Plans for Remembering

Memorizing facts is an important part of school learning. Many times, children recite facts, such as 8 + 9 = 17, which requires understanding the order of the numbers because of their arrangement. Memory strategies (e.g., a plan) are an excellent way to help children remember facts they need to know because the strategies change the way children think about or process the information. Memory or mnemonic strategies are techniques for increasing learning to help long-term memory of important information. When people read facts, they are better able to remember them later when the facts are made more meaningful through their relationship to other things already known and through elaboration. Using mnemonics is a specific strategy for doing this.

Mnemonics

Figure 1 illustrates how a child who has difficulty remembering the order of math operations can use a memory strategy (i.e., a plan). In this example, the mnemonic device allows the child to perform the operations in the correct order by using the strategy rather than by relying on the memory of the sequence of operations. Other plans for remembering include associations of pictures with a word.

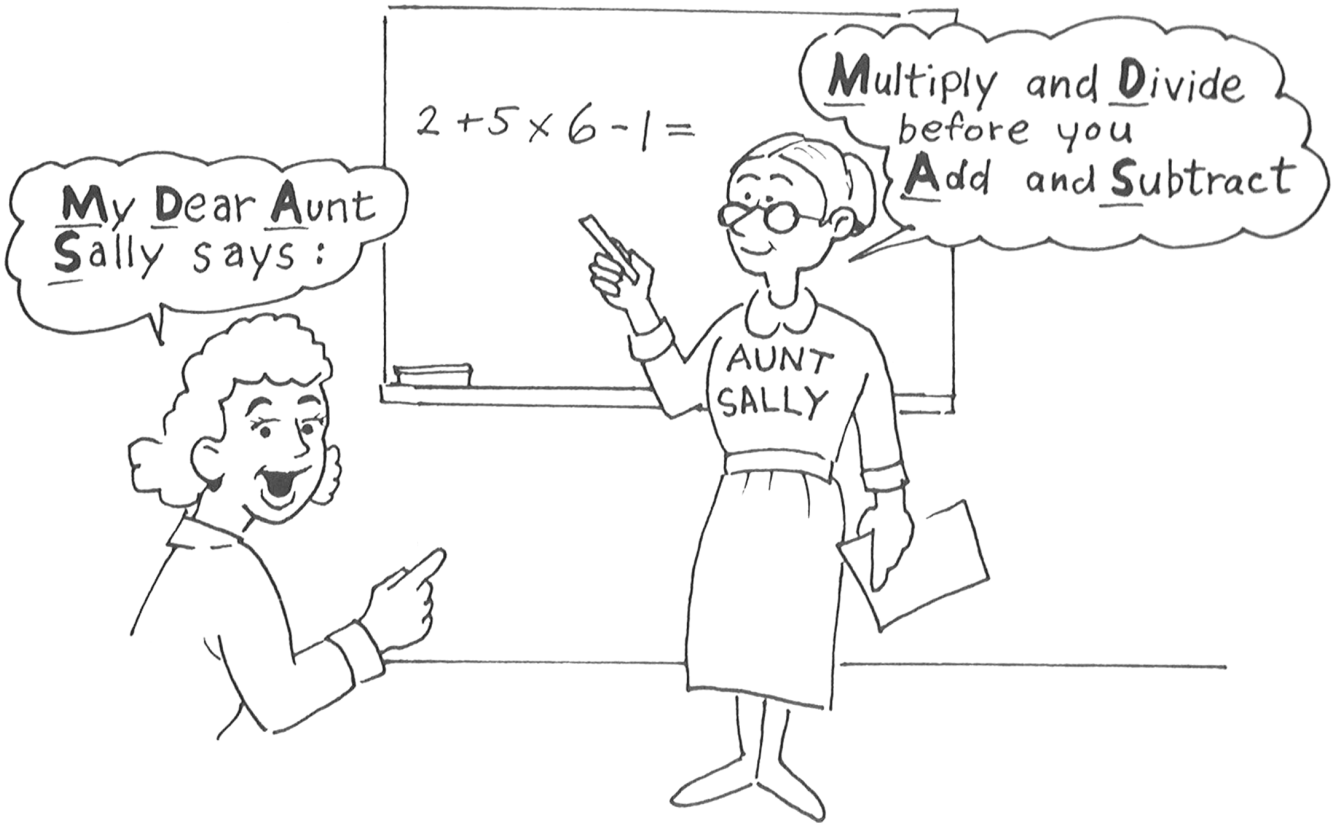

Figure 1. A drawing that represents a common mnemonic. (From Mastropieri, M.A., & Scruggs, T.E. [1991]. *Teaching students ways to remember* [p. 89]. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books; reprinted by permission.)

How to Teach Plans for Remembering

The *keyword method* is a plan for remembering that enhances learning by helping the individual organize incoming information for better storage and retrieval. The following are steps for using the keyword method to remember new vocabulary words.

1. The child associates a new word to a familiar word. For example, *ranid* (which means *frog*) is matched to a similar sounding word, *rain*.
2. The child remembers that the keyword for *ranid* is *rain*.
3. The child relates the keyword to the unfamiliar word's meaning. For example, frogs like water, so they like rain.
4. The child makes a mental image of a frog in the rain.
5. The child retrieves the new word's meaning. For example, the child might think, "What does *ranid* mean? It sounds like *rain*, and I remember the image of a frog in the rain. *Ranid* means *frog*."

Who Should Be Taught Plans for Remembering?

Plans for remembering appear most useful for memorization of specific words or facts for the sciences, history, foreign languages, rules for writing, math facts, and so forth. Children who perform poorly in Successive processing often have trouble with remembering facts based on the order of information. This instruction benefits students who are poor in Successive processing and students who score low in Planning because it gives them a strategy or plan for remembering.

Resources

More examples, written instructions, lessons, and classroom handouts related to mnemonics can be found on the web at http://www.mindtools.com/memory.html.

Kirby, J.R., & Williams, N.H., (1991). *Learning problems: A cognitive approach*. Toronto: Kagan & Woo Limited.
Naglieri, J.A. (1999). *Essentials of CAS assessment*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
Mastropieri, M.A., & Scruggs, T.E. (1991). *Teaching students ways to remember*. Brookline, MA: Brookline Books.
Pressley, M., & Woloshyn, V. (1995). *Cognitive strategy instruction that really improves children's academic performance*. Brookline, MA: Brookline Books.