

## MNEMONIC DEVICES

*A mnemonic device is an artificial memory aid. It is not intended to take the place of understanding. However, for long or complicated memory tasks, it is often worth student's time to organize his material and construct one of these artificial "crutches."*

**Characteristics of a good mnemonic:** it should be *simple*. It should be *vivid*. It should make as much *sense* as possible.

**Here are some examples you may recognize:**

*30 days hath September, April, June, and November. All the rest have 31, except February, which has 28, and Leap Year gives it 29.*

*I before E, except after C, or when sounded as A, as in neighbor or weigh.*

*Stalagmite is spelled with a "g" and comes up from the ground.  
Stalactite has a "c" and comes down from the ceiling.*

*Franklin Pierce was the Fourteenth President of the U.S.*

*Abraham Lincoln's first Vice President was Hamlin.*

*Spell separate with an "a" till your hair turns gray.*

*The letter m comes from in the middle of the dictionary, so everything coming before m is in the front half and everything after m is in the last half.*

*In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.*

**You can often arrange lists of words so that their first letters spell a word,** as in this shopping list: *Tea, Apples, Bread, Light bulbs = TABL or Tings for the table.* (Notice that the word is not spelled correctly. However this is not a handicap. Often misspelling will aid memory since it may be unique, funny, etc.)

**You can also construct sentences using this same idea.** Medical students often use the following mnemonic to help them memorize the cranial nerves. The first letter of each word stands for the first letter of each of the 12 nerves: *On Old Olympus' Towering Top, A French Speaking German Viewed Some Hops.* The nerves are: *Olfactory, Optic, Oculomotor, Trochler, Trigeminal, Abucent, Facial, Statocoustic, Glossopharyngeal, Vagus, Spinal accessory, Hypoglossal.*

**Numbers can be read remembered by looking for patterns.** Simply grouping numbers in clumps of three makes things easier:

*384962801 is better read 384-962-801*

*71600 might be read 7 minus 1 equals 6. Oh, oh!*

*524 could be read "Counting back ward, I go from five to four".*

Obviously, each number is unique; however, the principle is the same. It is up to the student to devise and practice on his own.