

Using Music for Memory

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Do you find yourself blanking out on tests? Do you have trouble remembering lists of concepts, complex formulas, vocabulary words, and historical timelines? Do you also know all the words to the top songs of the early 2000s? Then I've got some news for you!

The Power of Rhyme and Meter

- There is a reason you remember songs that you haven't heard in years! Rhyme and meter are tools that have been utilized for centuries, allowing people to pass down information that was not transcribed into written word. You can use these tools to help study!

***Fun Fact:** Have you had to read Homer's *The Odyssey* for an English class? Before this epic poem came to life on paper, the story had been passed down for generations orally, predating the written alphabet! (Project MUSE, 2007)

Writing Your Own Music!

Start Small

Songwriting isn't a magical power granted to a few, it's a process that anyone can engage in! Here are some tips to help you get started:

1. **Use Simple Tunes:** The process of music as a memory tool is supposed to be helpful, not something that adds to your stress! Keep it simple by using a tune you already know. Use classic nursery rhyme tunes like Twinkle Twinkle Little Star for shorter songs.
2. **Put Your List to Music:** Your song doesn't have to be a full ballad with a chorus! If you have a list of things to remember, try putting it to a tune. For example, if you are taking Astronomy, turn the list of planets in our solar system into a catchy song.
3. **Short and Sweet:** If you make your song too long, it might be hard to remember. Try to keep your songs concise so you don't spend too long writing it and trying to memorize it, which could be an ineffective use of time.

The Big Leagues

Do you think you have mastered the art of memory through song? Ready to kick it up a notch? Here are more advanced methods for big dreamers:

1. Utilize Your Talents: If you like to rap, try making an original piece to summarize the main concepts for your Biology test. If you play guitar, you can write your own melody and turn the timeline of World War II into an acoustic masterpiece. If you don't play music but live for poetry, create a poem! Use your strengths.
2. Parodies: In 2007, Miley Stewart's iconic "Bone Dance" aired on Disney Channel, set to the tune of the Hannah Montana song, "Nobody's Perfect." Miley remembered all 206 bones in the human body by creating a parody of her own song, allowing her to ace her test. Using one of your favorite songs can save you the trouble of creating your own tune, while giving you more depth to work with.

Examples

Now that you have the tools you need, go forth and make music! If you still feel unsure, refer to the following examples (both songs written by Danielle Dickey).

Simple Tune:

Set to the tune of the ABC Song

The Group 1A metals are Alkali
Here you will identify
Lithium, Sodium, Potassium too
Rubidium, Cesium, Francium, woo!
Now you know your Group 1A
Try to keep it in your brain

Originally Composed Tune:

Composed on ukulele

Right now, in the European Union (C, F, C)
There are 28 countries (G/B, F, C)
But to understand the Union today we must go back (G, F, G, F)
Go back, to the 1950s (G/B, F, C)
In May of 1950 there's the Schuman Declaration which said Europe should pool its coal and steel production (C, F, C, G/B, F, C)
Because when you work together on coal and steel production (G, F, G, F)
You're not making weapons its aggression reduction (G/B, F, C)
And if there was aggression post-war Europe couldn't function (G/B, F, C)
In 1952 this plan came to be in the European Coal and Steel Community (C, F, C, G/B, F, C)
A group of Western nation worked in solidarity (G, F, G, F)
What would lead to the EU started with 6 countries (G/B, F, C)
Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, West Germany (G/B, F, C)