



## Mnemonics

- What are mnemonics?**
- A mnemonic is a memory device that helps you remember things. An example of one is ROY G. BIV. It stands for the colors of the rainbow. Each letter refers to a color. With this little acrostic (a type of mnemonic), we can remember all the colors and the order in which we find them on the rainbow.
  - Mnemonics are very helpful devices that help move information from our short-term memory to long-term memory.
  - The secret is that you can make up your own mnemonics. Try it as you prepare for your next test.
- How do mnemonics work?**
- Picture association. Our minds store pictures much more easily than facts. If we can associate facts with pictures we can trigger our memories from the pictures—which we remember—to the facts that take a little nudge to remember. Many mnemonics take advantage of our picture memory.
  - Linking. To remember a large amount of information it is very helpful to link it so that one step triggers the next.
  - Humor. We tend to remember ridiculous, silly things.
- How can I make up a mnemonic?**
- While there are many techniques, let me focus on one. Often we have to remember several key ideas—that can be written out as key words. For example, if I have to remember the great lakes, an acrostic already exists. HOMES—Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior. But if I didn't have this, I could make a sentence using the first letter of each lake. **Henry offended many enemy spies.** You can make up a silly sentence for any information you need to remember.
  - Link your sentences into a story. Rather than try to memorize a dozen unconnected sentences, link them together. If I had to remember the great lakes and the colors of the rainbow I might begin to make a story about Henry, the pirate, that goes something like this. **Henry offended many enemy spies. Relaxing on a yacht, gangsters believe in vulgarity.** Yes, it sounds stupid but it works.
  - If you are having difficulty finding words, page through the dictionary and write down a bunch of options to choose from. Then try and develop sentences that link together. It takes some work, but it will help trigger your mind back to the information you want to remember.

