



# Promising Practices Helping Your Child with Mnemonics

FAPE-36

IDEA '97 strengthens the need to insure that students with disabilities progress in the general education curriculum. At the same time, there is a national push for better results for all students, not just students with disabilities. More and more states are requiring achievement testing for students. These tests are being used to decide whether a child advances from grade to grade or graduates. Your child with a disability takes these tests along with his or her non-disabled classmates.

Your child will need to be able to recall facts quickly and correctly to do well on the tests. Of course, memory is not the same thing as understanding. However, your child will have a hard time showing what he or she knows without being able to remember the facts. These types of memory skills are difficult for many students with disabilities. Luckily, you can help your child learn ways to remember better.

Your child's memory for facts depends upon both information *encoding* and *retrieval*. Learning is the way your child puts information into his or her memory – to *encode* information. Tests require your child to remember things he or she has learned — to *retrieve* information. While helping your child with homework, you can help your child to change the way he or she encodes information. Changing the way he or she encodes information can lead to better retrieval and better test scores.

Mnemonic (pronounced nih MA nihk) strategies are ways to help your child do a better job at encoding information. Then he or she will be able to do a better job retrieving it on demand. Using these strategies, your child can find a way to relate the information he or she is learning to information already long-term memory – information he or she already remembers. With a strong connection between the new and old information, your child can remember new information for a long time.

## Examples of Mnemonic Techniques

*The Keyword Method* — This method pairs a new word with a keyword. This keyword sounds like the new word and can be easily pictured. The picture shows the keyword interacting with the meaning of the word to be learned. For example, to remember that a barrister is another word for lawyer, you could picture a bear in a courtroom.

*The Pegword Method* – This method is used when numbered or ordered information must be remembered. Pegwords are words that rhyme with numbers. The pegword is pictured with the information to be learned. For example, suppose you choose the pegword *sticks* to be the number *six* in your method. Then picturing insects walking on sticks would remind you that insects have six legs.

*Letter strategies* – This method is used to remember a list of things. An acronym is created that is made up of the first letters of the items to be remembered. The first letters of the items found in the acronym helps recall of the list of familiar items. It is easier to remember the one word acronym than all of words on the list. The acronym HOMES can be used to help students remember all the names of the Great Lakes (**H**uron, **O**ntario, **M**ichigan, **E**rie, and **S**uperior).

Research has shown that students with disabilities can be taught to successfully use these mnemonic strategies. These studies show that mnemonic use results in better test scores for students in a wide range of grade levels and in a variety of subjects.

Mnemonics is not an overall teaching approach that should be used for all instruction. There are good ways to teach all subject areas that focus on more than memorization of facts. However, mnemonics can properly be used as a tool that can help your child demonstrate what he or she knows better. This can lead to greater success in school for your child.



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ld\\_indepth/teaching\\_techniques/  
mnemonic\\_strategies.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/teaching_techniques/mnemonic_strategies.html).

For more information on how to use these techniques,  
look for books about memory improvement or  
mnemonics.

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