



Here are the memory pegs, and a method for teaching them to school students. Trainers, you are welcome to adapt this as appropriate for your participants. R.A.

The Memory Pegs

The ‘Peg’ The Action

- 1) Sun Make a circle with your hands
- 2) Eyes Bring two fingers to your eyes
- 3) Triangle Draw a triangle in the air with your fingers
- 4) Stove Touch all four burners on a stove
- 5) Fingers Hold up the five fingers of one hand
- 6) Sticks Pick up sticks from the ground
- 7) 7 Up Take a big drink from a can of 7-Up
- 8) Octopus Put your arms out like an octopus
- 9) Line Draw a line in the air in front of you
- 10) Hen Flap your arms like a chicken's wings
- 11) Fence Two fingers in the air, and make a series of fence posts
- 12) Eggs Crack an imaginary egg
- 13) Black Cat Pet the cat
- 14) Heart Make a heart in the air in front of you with your fingers
- 15) Fame Arms spread wide, say "Fame!"
- 16) Driving Drive an imaginary car
- 17) Magazine Turn the pages of an imaginary magazine
- 18) Vote Make a check mark in the air
- 19) TV Remote Click the imaginary remote at the TV
- 20) 20-20 Vision Make circles with your hands around your eyes.



Here's how you can use them:

Step One: Learning the pegs *yourself!*

First, before you can share this with your students, you'll need to know how to use the pegs yourself. Learn them by first saying the number, then saying the peg associated with that number, while doing the motion. For example, to learn the first peg, out loud say, "One – sun." At the same time, do the action of making a circle with your hands in the air in front of you. Next, say, "Two – eyes." At the same time, do the action of bringing two fingers towards your eyes, pointing at them. Continue in this way until you feel confident you've 'learned' all 20 of the pegs.

To verify that you really can remember them, try several things. First, give a friend the list of the 20 pegs to test you while you go through them in order. Remember – *always say the number, then say the name of the peg as you do the action.* Next, try doing the 20 pegs backwards, starting at 20, and going down to 1. Again, ask your friend to make sure you get them all correct. Finally, ask your friend to call out random numbers between 1 and 20, and you tell them the peg, while doing the action.

When you are confident you know the 20 pegs, you're ready for the next step ...

Step Two: Using the Pegs yourself

Here's how to use the pegs, at a very basic level. Begin by making a random list of **20 Common Household** objects. We've filled in the first few, just to get you started, so please fill in the rest of the list. *Be sure to do this before you read on!*

- | | |
|-----------------|-----|
| 1) Refrigerator | 11) |
| 2) Book | 12) |
| 3) Toothbrush | 13) |
| 4) | 14) |
| 5) | 15) |
| 6) | 16) |
| 7) | 17) |
| 8) | 18) |
| 9) | 19) |
| 10) | 20) |

Now, suppose you wanted to 'memorize' this list you've just created. How can you use the pegs to do it? To explain, it helps to know why they are referred to as 'pegs.'

Have you ever seen pegs on the kitchen wall, where people hang various sets of keys? The words you've learned, connected to each number, can be used like 'mental pegs'. You can 'hang' a picture of the thing you want to remember onto the picture that's already in your head at each number. Here's how it works.





Take the first thing on this list you want to remember. How do you remember it's a 'book'? You start by thinking of the 'peg' you've learned for number one. Remember? It's the 'sun,' and the motion is making a circle in front of you like a sun. The key is to *take the motion you already know – making a circle – start making it again, but then let it change into a motion that might remind you of a 'book.'*

For example, you might start making the circle, then you square it off, and say the word, "Book." Starting the motion you already learned becomes the trigger for the motion, which changes into a specific motion that triggers the memory. Try it right now, do it in the air in front of you – start making a circle, then change it into a square and say, "One – book." Remember, it's important to keep saying the number!

Let's try another one. The second one on this list is a 'refrigerator.' First, start making the motion for the second peg. Remember, the second peg is 'eyes' and the motion is your two fingers coming toward your eyes. Now, start that motion, but change it into something that will trigger a memory of a refrigerator. It could be anything that you want to make up, but for now, let's imagine that your fingers start coming towards your eyes, and then you bend them into hooks, which you use to open the refrigerator door, as you say, "Two – Refrigerator." Try that right now. Do it several times.

For the third one, use the same idea – start with the action you know for that peg, and change it into something that will trigger a memory of the item on the list. Can you make one up right now, before you read on? TRY IT! Perhaps, since the third peg is 'triangle' and the motion is to make a triangle with your fingers, you could start making the triangle, but as your fingers come down, pull on an imaginary lamp cord, and say, "Three – lamp."

Now, continue 'memorizing' the list you created, using this approach. For each item, start the motion of the peg you already know, and then change it to become a motion that triggers the memory of the item on the list. Do this for each one several times, always saying the number and the item as you do the motion. Continue down the list until you've done all 20. Finally, grab a sheet of paper and write down the 20 things on that list!

If you're like most people, you'll get most of them – perhaps all of them – right away! It's OK to celebrate – this is great! Yet while this instant success tends to startle many people who are trying it for the first time, it's really not magic – it's just using the basic way our memory works naturally. To make sure you have the hang of using the memory pegs, you might want to repeat this process several times, each time using a new list, before you introduce it to your students. Only do it once a day, at most. When you're confident you understand how the process works, you're ready for the next step ...

Step Three: Demonstrating the Pegs to Your Students

Here's one way to introduce your students to the pegs – done properly it's completely amazing to the students, and enjoyable to do! It's mentioned briefly in Day One of the *Five-by-Five* section, however we'll expand on it here.

First, ask your students to call out 20 household items, and get a couple of volunteers to write them on the board. Don't tell them why you're doing it, just ask them to give suggestions while you write them up. When you have 20 things written on the board, tell the students you'll come back to these later, and get them busy doing some type of activity where they are working with each other. When they're busy, use the peg strategy to memorize the pegs. Don't be too obvious about your hand motions, and take as much time as you need.

When you feel you have the list memorized, you can start. Tell your students you're going to memorize the list. Ask them to time 20 seconds for you. When they say go, turn your back on them and look at the 20 things on the board – use this time to check once again that you DO know them! Then – turn around and without looking at the board, start saying the items, in order. They'll be staring at you, amazed! And then, if you're feeling confident, ask them to call out random numbers, such as "7" or "15" and show that you can remember any of the items from the list, even when called out at random. And of course – celebrate!

Now that you've amazed them, you're ready for the next step ...

Step Four: Teaching the Pegs to the Students

Teaching the pegs to the students follows the same sequence that you used when you were learning teaching them to yourself:

- Explain that for them to do this, first they have to learn some 'pegs.' Make clear it why they are called 'pegs,' using the explanation from this section.
- Teach the students the 20 pegs as a group, going in order, and asking them to repeat each one, always doing the actions.
- Next students practice the pegs in pairs, or trios, doing them first in order, then backwards, then testing each other at random.
- When they all know the pegs, celebrate!
- Demonstrate how you used the motion of each peg to make a connection to the list of items on the board. Do the first few with them, and then get them to work together to memorize the rest of the list. Give them 5 minutes, at most!
- After the five minutes are over, erase the items from the board! Ask your students to work together to write down the 20 items from the board. Celebrate their success!



It's OK to now tell the students the truth, that you actually took a bit more time to learn the pegs, while they were involved the activity. You certainly don't have to, if you want to maintain an air of mystery and magic!

However, many teachers – following the idea of *Tell Students Everything* – will want to talk about it, explaining they did it to create a state of amazement, which helps students get excited about learning. And they should be excited – even if it takes a few minutes instead of 20 seconds, in many ways that's *still very magical!*

When students have proven to themselves they can memorize 20 individual items this way, you're ready for the final step ...

Step Five: Using the Pegs to Learn Content

The final piece in understanding the memory pegs is to apply them to remember content students need to learn. Interestingly, once the basic idea is in place, this last part is surprisingly simple, yet incredibly powerful.

The key is to isolate the important points from any unit or lesson.

Write these points on the board.

For example, if your students are doing a history unit, on the day before the test, write up the 20 most important facts, such as names, dates, or locations.

Give students time to work together and use the pegs to memorize them.

When students can remember these key points, they'll easily be able to recall other information *related* to these central points.

Can students remember multiple lists? Yes, they can!

Meaning, the pegs can be used to remember key points from several different content areas if necessary. Try them in various ways, with various subject areas, and watch how flexible, adaptable, and *useful* these memory pegs can be.