

Introduction to Statistics and Research Methods: Becoming a Psychological Detective, An

Greek poet Simonides, said to have created the method of loci

Method of Loci Examples

This technique could be useful in daily life, such as memorizing a grocery list. Here's a simple example:

Pears

Bananas

Artichokes

Bacon

Cheddar Cheese

Eggs

Ice cream

Cereal

Almond milk

Bread

Cinnamon

Tofu

Orange Juice

One way to use the method of loci on this list would be to simply use the places suggested by the nature of the list. If someone knew the grocery store very well, the method of loci could be used simply by spending some time visualizing how the trip would go. The shopper would first group items which are located in the same parts of the store together, for example moving Tofu to be near the fruit and vegetables because the plant based proteins are found in the produce section. Then, the shopper would carefully imagine the course they were going to take in the store, a section at a time, perhaps imagining each item to be purchased as lighting up with a colored halo. Finally, actually walking through the store would trigger memories of what needed to be purchased at each physical location in the store. A similar natural technique would be to imagine precisely where all the groceries would go in the refrigerator and cabinets after the shopping trip, and then fill in the refrigerator and cabinets in one's mind while shopping, completing the mental picture while gathering physical goods.

A more classical technique would be to imagine a physical place, perhaps the

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shopper's living room. As the shopper looks around their own living room, they would mentally place the items to be purchased throughout the room. Perhaps the bananas become perched on the television, and the orange juice reclines upon the couch. Then, at the store, the shopper simply visualizes their living room, and mentally imagines themselves walking through it and seeing the items in order to recall the list.

A third way to remember information with the method of loci incorporates a bit of narrative. The user imagines a vibrant location with lots of unforgettable objects which serve as hints or triggers to recall the items in a list, creating a slightly absurd mental space with a narrative feel. A story unfolds in the mind as the user imagines moving through the space. This is particularly useful for more scholastic and abstract topics, such as memorizing a string of numbers. This is also an excellent technique for memorizing something like the periodic table or medication lists.

The first 15 digits of pi are 3.14159265358979.

If someone is trying to recall the digits of pi they might imagine a home, with a number 314 as the house number. On the door might be a wreath which belonged to the person's grandfather, who died at age 59. Upon imagining opening the door, there might be a two welcome mats (since the next number is two). Hanging next to the mat is a picture of a fishing boat, since this person looks forward to turning 65 and being able to retire to fish full time. There are also three pegs for hanging coats, and someone has dropped a five cent nickel on the ground under the pegs. The user imagines bending over to pick up the nickel, and notices crumbs from a snack the cat carried over and ate (ate = eight). Speaking of the cat, she is lying near the doorway, enjoying her nine lives. She purrs, sounding like she is in heaven (heaven rhymes with seven). The person engaging in this technique then imagines that they hear their son running to welcome them home. He is nine.

The problem with all these methods is that each location in the mental image is light on information. There's really only one piece of information at each spot. The way to remedy the problem is with the fourth way of using the method of loci, which is to use a technique that allows for information dense chunks to occupy each node of the memory palace. For numbers, one could use the counting method, whereby the number of letters in a word equals the number which the word is meant to stand for. So 'I like apple juice' is equal to the number 1455. To combine with the method of loci, one would place a glass of orange juice in their imaginary space and associate this phrase with the juice.

Reference

[Psychoanalysis Online 4: Teleanalytic Practice, Teaching, and Clinical Research \(The Library of Technology and Mental Health\)](#)

[Research and Evaluation in Counseling](#)