

Do the math

By Daniel Theyagu - Nov 2, 2005

ST Recruit

ONE way of remembering information is in a linear sequential manner. However, there may be occasions when you have to recall information in a random order. To do this, you need to use a system called the numerical pegging system.

For example, you want to remember a list of 10 foods rich in Vitamin A, which are egg, milk, green vegetables, banana, pumpkin, sweet potato, carrot, tomato, papaya and liver.

If you use the creative sentence system, you must find a long enough sentence to remember the above items. And you may find it difficult to recall item number five instantly.

This is where the numerical pegging system is useful. You have to replace the number with something that looks, sounds or is associated with the number. You must do this because your right brain does not understand the concept of numbers or letters. So, by replacing the numbers with various associations, you are allowing your right brain to recognise the number and that helps you remember the word.

The numerical pegging system works in a similar fashion. Just imagine that you have 10 different pegs, each with a number written on it, or a shape that is associated with the number. And you are hanging up the 10 food items listed earlier.

Now create numerical pegs to help you remember the words, and associate each item on your list with the respective peg:

1. Sun (sounds like one): Number 1 is a sun and it is shaped like an egg.
2. Shoe (one-two, buckle my shoe): Number 2 is a shoe and you poured some milk into it because you did not have a cup (It may sound disgusting, but you will not forget what number 2 is now, will you?)
3. Tree (sounds like three): Number 3 is a tree and below it you see green vegetables. See yourself picking these vegetables.
4. Door (three-four, shut the door): Number 4 is a door that you opened and somebody threw a banana at you.
5. Finger (associated with five): Number 5 is a finger. Imagine you are digging your fingers into a huge pumpkin.
6. Stick (five-six, pick up sticks): Number 6 is a stick that you are using to unearth some sweet potato from the ground.
7. Heaven (rhymes with seven): Number 7 is heaven and you saw a lot of huge carrots there.
8. Spider (looks like eight and has got eight legs): Number 8 is a spider building a web inside a tomato.
9. Flag pole (a flag looks like a nine): Number 9 is a flagpole on top of which is a papaya.
10. Hen (as in nine-ten, a big fat hen): Number 10 is a hen running away from a cleaver, which sounds like liver.

Now stop reading this article and see whether you can remember the 10 food items rich in vitamin A. If you were able to do it, congratulations! If you had difficulty recalling any particular item, this could be because your mental connection for that item was not strong enough. It is as though you pegged your clothes loosely and a strong wind blew them away. What you need to do is make stronger connections.

This technique is useful especially when you have to recall things at random. All you have to do is to link the word you want to remember to the number peg. You can use other words to represent the numbers as long as you are able to associate the word with the number.

Try using this technique — with your shopping list or your “To-Do” list. It is only when you make a concerted effort to unleash the true potential of your brain power that you can develop a razor-sharp memory.

If you want to remember a list that goes beyond 10 items, you need to add on new pegs. However, finding words that can ideally replace each number might become tedious as you go beyond 10. This is when you need a variation of the numerical pegging system called the alpha-numerical pegging system.

Tomorrow: How the alpha-numerical pegging system works.

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