Sometimes Learning Is As Simple As Asking The Right Questions

Were you one of those students?

You know the kind I'm talking about.

The kind of student whose mind is brimming with questions.

And yet ...

You never asked any of them.

Instead, you sat behind your desk, gripped by curiosity, but forever reason, kept quiet.

How To Train Your Memory To Memorize Any Word

It all begins with getting out of your comfort zone and asking
those questions.

But before that, you'll need to read and test how well you've understood something on your own.

And that's what I admire so much about Jordan.

He sent in this question and really took his time to think things through.

Because here's a little-known secret for you ... 

**The Answer Is Almost Always In The Question!**

To prove this point, take a moment to go through the following question. Note just how many times Jordan's fantastic questions create the basis for a powerful answer.

You should do the same whenever you have questions. Write to explore and you'll find that you know so much more than it might at first seem.

**Hi Anthony,**

Everything about your associative memory methods is exceptionally clear. I actually developed a near-identical memory system for myself to learn basic Hebrew and Farsi, years ago ...
However, what I didn't include at the time was my own "spatial / palace" dimension. My images were going 'into the void.'

For that reason, I'm having a bit of trouble understanding just how it is you use your Memory Palace - in combination with your Excel sheets etc. - when learning a new language.

I'm now learning Russian, so let's use that as an example here. Sorry for the questions to follow. Just bear with me a moment, and maybe this can help you clarify your method to other future learners.

I'm curious how it is you build your palatial repository, sequentially speaking. Here's how I understand it... please let me know if I'm getting any of these steps wrong or missing out something crucial.

1) Create one Memory Palace for your new target language (e.g., Russian), and begin by subdividing into 33 'locations' within that Memory Palace (i.e., one location per letter of the alphabet).

The path you walk through the palace at any point in the future will now be by location, by alphabetical order. (I.e., start with 'A' location, then 'Б' location, then 'B' location, etc., linearly, without crossing or doubling back or boxing yourself in)

2) For each 'location', identify at least 10 'stations' (i.e., sublocations?) ... These stations are where you're going to store the associative images for your first 10+ vocabulary words.
Respectively, each of which starts with the respective letter of the alphabet corresponding to the location. For instance, in my 'A' location I have 10 stations, where I store the words 'арка,' 'афиша,' 'аптека,' etc. (i.e., one word/associative image combo per station).

3) I continue to populate all my locations and stations this way, i.e., organized by initial letter.

4) I write each of my vocab words down in an Excel file, noting the words itself. Plus, the location, the station and/or the image ... ? (please advise if I understand this correctly)...

5) Continue ad infinitum and practice my walk through regularly...

Assuming I have that right, above (please correct me if not), I have a few questions:

i) As you learn any new word, you must create a new station within the appropriate location, and store it there for organizational purposes and ease of access ... correct? ... So, theoretically, each 'location' grows in terms of volume of 'stations', infinitely (i.e., it grows by one newly invented station every time you add a new word that begins with the location-relevant letter).

ii) Assuming what I just said in (i) above is correct, do you subdivide the 'location' into ever-smaller, more specific 'stations', as your vocabulary grows? Does this result in a sort of infinitesimally divided 'location' ...
If so, do you have any tricks or techniques for finding ever more, or increasingly small/minute, stations to create and use within your locations as your vocabulary grows? ... If not, and I have this wrong, please correct me.

iii) Assuming (i) and (ii) are mostly correct, what do you do to memorize key *phrases*, as opposed to just words? Do you store each one in a new station, within a location that corresponds to the first letter of the first word of the phrase (e.g., 'Что нового' gets its own new station within the 'Ч' location)? I realize this may be different for everybody, but I'm curious how *you* do it, particularly in terms of Russian, but also for any language, generally.

iv) Assuming i have the general storage hierarchy system understood correctly, do you tend to store new words/phrases in new stations *in alphabetical order* within your locations? E.g., if you already know and have stations for 'аптека' and 'афиша', but then you learn the new word 'арка,' do you create a new station for 'арка' *in between* the stations for 'аптека' and 'афиша'? (I.e. because the letter 'р' comes after the the letter 'п' but before the letter 'ф' in the Russian alphabet.)

Or do you just add a new station at the end of all your other 'A' stations each time you learn a new 'a' word (i.e., within each location, new words get stores in stations ordered sequentially by when you learned them). ... Please let me know which system you use/have had the most success with.

v) Assuming most (i) to (iv) is correct in spirit if not in detail, each time you do a mental walk-through of your Mind Palace,
are you actually revisiting *every single station* within *every single location* in your palace? If I understand correctly, this is basically like walking through a dictionary from front to back, in your mind, with each word represented by its own station, nested within one of 33 (e.g., in the case of Russian) sequential locations. ... That seems like a lot of walking/remembering!! ... maybe I'm missing something here (or maybe its just not as daunting as it sounds) ... Do I have this right?

Generally, I'd just like to know if I have this all understood correctly. I do realize everyone can and will make their own personalized modifications to the system/principles based on how their own minds work, and on their specific target material. That said, I'm very curious to know how *you*, specifically, structure your Mind Palaces, *specifically* for the case of language acquisition, and--to the degree relevant--specifically in the case of Russian.

Apologies for the epic email, but I want to make sure I'm building this palace--and these habits--the most effective and adaptable way possible, from the ground up.

Thanks for any insight!!

Cheers,

Jordan

How To Avoid Disaster, Make Your Own Discoveries And Find All The Memory Palaces
Hi Jordan,

Thanks for your note.

Yes, you’ve understood everything more or less. I think a re-read of the book will cement things further.

On to your questions:

1) I do not recommend that you create your stations as you go along. This is a recipe for disaster.

Instead, go in with your Memory Palaces prepared in advance. If you want to memorize ten new words, have a Memory Palace with ten stations. If you have to build it as you go along, then you’re going to create cognitive load. Dig your wells before you get thirsty.

2) Subdivision is possible, but you shouldn’t need it because proper use of the MMM will get the words into long-term memory. You can then reuse the Memory Palaces. If you want to hold onto them, which is often the case and perfectly okay, then you can create new Memory Palaces per letter. Easy-peasy.

There’s more help here:

How To Find Memory Palaces
3) Phrases are best memorized by attaching them to words you’ve already got reliably stationed. If you’ve memorized the word for “first,” then later, go back and memorize the equivalent of a phrase like, “first things first,” or “in the first place,” or “first of all.” You can often memorize a number of phrases, assuming the word is actually in the equivalent phrasing of the target language (it isn’t always, but often enough it is).

4) See 3

5) If your Memory Palace is built correctly, you’re not revising every station. You just go there. It’s the same thing as walking from your bedroom to the kitchen. You don’t revise that journey. You simply move to it on autopilot.

Sure, there’s some part of your mind responsible for moving you from place to place and observing everything. But good Memory Palace construction reduces the effort.

As for this being a lot of memorizing and revising, I suggest that anyone time their effort, time spent and results in comparison with rote learning. I doubt that anyone seriously using the Magnetic Memory Method in the right way will be able to say that spaced-repetition software or any other form of rote learning will be faster or easier.

And you don’t have to take my word for it. Check out Noel Van Vliet’s results using the Magnetic Memory Method. He was very skeptical, and yet it worked gangbusters for him:
Judgment Day

As for whether you understood everything correctly or not, here’s the thing:

Go in with the spirit of experimentation using the understanding that you already had and some of my clarifications. If you get results based on that understanding, awesome.

If you don’t get the results you’re looking for, go back to the book for more study and analysis of what you’ve been doing and make changes based on your needs and preferences. When you get results, awesome.

Since this is a method that teaches you how to build your own systems, then it’s really not about how I use the MMM. It’s about how you use the MMM.

The books and video courses already tell you how I use it. I’ve never made any significant changes to how I use it and I doubt I ever will. The basic nature of memory, the nature of the techniques and the nature of language will never change - at least not much. These features of reality really are one of the few things that are impervious to the old rule that change is the only constant. Not memory techniques nor the basic rules of language (words and grammar "rules" might transform over time, but the fact of words and grammar as such most likely never will).

The only thing that ever changes is the extent to which people
get busy using these techniques. And I’m very pleased to see that you’re poised to do just that.

And it truly is the best of all worlds because as you learn Russian with the MMM, you learn about your memory and how to use it. As you learn about your memory and how to use it, you learn Russian.

Just make sure that you also read, write, speak and listen to Russian everyday. Otherwise, all the Memory Palaces and memory techniques in the world won’t help you get fluent. Memory techniques are a tool of fluency and the MMM is an imaginative and organic alternative to the old school hammer of rote learning. But both require the same level of daily reading, writing, speaking and listening.

So memorize forth and prosper with this in mind.

Thanks again for your note - hope to correspond again soon!