

“I’m sorry, what did you say is your Name?”

Steve Iman, based on Harry Lorayne’s Page a Minute Memory Book, Anguson & Robertson, U.K, 1985

All knowledge is but remembrance — Plato

You have a fantastic memory. Want to prove it to yourself? Okay — Try to forget something you already know!

It’s always been a matter of wonder that people don’t think twice about getting eyeglasses if they need them, but assume that nothing can be done about their ‘poor’ memories. Hogwash! It’s easier to bring memory skills to a high level than it is to alleviate physical defects.

The starting point, the ignition, of memory is association. Association may be subconscious (in other words, uncontrolled) or conscious (in other words, controlled). Many times, the thing that makes your mind snap its fingers seems to have nothing to do with the thing it reminds you of. Ah — but it does. You simply aren’t aware of it.

Association is the best way there is to make you aware of “it.” You can make this principle work for you whenever you want to — if you simply control the associations you make in the moment.

We usually remember one thing because we are reminded of it by another.

Association is simply the mental connecting or binding together of two “things.” That’s all. And only two things — always. Association is a reminder-connection. Build an association with whatever you want to remember and you’ll have it.

Interest: One of the spark plugs of memory is interest. It’s always easier to remember things you’re interested in than those you aren’t. The connection works two ways — what you ‘remember’ you become interested in!

Lee Iacocca says (Fortune, August 1978) that he believes that memory depends on interest. “If you care, you remember.” He makes mental lists every morning of the things he wants to accomplish that day! The point is: mental reminder-connections force you to be interested in those things — association forces interest — time management and goal clarification work!

“In order to think, we must speculate with images.”

Interesting observation:

You often hear “Oh, I know your face, but I can’t remember your name.” You’ve never heard anyone say “Oh, I know your name, but I forgot your face!”

The Point:

We remember what we see better than what we hear. Hearing alone often isn't enough for memory — we must “see.” When it comes to trying to remember words or non-visual symbols, we must visualize, fantasize.

In order to remember any new thing, it must be associated to something we already know or remember. Memorizing isn't the easy way to remember - imagining is. If it can be visualized it can be easily remembered

The “Slap in the Face” Principal: The silliness of the image you develop to associate with what you're trying to remember facilitates memory.

If you walked out of your house and a few drops of rain splattered on you, you'd quickly forget it. If, however, buckets of water poured over your head, soaking you — you'd recount the event in detail for years.

If you stopped to rest in a meadow and a cow or two wandered by, it'd be no big deal unless you were from Southern California. Usually, it's be pleasant, but not memorable. Trow a crazed bull into the scene though, and you've got something you'll remember. Almost everybody in the entire world who is older than you probably are remember in a great deal of detail exactly what they were doing when they first heard the news of President John Kennedy's assassination.

So — if you're trying to remember something — associate to something unusual, ridiculous, impossible — and the memory will stick like burrs.

THE MOST UNIVERSAL MEMORY COMPLAINT —

*I'm introduced to someone and moments — no,
seconds later —*

I've forgotten his or her name.

It's a lie — you haven't 'forgotten' the name.

You didn't 'remember' it in the first place.

Grunt Effort Approach to Remembering Names:

1. Say the name when you say “hello.” Ask for it again if you haven't heard it.
2. Try to spell the name. It doesn't matter is you spell it incorrectly — the person will correct you and be flattered that you care.
3. Make a remark about the name. (Anything — you never heard a name like it, have a friend with it, think it lovely, whatever.)
4. Use the name during your initial conversation with the person at least a few times without overdoing it.
5. Use the name when you leave. Always say goodbye to each person or as many as are near at range.

Henry, or Penny?

Carl or Karl?

*Melvina reminds
me of a melody
about grapevines.
She also looks like
a bottle of Gallo!*

Substitute Word or Phrase Approach

You can visualize names like Swim, Long, Rivers, and so forth because they already have meanings that allow you to conjure up pictures in your mind. But what about names like Weatherford, Stumpf, Truax, Bui, Laubach and Peerzay — that vast majority of names that have no initial meaning to you?

Think of something that sounds enough like the name to remind you of it:

Weatherford - a Ford driving in bad weather

Stumpf - bottom of a whacked off tree

Truax - an Ax from Truevalue Hardware

Bui - a buoy floating in the harbor

Laubach - low back pain

Peerzay - a 'peer' of 'zay' - a 'peer' of 'Jay' (my brother's name)

Zip Names: Some names go in one ear and zip right out the other — you don't bother trying to properly hear the name usually, and say to yourself "What's the point? I'll never remember it anyway!" Try — take the time.

Paul Antesiewicz was one of my first students. It slipped me on the first time, and then I re-spelled to myself how it was supposed to sound as "ante-sevage." From here I played with 'anti-savage' and 'auntie save itch' and it wasn't much of a problem. There is no name, no matter how long, to which the system can't be applied — even some of those challenging derivations from Thailand and Greece:

Papadopoulos — papa (father) topple us.

Dimitriades — the meat tree ate E's

Funny Face System

When you look — that's the key word — at any face, there is usually one feature on that face that you notice first. That one feature can serve as the second "thing" in this important entity of two things needed to formulate an association.

You've just met Mr. Bentavagnia. You've listened to the name because you want to develop a substitute word or phrase. "Bent vane" comes to mind. And then you notice his nose!

He doesn't need to know it — but you've already done the two things that the myriad people who complain "I can't remember names" do not do. You've listened hard to the name (in order to come up with an association) and looked at the face. Do nothing more than this with every new person you meet and you must better your memory for names and faces to a degree that you never dreamed possible.

Now — lock in the "two things" with a reminder-connection (letting those short-term memory circuits of your brain get a full dose of the picture). Look at Mr. B with a smile, shake hands, and visualize a bent vane on his face where his large nose should be! For heavens' sake, don't tell him about it until later — if ever!

Practice! Give people in pictures from newspapers names for the fun of it — then turn the skill on with new acquaintances. Harry Lorayne, whose book I got these ideas from, tells the story of an 80 year old woman in a Swiss village who he talked to about all of this. She was interested because she was getting to a point of having so many grandchildren she started forgetting their names and didn't want her kids to see her as senile. She practiced on others — neighbors, service people, cashiers, plumbers, bakers, etc — until she became a legend in her valley. Everybody knew her name because she knew everyone by name!
