Study Skills and Test Prep

Lesson Plan | Middle and High School

Lesson Time: 20-25 minutes

Be a Memory Champion!

Objectives & Outcomes

Lesson Objectives: Given a list of items, students will use mnemonic strategies for memorizing the list.

Lesson Outcomes: Students will be able to ...

- create their own mnemonic devices for memory
- explain to another person how the VIA system works

Subject Area Connection: Language Arts

Getting Ready

Teacher Preparation: In this lesson, students will learn about a mnemonic system called VIA (visualization, imagination, action) as a memory aid that can help them in their studies. Have a deck of cards ready to use in the practice session.

Materials Required:

- a deck of playing cards
- paper and pencils or pens

Key Vocabulary

mnemonics: systems to assist in memory.

VIA: visualization, imagination, action.

peg: a mental image that aids in learning.

Background

Mnemonics have been used to assist with memorization for thousands of years. If you were taught **P**lease **E**xcuse **M**y **D**ear **A**unt **S**ally for the order of operations in math, you've used a mnemonic. There are many different types of mnemonic systems. The VIA system uses **V**isualization, **I**magination, and **A**ction to help in remembering long lists of different people, events, dates, words, or other things. The first step is to visualize the item. The second step is to imagine the item doing something. This is called creating a "peg." Sometimes silly actions work best because they are unusual, and therefore are less likely to be forgotten.

"The VIA system uses **V**isualization, **I**magination, and **A**ction to help in remembering long lists."

Introduction and Modeling

Tell the students that mnemonics are systems that facilitate memorization. Today they will practice using a mnemonic called VIA, which stands for **V**isualization, **I**magination, and **A**ction. Tell the students they can memorize long lists of items quickly by using this system. Share with students how to create a "peg" or place for the information by visualizing the items and imagining them in action. Demonstrate the VIA system by having students memorize the order of the first three planets in our solar system. Have them visualize a post office. As they look inside, they see a delivery man racing (Mercury) past a beautiful woman (Venus) before delivering the package at home (Earth). Remembering this scene "pegs" the three planets into memory.

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Procedure

1. Take out a deck of cards. Hold up the two of spades. Have students volunteer to share the VIA they create from it.

2. Hold up a four of diamonds. Again, have students create their own VIA with the two cards.

3. Next, hold up a King of Hearts. Students now should add a VIA with the third card. If students are stuck for an idea, one example they might think of is two people with shovels dig up four diamonds and give them to a beloved king.

4. Ask the students what the three cards were. Most should be able to answer correctly.

5. Add another card to the pile, a five of clubs. Now the VIA might add five men with clubs came and robbed the beloved king and stole the four diamonds the two people dug up with their shovels.

6. Notice in the last step the VIA repeated the cards in reverse. This technique also aids in memorization.

7. Continue adding cards and building the VIA until you reach seven cards. Have the students recite the cards to each other and ask if any of them created a different VIA and have them share it with the class.

8. Now give the students an academic topic to memorize, for example, the seven levels of species classification (Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, and Species). Have them write them in a list, then create a VIA.

Discussion Questions

- What are mnemonics?
- What type of information would work best to memorize with a mnemonic device?
- Would you use a mnemonic device to help you remember the plot of a book?

Evaluation

Students will explain to a partner their VIA for memorizing the 7 levels of species classification in order. After a short discussion, have them return to their seats. Give students three minutes to list the levels on a paper in order. Collect the papers to see if the students were able to memorize them.

Tips for Tailoring This Lesson

For Higher Grade Levels

- Create a VIA for high school level math or science terms.
- Create a VIA for foreign language word lists and definitions.

For Lower Grade Levels

- Create a VIA for remembering the planets in order.
- Draw a picture of a VIA to remember vocabulary words.

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Alignment to Standards and Frameworks

Common Core State Standards: College & Career Readiness

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Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

CCRA.SL.2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Anchor Standards for Language

CCRA.L.6. Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

Partnership for 21st Century Framework

Partnership for 21st Century Framework: the framework comprises the skills, knowledge and expertise students should master to succeed in work and life in the 21st century. Partnership for 21st Century Skills www.p21.org

Initiative and Self-Direction

Work Independently

- Monitor, define, prioritize and complete tasks without direct oversight

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