

Look at the names and faces on the following page, and create an association for each. Write it below the photo. You'll match the faces to the names later, so make sure that the associations will stick.

Note:

The photos you see are of people from a commercial photo gallery, and the names used are fictional and created strictly for the purpose of this exercise!



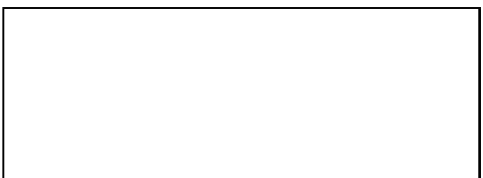
Meiling Newsome



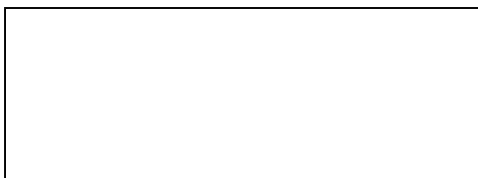
Harold McIntyre



Ayo Jones



Louise Baker

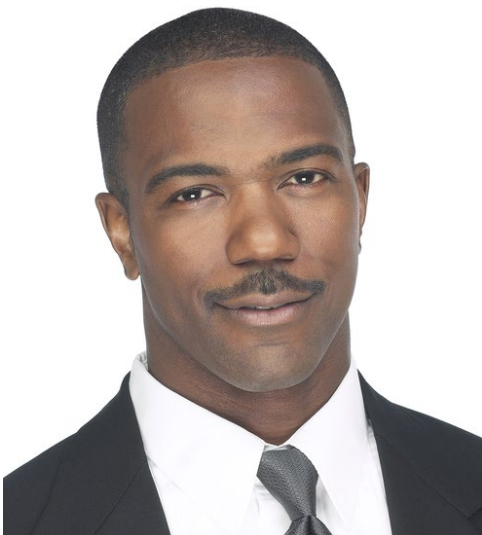
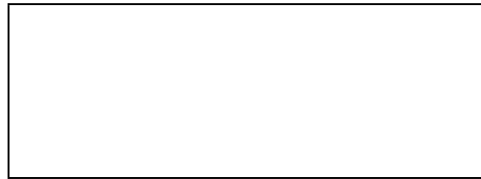
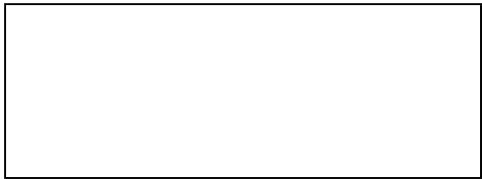




Dale Ferguson



Carly Thompson



Richard Perry



Edward Larenko





Julie Thorne



Marjorie Young



Gordy Jones



Elaine Turner



Can you remember the names? Let's find out...



Action:

Match the names to the faces below. Record the number under the corresponding image.

1 Marjorie Young	4 Gordy Jones	7 Richard Perry	10 Elaine Turner
2 Meiling Newsome	5 Louise Baker	8 Harold McIntyre	11 Edward Larenko
3 Carly Thompson	6 Julie Thorne	9 Dale Ferguson	12 Ayo Jones



Action:

Now go back and check your answers. Write down what you've learned from this activity, below.

4. Numbers

Numbers are everywhere: PINs, telephone extensions, security codes, and so on. But how can you remember them all without writing them down (which can be a security risk)?

Two useful techniques are the **number/rhyme** and **number/shape** mnemonics. To make numbers easier to handle, you associate them with rhyming words or easy-to-remember shapes. You can then “tell stories” with these words or pictures, giving your brain something much more memorable to play with!

Let’s look at these two methods in turn.

Number/Rhyme

With this technique, you start by associating each digit from zero to nine with a rhyming word. For example:

- Zero – “Hero.”
- One – “Bun.”
- Two – “Shoe.”
- Three – “Tree.”
- Four – “Pour” or “Paw” (depending on your pronunciation).
- Five – “Hive.”
- Six – “Bricks.”
- Seven – “Heaven.”
- Eight – “Gate.”
- Nine – “Line.”

Then you can tell a “story” with any sequence of numbers.

For instance, the telephone extension 8067 might get you thinking about a GATE opening up to reveal a HERO, who lifts a pile of BRICKS up to HEAVEN!

Action:

Use this method to remember the serial number 63082. Write your ideas into the spaces on the next page, then close your eyes and test your memory!



Number Sequence	Association
6	
3	
0	
8	
2	

Number/Shape

You can also use shapes to make numbers easier to learn. Look carefully at the digits from zero to nine, and pick an object for each based on its shape.

For instance, a zero is round like a ball, while 1 is tall and straight like a candle.

Here's a common shape scheme:

- 0: Ball.
- 1: Candle.
- 2: Swan (beak, curved neck, body).
- 3: Open handcuffs.
- 4: Yacht.
- 5: Meat hook.
- 6: Golf club.
- 7: Cliff edge.
- 8: Egg timer.
- 9: Balloon on a string.



Action:

Using the number/shape technique, memorize the code 6947356. Weave the shape words into a memorable story, using the table on the following page to record your ideas. Then, can you remember the code?

Number Sequence	Association
6	
9	
4	
7	
3	
5	
6	

Which of these two techniques works best for you?



Action:

Use your preferred technique to remember the account number 75219657. Use the table on the following page to work out a funny, strange, exciting, colorful, and highly memorable story.

Number Sequence	Association
7	
5	
2	
1	
9	
6	
5	
7	

5. Key Points

Memory is a fickle thing. One moment you can recall a piece of information quickly, and the next it has completely escaped you. However, you can learn techniques to take more control over your memory, improving your ability to recall key details when you need them.

All the best memory techniques work through associations. You might remember someone's name by associating it with a famous person or funny image, for example. Or you could learn numbers by turning them into rhyming words, then using those words to tell a memorable story.

Try out traditional mnemonic systems, but also invent your own.

Be observant, use your imagination, practice... and soon you'll be feeling much more confident about your memory skills!

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