Mnemonic Devices

Mnemonic devices are aids for improving one's memory. These devices can be much more efficient than rote memory techniques (learning by simple repetition). Mnemonic devices are more effective because they generally attach new information to be learned to old information already mastered, or to catch words or phrases that are more easily remembered.

Jingles
days in each month--30 days hath September, April, June and November
spelling generalization--i before e except after c

Acronyms (catchwords)
the Great Lakes--HOMES
the only spot in the U.S. where four states meet—CANU

Acrostics (catch phrases)
the colors of the spectrum--Roy G. Biv
the order of the planets from the sun--My very educated mother just served us nine pickles

Procedure for Developing Acronyms and Acrostics (Catchwords/Phrases)
Step 1: Present information to be learned. Underline the first letter of each word.

Step 2: Devise a word or phrase (nonsense or otherwise) using each letter underlined.
For example: Psychology - 4 symptoms of schizophrenia
1) withdrawal 2) hallucinations 3) inappropriate emotional response 4) delusions
Catchword: whid

For example: Chemistry - 7 diatomic molecules
Bromine, Hydrogen, Chlorine, Fluorine, Oxygen, Nitrogen, Iodine
Catch phrase: Brian helps Claire find out new ideas.

If a series of phrases needs to be learned, have the students first circle the key word, or most significant word in each phrase. Then, underline the first letter of each key word and form the catchword/phrase as outlined below.

For example: Psychology - Abraham Maslow's theory of basic human needs:
1) biological need 2) safety need 3) need for companionship 4) esteem need 5) need self-actualization
Catch phrase: Bob sings clearly each afternoon.

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