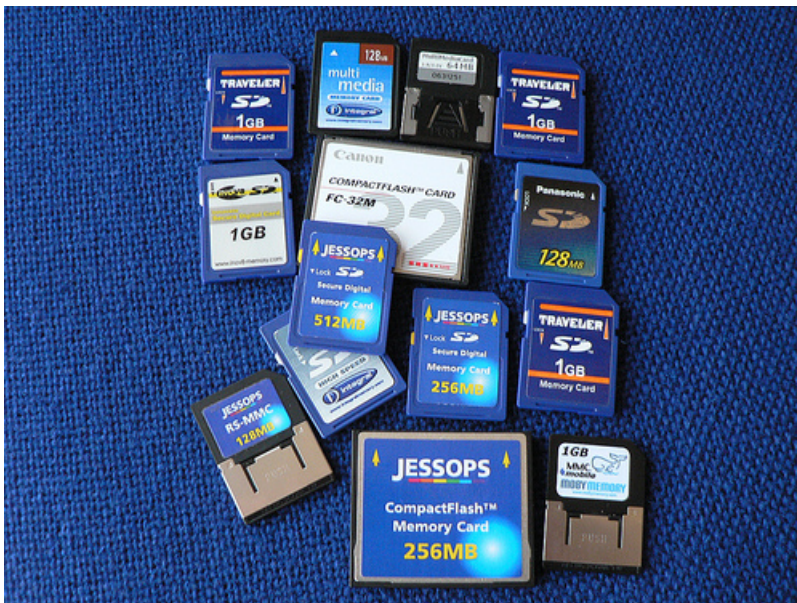# Make Messages Easy to Remember

by Sophia Tutorial

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to best help your audience remember the main ideas from your speech. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Make Messages Easy to Remember
2. Principles for Supporting Memory

1. Make Messages Easy to Remember

Memory refers to the process by which information is encoded, stored, and retrieved. From an information processing perspective, there are three main stages in the formation and retrieval of memory:

1. Encoding or registration allows information that is from the outside world to reach our senses in the form of chemical or physical stimuli.

2. Storage creates a permanent record of the encoded information.

3. Retrieval, recall, or recollection calls back the stored information in response to some cue for use in a process or activity.

If you could simply transfer your memory modules to the brains of your audience, speaking would be

obsolete. Cyborg memory transfer is not feasible yet, and we have not reached **singularity** with the audience, but we can develop our ideas and deliver them in such a way as to facilitate the transfer of information.

📄 **TERMS TO KNOW**

Memory
The ability of an organism to record information about things or events with the facility of recalling them later at will.

Singularity
A proposed point in the technological future at which artificial intelligences become capable of augmenting and improving themselves, leading to an explosive growth in intelligence.

2. Principles for Supporting Memory

Visual and spatial orientation (method of loci): This is one of the oldest memory aids presented in classical rhetoric. It allows items to be remembered through the **mnemonic** system, which includes mentally associating them with specific physical locations.

↪ EXAMPLE You can create a mental image of a building or a city for your audience and then associate different ideas or themes with each spatial area. You can then walk the audience through the area as you discuss each theme in the associated location.

Ordering: You can create an organizational scheme or pattern, and then position ideas, objects, or processes using the scheme for the listeners. If you consistently follow the scheme or pattern throughout the speech, it is easier to remember and reinforces the ordering, whether it is a natural order or one which you created for the speech.

↪ EXAMPLE Think about money. You have a scheme of value for one cent up to one dollar. You can put all the pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters into their respective place in the order. It then becomes easier to count and remember how many of each you have.

Limiting sets: You can break up long series into manageable smaller sets. When chunking, you want to group similar items together. Since the newest research suggests that short-term memory capacity is 4-5 items, you want to break up long lists into meaningful and smaller groupings.

Association: You make associations between new ideas, concepts, or similar ideas. You want to make sure the association you create is actually meaningful to the members of the audience and will fit into their mental framework.

↪ EXAMPLE It is easier for an English speaker to remember names in English or other European languages, where names are associated with everyday meanings (e.g. "Brown") and with numerous known people who have that name, than it is for them to remember names in Chinese, where no such associations are known. The same concept applies in reverse for a Chinese speaker. Similarly, it is much easier to remember places, objects, or rooms in a building by name than by number, because names have higher association value than numbers.

Affect: You can also create a strong emotional connection for the audience by mentally "painting" a vivid

picture for the audience. You might describe an image of something that is extremely beautiful or ugly in the minds of your audience. The concept that is salient, bizarre, shocking, or simply unusual will be more easily remembered.

Repetition: You may repeat important ideas to help the audience remember, and include internal summaries so that you repeat again what you want the audience to remember.

Mnemonics: Mnemonics are often verbal, such as very short poems or special words used to help with memorization (e.g., lists).

> ⤤ EXAMPLE If you want the audience to remember the list (dog, envelope, thirteen, yarn, window), you could create a link system, such as a story about a "dog stuck in an envelope, mailed to an unlucky black cat playing with yarn by the window. " Alternatively, you could use visualization to imagine a dog inside a giant envelope, then visualize an unlucky black cat (or whatever reminds the user of 'thirteen') eating a huge envelope.

While we wait for communication technology and artificial intelligence to enable direct memory transfer, we can make good use of these time tested principles to make messages easier to remember.

📄 **TERM TO KNOW**

Mnemonic
Anything (especially something in verbal form) used to help remember something.

📋 **SUMMARY**

In this lesson, you learned that creating mental images of objects, people, and things is one of the oldest memory tools presented in classic rhetoric. Creating an organizational scheme and positioning ideas, objects, or processes into a specific order **makes the ideas easier for audiences to remember** and reinforce through the scheme.

Further **principles for supporting memory** include breaking up long lists or series into smaller and manageable groupings of four to five items, associating your new idea with ideas that are similar and/or familiar to the audience, and repeating important ideas. Additionally, creating a short poem, special word, or link system helps audiences visualize a connection between previously unconnected objects, ideas, or events.

Source: Boundless. "Make Messages Easy to Remember." Boundless Communications Boundless, 3 Mar. 2017. Retrieved 4 Jun. 2017 from https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/learning-to-listen-and-helping-others-do-the-same-5/helping-your-audience-listen-more-33/make-messages-easy-to-remember-149-10660/

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