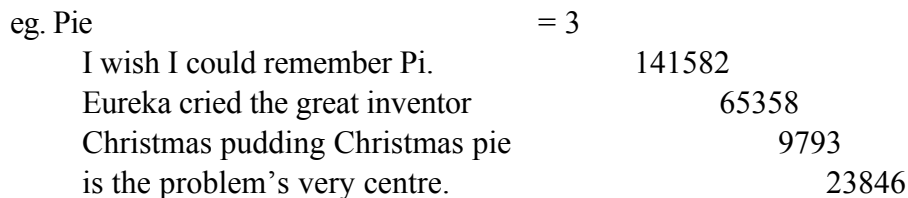
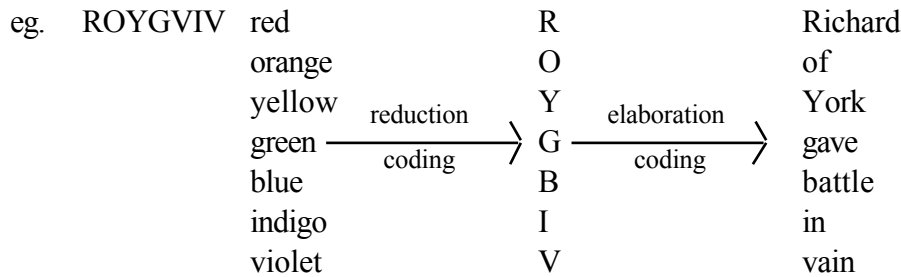


Mnemonics

A. Definition

A **mnemonic** is a memory aid, a way of helping to ensure we retain information which would otherwise be forgotten. Most mnemonics involve first reducing the amount of information to a minimum then elaborating this minimal information in a more memorable way. This is called **reduction coding** and **elaboration coding** (Baddeley and Patterson 1971). The process is then reversed to retrieve the original information.



It is important in the reduction not to trim away too much material, leaving insufficient cues to reconstruct the original.

B. Examples

There are two basic forms of elaboration; verbal and visual (or **semantic coding** and **imagery**).

I Verbal mnemonics

1. Key letters/words or **acronyms**

eg. ROYGBIV

eg. she fELL on her BUM on cried "GAA! KaT-U-KiT!"

This gives the new countries formed by the dissolution of the USSR (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaidzhan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kirgykistan, Tadzhikistan)

2. 'Scrabble' links or crosswords

Use a letter in your first word as a cue for the next key word.

eg. J
FREUD
N
GOFFMAN

II Visual imagery mnemonics

1. Methods of loci

This involves memorising a series of locations in a familiar place then visualising each item to be remembered in one of these locations. Follow these steps:-

- a) Condense the things you want to remember into a series of key words
- b) Select a place you know every well, such as your house
- c) Choose a starting point in that place and form a mental image of it
- d) Go for a mental walk in your familiar place and pick out in an ordered way the same number of locations as key words in (a) above
- e) Rehearse (d) until you can remember it without fault
- f) Return to your starting point and install your first key word in that location. If you make the connection fairly bizarre it will be easier to recall
- g) Continue through your mental walk putting the key words into the familiar locations until you come to the end
- h) Rehearse (g)
- I) To retrieve your key words simply go for an imaginary walk

For example:

Startingpoint	frontdoor	Key word	bread	Image	door made of bread
next location	kitchen table	next word	milk	next	spilt milk
“		photo on table		“	tickets “
	tickets in frame				
“		chair	“	matches	“ chair on
fire					
“		fireplace	“	onions	“ onions
frying					
“		etc.	“	etc.	“ etc.

2 Numeric peg-words

Learn the following rhyme	one - bun	six - sticks
	two - shoe	seven - heaven
	three - tree	eight - gate
	four - door	nine - wine
	five - hive	ten - hen

Then form a mental image linking your first item with bun, then second with shoe and so on. This scheme has the advantage that it can be probed at any point rather than having to recall the whole series.

C Applications

Mnemonics can be used separately or combined. For example, in revising an essay you might use method of loci to remember a good structure and ‘scrabble’ links for key studies in that area. You might even need a mnemonic to remember the mnemonics!

A crude comparison between the two forms of elaboration can be made by instructing subjects to elaborate key words either verbally using rhyme or visually using images during a brief presentation of, say, 3 seconds per word for a total of 16 words. The number of words recalled from each category might be seen as an indication of the effectiveness of each type of elaboration.

BEAR	(rhyme)
APPLE	(image)
MONEY	(image)
PLATE	(rhyme)
CONE	(image)
GLASS	(rhyme)
TOOTH	(rhyme)
COUPON	(image)
CHAIR	(rhyme)
PLANT	(rhyme)
FACE	(image)
CHEQUE	(image)
MOUNTAIN	(image)
WALL	(rhyme)
LETTER	(image)
STRING	(rhyme)

Evaluation of this investigation should consider:-

- order of presentation
- length of list
- duration of exposure
- length of lapse after exposure and before recall
- duration of recall
- choice of method of elaboration should be arbitrary; is it?
- is it possible to instruct people to encode in a particular way? How could you check?

D Key Words

MNEMONIC
REDUCTION CODING
ELABORATION CODING
SEMANTIC CODING
IMAGERY
ACRONYM
METHOD OF LOCI