Mnemonic Device Creator Cards

Seven mnemonic types with examples and blank cards for your child to create their own

Mnemonics work because they create additional retrieval pathways. Instead of one way to access a memory, you create two or three — the fact itself, plus the pattern (rhyme, acronym, image). Self-generated mnemonics are significantly more effective than pre-made ones, because the act of creating forces deep processing.

1. Acronym Mnemonics

Take the first letter of each item and form a word or phrase.

EXAMPLE	WHAT IT ENCODES
HOMES	Great Lakes: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior
ROY G. BIV	Rainbow colors: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet
PEMDAS	Math order of operations: Parentheses, Exponents, Multiplication, Division, Addition, Subtraction

Create your own acronym mnemonic:

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2. Acrostic Mnemonics

Create a sentence where each word starts with the first letter of what you need to remember.

EXAMPLE	WHAT IT ENCODES
My Very Excellent Mother Just Served Us Nachos	Planet order: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune
Every Good Boy Does Fine	Treble clef lines: E, G, B, D, F

EXAMPLE	WHAT IT ENCODES
King Philip Came Over For Good Spaghetti	Taxonomy: Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species

Create your own acrostic mnemonic:

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3. Rhyme Mnemonics

Rhyme creates a phonological loop — the brain replays rhymes automatically.

EXAMPLE	WHAT IT ENCODES
In fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue	Year Columbus reached the Americas
i before e, except after c	English spelling rule
Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November	Months with 30 days

Create your own rhyme mnemonic:

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4. Chunking

Break long strings into smaller, manageable groups. Working memory holds 4 ± 1 chunks.

BEFORE CHUNKING	AFTER CHUNKING
5551234567	555-123-4567
CIAFBINASAMIT	CIA-FBI-NASA-MIT
149216251732	1492-1625-1732

Practice chunking a long number or list:

5. Visual Association

Create a vivid mental image linking two things together. The more absurd, the more memorable.

WORD PAIR	VISUAL IMAGE
Mitochondria = powerhouse	Imagine tiny power plants with smokestacks inside each cell, generating electricity
Stalactite hangs from ceiling	Stalactites hold TIGHT to the ceiling (tight = top)
Capital of Australia = Canberra	A kangaroo in a CAN eating a BERRY on top of parliament building

Create your own visual association:

6. Story Method

Link items together in a narrative. Each item leads to the next through cause and effect.

Example — Remembering a grocery list (milk, eggs, bread, apples, cheese): A COW (milk) sat on a NEST of EGGS, which cracked and spilled onto a loaf of BREAD that rolled down a hill into an APPLE tree, where a MOUSE was eating CHEESE on a branch.

Create your own story mnemonic:

7. Peg System

Memorize a fixed set of 'pegs' (rhyming numbers), then hang new information on them.

NUMBER	PEG (RHYMES WITH)	USE: HANG ITEM ON IT
1	Sun (or Bun)	Visualize item 1 interacting with a sun/bun
2	Shoe	Visualize item 2 interacting with a shoe
3	Tree	Visualize item 3 interacting with a tree
4	Door	Visualize item 4 interacting with a door
5	Hive	Visualize item 5 interacting with a beehive
6	Sticks	Visualize item 6 interacting with sticks
7	Heaven	Visualize item 7 interacting with clouds/heaven
8	Gate	Visualize item 8 interacting with a gate
9	Vine	Visualize item 9 interacting with a vine
10	Hen	Visualize item 10 interacting with a hen

Use the peg system to memorize a 5-item list:

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> The best mnemonic is the one your child creates themselves. Pre-made mnemonics are helpful as examples, but self-generated ones are stickier because the creation process itself forces deep encoding. Have your child make their own — even if they're silly. Especially if they're silly.