

Keywords: A Memorization Strategy

Description: In this mnemonic (memorization) technique, students select the central idea of a passage and summarize it as a ‘keyword’. Next, they *recode* the keyword as a mental picture and use additional mental imagery to *relate* other important facts to the keyword. They can then recall the keyword when needed, *retrieving* the related information. Reserve at least a full instructional session to introduce this comprehension strategy.

Materials:

- Overhead transparencies of sample passages taken from expository texts, transparency markers
- Student copies of *Memorizing Facts: The Keyword Strategy* and practice expository passages (optional) or text books

Preparation:

- Prepare overheads of sample expository passages.
- Review the procedures in the worksheet *Memorizing Facts: The Keyword Strategy*

Intervention Script:

1. Tell students that a good way to remember lots of facts is to use keywords. With the keyword approach, students:

- highlight important facts or ideas in a passage
- write a “gist” sentence that summarizes the highlighted ideas or facts
- select a ‘keyword’ that will help them to recall a central idea about the article or passage.
- create a mental picture to remember the keyword, and then
- add details to the mental picture or create a story around the keyword to memorize additional facts or ideas.
facts using this approach.

Read through several sample passages with the group. Write a description of the mental imagery that you used to memorize the keyword and related facts. Using a “think-aloud” approach, explain the mental imagery of your keyword and related story and show how the imagery encapsulates the main facts of the original passage. Show students how they can more easily recall facts using this approach.

2. Pair students off and give them a sample passage. Assign each pair of

students to:

- identify the main idea of the passage
- write a “gist” sentence to summarize the passage’s main idea and related important facts
- select a keyword based on the main idea
- write out a description (or draw a picture) of the mental imagery that they will use to recall the main idea and important facts of the passage.

3. When students are able to use the keyword strategy independently, have them use the technique when reading through expository passages. Monitor students’ use of the method and their accuracy in recalling key facts.

Conference individually with those students needing additional guidance and support.

Tips:

Encourage Students to Share Helpful Keyword Examples With Peers.

Your students will probably come up with clever and memorable ways to recall information using the keyword strategy. Note any students who do especially well at memorizing complex information and invite them to share their mnemonic strategies with other students.

References:

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Peters, E.E. & Levin, J.R. (1986). Effects of a mnemonic imagery on good and poor readers’ prose recall. *Reading Research Quarterly, 21*, 179-192