



October 2008  
Issue 2

# Strat-O-Grams



A bi-weekly newsletter of research-based strategies for  
Belton School District students, teachers and parents

## Topics :

- Memory Training
- Clustering/  
Chunking
- Association
- Mnemonics
- Attitude

## Learning Strategies—Improving your Memory

### Memory Training

Improving memory of details and facts will have an immediate impact on a student's success in the classroom. Many students have difficulty with remembering because they do not know how to transfer knowledge from short-term memory into long-term memory. It takes 7+/-2 practices to move information in the brain from short to long-term memory. What does that mean? It means that we must practice, study, read, think or recite things anywhere from 5 to 9 times before we "know" it. It is important to know which kind of memory strategy to use to remember different

types of information.

Memory training involves many different types of practice activities. It is important to realize that memory training involves organization of material, selection of what is really 'important', ability to visualize, recite material from memory (use flash cards, double checking for accuracy with frequent reviews and retesting), implementing several short lessons to maximize learning and concentration and believing that you cannot practice too much!

### Clustering/Chunking

Clustering information is simply breaking information into smaller groups so it is more easily transferred to long term memory. Clustering includes outlining, use of color (color coding class notes), developing categories, grouping, alphabetizing or using key points. Clustering can be used to learn or remember:

- things or steps in a sequence or formulae
- lists of people, places or things
- class notes
- dates and events
- vocabulary words
- definitions

### Association

Association is another strategy for memory training which involves relating one thing to another. Sometimes these associations can be humorous, artificial, or involves rhythm. They include using visual images, flash cards, linking systems, comparisons, mnemonics, rhyming, breaking pattern (due dates for assignments, test, etc), or substituting words. Some examples of information that be learned through association are:

- lists of people, places, or things
- things or steps in a sequence or formulae
- rules
- theorems or postulates
- names of individuals
- locations
- dates and events
- due dates for assignments, tests, etc.
- matching items (for a test)
- vocabulary words
- spelling
- definitions
- symbols
- foreign words
- main points and supporting details

Sources:  
KU Special Connections  
Plano, Texas Strategy  
Handbook

## Learning Strategies—Improving your Memory (cont.)

### CAN-DO Strategy

The **CAN-DO** strategy helps in developing a list of material to be learned. The “A” step, “Ask self if the list is complete”, illustrates how a step in a strategy can cue self-monitoring of one’s progress toward collecting all information to be learned.

#### CAN-DO: A strategy for organizing and learning content-subject matter

**C**= Create a list of items to be learned

**A**= Ask self if list is complete

**N**= Note the main ideas from details using a tree diagram

**D**= Describe each component and how they relate

**O**= Overlearn the main parts, then supporting details

### Mnemonics

**Mnemonic** strategies are separated into key word, first-letter, or sentence. **Key word mnemonics** method allows students to learn to associate unfamiliar words with words that are familiar and that may rhyme or have some physical resemblance.

Example of the concept:

1. Recoding the unfamiliar word into a more concrete proxy (e.g., humiliate=humming);

2. Relating the concrete term to the new term (e.g., a student is humiliated because he/she was overheard humming “Dixie” during class);

Retrieving, where the student is provided a way to retrieve all of the associated information (use of a coded strategy).

**First-letter mnemonics** requires the student to take the first letter of

each item in a list and form a word that relates to the main idea of the list. These are also called acronyms.

Example of concept:

**LISTS**: a strategy for finding and organizing material to be memorized

**L**=Look for clues

**I**= Investigate the items

**S**= Select the mnemonic device using “**FIRST**”

**F**= Form a word

**I**= Insert letters

**R**= Rearrange the letters

**S**= Shape a sentence

**T**= Try combinations

**T**= Transfer information to a card

**S**= Self-test

**HOMES**: Names of the Great Lakes

**H**= Huron

**O**= Ontario

**M**= Michigan

**E**= Erie

**S**= Superior

**Sentence-Mnemonics** Designate a key word for each idea or main point that you want to remember. Write down the first letter of each key word. Write an easy-to-remember sentence using words with the same first letter of the key words.

Example of concept:

**Sentence-Mnemonic**- using the biological classification system as the basis for the sentence where the first letter of each word cues you back to a part of the system.

**Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species.**

**Kings play cards on fine green sofas.**

### Attitude

Attitude affects your learning potential. Research indicates that the more you know about any subject, the more interested you become. Therefore, positive achievement is likely to follow when you decide to spend more time on a subject and keep an open mind about it. Additionally, it is important to have high expectations for yourself! Focus on how good you will feel after reading rather than finding excuses to avoid studying. You can if you believe you can! Accept that a subject may be difficult, but also accept the following equation- “Hard work + Effort= Success”.