

# Mnemonic Devices

Mnemonic devices are rhymes or sentences that aid one's memory. They can be especially effective to remember lists of items.

Mnemonic can have disadvantages. They may encourage superficial learning rather than in-depth learning. Students may forget the information quickly after a test. Use mnemonic devices sparingly, but as needed to recall information. Heavy use is inefficient.

Create your own mnemonics by assessing the information to be learned. Underline the first letter of item, then devise a word or phrase (nonsense or otherwise) using each letter underlined.

## Types and Examples

### Jingles

Days in each month = 30 days hath September, April, June and November...  
Spelling generalizations = i before e except after c

### Acronyms (catchwords)

- Great Lakes = **HOMES** = Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior
- Only spot in the U.S. where *you can* be in four states at once = **UCAN** = Utah, Colorado, Arizona, & New Mexico
- 4 symptoms of schizophrenia = **WHID** = Withdrawal, Hallucinations, Inappropriate Emotional Response, & Delusions
- Stages of cell division = **IPMAT** = Interphase, Prophase, Metaphase, Anaphase, Telephase
- Sequence in solving or evaluating math equations = **PEMDAS** = Parenthesis Exponents Multiplication Division Addition Subtraction

### Acrostics (catch phrases)

- The colors of the spectrum = **Roy G. Biv** = Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, & Violet
- The order of the planets from the sun = **My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nine Pies** = Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, & Pluto
- 7 diatomic molecules = **Brian helps Claire find out new ideas** = Bromine, Hydrogen, Chlorine, Fluorine, Oxygen, Nitrogen, Iodine
- Maslow's theory of basic human needs = **Bob sings clearly each afternoon** = 1) Biological need 2) Safety need 3) need for Companionship 4) Esteem need 5) need for self-Actualization
- Sequence in solving or evaluating math equations = **Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally** = (PEMDAS, above) Parenthesis Exponents Multiplication Division Addition Subtraction
- From Biology = **Kings Play Cards On Fairly Good Soft Velvet** = Kingdom, Phylum, Class Order Family Genus Species, Variety

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Adapted from  
Center for Academic Development. (2006). *The leader's guide to supplemental instruction*. Kansas City, MO:  
Curators of the University of Missouri.

Reynolds, J. (2002). *Succeeding in college: Study skills and strategies* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, N J: Pearson Education.