

**STUDYUP:**  
KNOWLEDGE TO GO

50 YEARS MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

## How to improve your memory

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**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of this session you will be able to:

- Use associations to reinforce learning and recall
- Use memory systems to memorize sets of facts

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**INTERACTIVE TASK 1**

How many of these can you remember?

- What you ate for lunch yesterday
- An unpleasant experience at primary school
- Where the washing powder is in your local supermarket
- Your student ID number
- The planets from the Sun outwards

Write in the chat box:

- The number of things you remember (e.g. 3)

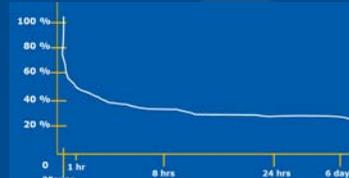
Think about:  
How you managed to recall some things  
Why you remembered some things and not others

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**FEEDBACK**

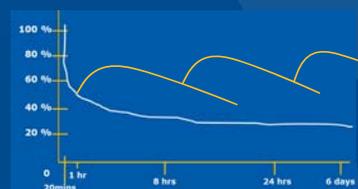
We remember information that had strong associations at the time we learnt it and / or is frequently used.

We are very good at forgetting in everyday life – and we carry that across into learning:



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One way to beat the forgetting curve is spaced recall – i.e. little and often



Another is to strengthen the associations you make when you first learn the information – that's the main focus of the rest of this session

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**PART 2: MAKING STRONGER ASSOCIATIONS**

An association connects two things:

**A target word or fact**

- This is unfamiliar information – and at Uni, usually abstract and / or technical – which you are trying to learn

**A hook**

- This is something familiar – typically physical – that you can link to the target word or fact so that you can recall it later

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**An effective way to create a hook is through visualisation:**

It is easier to remember pictures than words

The mind cannot distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary

Success is the result of recent, frequent and successful practice

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**Steps to successful visualisation**

- 1 Close your eyes
- 2 Relax
- 3 Create and manipulate sense impressions
- 4 Deepen and intensify
- 5 Suspend judgement
- 6 Practise often

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**For example, in Human Development, you may need to remember the four stages of cognitive development proposed by Piaget:**

Sensorimotor	(birth to two years)
Preoperational	(two to seven years)
Concrete operational	(seven to eleven years)
Formal operational	(eleven years onwards)

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**An association can be a more familiar word that sounds like the target word.**

For example, for 'sensorimotor', I might think of a motor car on a pile of coins.



Then, I close my eyes and visualise the 'hook' I've made.

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**INTERACTIVE TASK 2**



**Write in the chat box:**

- Your idea for a hook for the Piaget's next stage:
  - Preoperational (two to seven years)

**Feedback:**

I thought of preschool kids playing the 'Operation' game



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**Part 3: LINKING YOUR ASSOCIATIONS**

**In academic studies, we often need to learn sets or sequences of words or facts**

**Examples include:**

- areas of the brain
- components of the marketing mix
- conditions for a legal contract

**Write in the chat box:**

- One set or sequence of words or facts that it's important to remember in a subject you are studying

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**There are a number of memory systems which can help you to remember sets or sequences of words or facts.**

**We will look at:**

- Acrostics
- Stories
- Loci (places)

**ACROSTICS**

This is a simple system of making a sentence using the first letters of each word in a sequence.

Write in the chat box if you learnt the traditional one for the planets (including Pluto!):



Mercury	My
Venus	Vehicle
Earth	Encounters
Mars	Many
Jupiter	Jerks
Saturn	Struggling
Uranus	Up
Neptune	Neglected
Pluto	Paths

In this case, the 'hooks' are the words in the sentence AND the sequence of the sentence itself.

**INTERACTIVE TASK 3**

**Write in the chat box:**

- An acrostic for Piaget's four stages of cognitive development:
- Sensorimotor
- Preoperational
- Concrete operational
- Formal operational

**Feedback:**

I came up with: Stages Piaget Cleverly Formulated

**STORIES**

This involves first making associations with words or facts and then making a story based on the original sequence. For example, if you need to memorise the most common elements (in order) found in rocks. The first step is to make a 'hook' for each item in the list:

oxygen	= ox
silicon	= Pamela Anderson
aluminium	= aluminium foil
iron	= clothes iron
calcium	= calculator
sodium	= can of soda water
potassium	= pot
magnesium	= magnet

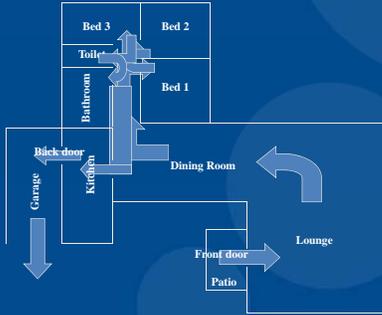
**Then you make up a story (as absurd as you like) involving the 'hooks' in sequence.**

ox:	an ox is walking along the road
Anderson:	riding the ox is Pamela Anderson
aluminium foil:	she is wearing a dress made from aluminium foil
clothes iron:	the dress is rumpled, so she starts ironing it
calculator:	a calculator falls out of the dress pocket
soda water:	it falls down and lands next to a can of soda water
pot:	the can of soda water is in a large iron pot
magnet:	stuck on the side of the pot is a huge magnet

**Close your eyes and visualise the story as you say it – and go over it a few times till you recall it.**

**LOCI (PLACES)**

Instead of a story, you visualise each 'hook' in a particular place as you follow a familiar route in a fixed order. For instance:



Let's imagine you have to memorise the 12 cranial nerves.

olfactory	optic	oculomotor	trochlear
trigeminal	abducens	facial	auditory
glossopharyngeal	vagus	spinal accessory	hypoglossal

The first step is to create visual 'hooks'. Write in the text box if any spring to mind.

Here are some we prepared earlier!

olfactory	= oil factory	facial	= face
optic	= optician	auditory	= audio tape
oculomotor	= motor car	glossopharyngeal	= lipgloss
trochlear	= truck	vagus	= veggies
trigeminal	= three gems	spinal accessory	= spine
abducens	= duck	hypoglossal	= hypodermic needle

Then you visualise one in each room as you go round the house.

**INTERACTIVE TASK 4**

Write in the chat box:

- The second most common element found in rocks
- The third Piagetian stage of cognitive development
- The first cranial nerve

**Feedback:**

- Silicon
- Concrete operational
- Olfactory

**SUMMARY**

In this session you have learnt how to:

- Use associations to reinforce learning and recall
- Use memory systems to memorize sets of facts

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- For more advice and resources, look under 'Academic Support' on Stream
- The library has several books on learning and memory. Use the search box or ask a librarian or learning consultant for advice.
- I'll be here for 15 minutes or so to answer questions you write in the text box