

# MIND PERFORMANCE HACKS™

*Tips & Tools for Overclocking Your Brain*



O'REILLY®

*Ron Hale-Evans*



HACK

#1

## Remember 10 Things to Bring

You need never forget your keys again. Always remember the top 10 things to bring when you leave your house.

Sure, thanks to the hacks in this chapter on memory, you'll be able to remember all the U.S. presidents and world capitals, but maybe you'll still forget your keys and your cell phone when you leave the house. What good are mnemonic tricks if you can't apply them to daily life?

You can make a practical difference in your preparedness for daily life and the efficiency with which you live it if you memorize a list of items *without which you never leave the house*. If you run through this checklist when leaving work, school, a restaurant, or a friend's house, you need never leave anything important behind wherever you go. You can also use this hack to get out of the house quickly in the morning, by ensuring that all of the items on the checklist are gathered in one place before you go to sleep.

### In Action

For this hack, you'll need some kind of mnemonic skeleton that can contain about 10 items (or as many as are on your checklist). You can use a short journey [Hack #3], the 10 digits of the Dominic System [Hack #6], the number shape system [Hack #2], or anything else that *you can remember effortlessly* and when distracted. I use the first mnemonic system I ever learned, the *number rhyme system*, which my father taught me when I was a boy: "One is gun; two is shoe; three is tree," and so on. Ergo, for the first item on my list, I create a vivid image that contains the item and a gun; I remember the second item by associating it with a shoe; and so on down the list.

Compile your checklist and write the items next to the mnemonic skeleton. Put your most important items first in the list so that you'll remember to grab those even if you are interrupted and can't run through your entire list.

As always, link the objects you want to remember to the places in the mnemonic skeleton using the most vivid images you can. Here is my actual list:

1 :: *gun :: medication*

I never leave the house without this. I imagine a gun firing pills scatter-shot in all directions.

2 :: *shoe :: keys*

I imagine the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe trying to open the front door of her giant shoe with her keys while dozens of her children are tugging on her skirt.

3 :: *tree* :: *cell phone*

I imagine a tree with a 1920s-style varnished black telephone handset and mouthpiece protruding from it. A pair of bells on the tree ring loudly.

4 :: *door* :: *notebook*

I imagine my Moleskine Mini notebook grown to enormous size. The front cover swings open like a door with a huge *Inner Sanctum* creak of hinges. (I never go anywhere without my catch [Hack #13].)

5 :: *hive* :: *wallet*

I imagine opening my wallet and a swarm of bees flying out into my face. Argh!

6 :: *sticks* :: *PDA*

I imagine using a scratchy wooden stick with leaves as a stylus to write on my PDA. (This also reminds me to bring a stylus, in case I forget in step 10.)

7 :: *heaven* :: *eyeglasses*

I imagine my eyeglasses shining, because they are made out of the same nacreous material as the Pearly Gates.

8 :: *gate* :: *handkerchief*

I imagine my handkerchief tied to the post of an ordinary garden gate and flapping in the wind like a flag as the gate swings back and forth.

9 :: *wine* :: *Swiss Army knife*

I imagine that one of the blades of my red Swiss Army knife is actually a miniature wine bottle and that when I open it, a flood of red wine pours out.

10 :: *hen* :: *pen*

I imagine that a hen is pecking at a bunch of the four-color pens I use, which lie about on the ground in abundance with some PDA styluses.

## In Real Life

I can honestly say that in the year or two I have been using this technique, I have forgotten particular items on the list only once or twice, and that was merely because I didn't run through the whole list as I was packing up. There was, however, one incident, where my wife and I were late because I set my fully packed bag down momentarily and forgot to bring the whole kit with me!

I'm now so familiar with my list that 10 brings *pen* to mind immediately rather than *hen*, and so on. Therefore, it's been easy to add two more items without thinking of additional mnemonics for them: 11, my *exoself* [Hack #17],

and 12, a good book to read. However, if I were going to extend my checklist any more, I would certainly add more mnemonic pegs.

## See Also

- A *murse* (a.k.a. *man purse*), such as that which I carry all my gear in, is an essential mini-hack in itself. Of course, women reading this who've been carrying purses for years will think that men like me are a bit slow and wonder what business we have writing a book on mental performance. Still, the Slacker Manager blog has a great intro to the murse concept; see [http://www.slackermanager.com/slacker\\_manager/2004/11/my\\_murse.html](http://www.slackermanager.com/slacker_manager/2004/11/my_murse.html).
- It's also useful to stock bags for different purposes, such as school, work, and emergencies. These work as a kind of external memory; you can just grab them and go.