

Learning on Steroids:

The Peg Method



by Scott Young

The Peg Method

Ever had difficulty remembering dates, formulas or numbers? Forgot that the Magna Carta was signed in 1215, that $F = MA$, or that $e = 2.718$? This is the type of information most students will memorize by rote, after all, how else would you be able to remember them?

Fortunately, there are tactics you can use to avoid rote memorization even with the most arbitrary of information—numbers.

Pegging takes a little practice to learn, but once learned it can last a lifetime as a powerful way to quickly remember numbers, dates, formulas and other trivia. And since you'll be learning holistically, you'll make huge time savings over your rote-memorizing peers.

What is the Peg Method?

I speak a little about a very simplified form of pegging in *Learn More, Study Less*. It's a tactic that links words to numbers, after which you can store sequences of numbers or lists up to 13 items long. It's a good system, but fairly basic.

Today I'm going to be writing about the full-blown peg system which is a tad more complex, but allows you to easily remember phone numbers, dates or sequences of numbers dozens of digits long. In future guides, I'll even explain how the technique can be brought with force against formulas and even more difficult topics.

I first learned about pegging about five years ago from a series of internet articles on the subject. The original website is no longer online, but the idea stuck in my head like a virus. In fact,

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thinking about pegging (and chaining, a more basic version) was part of the inspiration for writing about holistic learning.

It wasn't until I read [*Super Memory, Super Student*](#) by Harry Lorayne that I actually learned the tactic more deeply and saw the full implications. I'm a mere apprentice to Lorayne's mastery of this tactic so if you feel that it might be something useful for your studies, I suggest picking up the entire book he has devoted to it.

What Do You Need to Start Pegging?

First, I'm going to assume you've read the implementation guide on the chain method and on image association for vocabulary. If you haven't, go back and do that, since I'm going to skip over the fundamental parts of this tactic that are the same in all three of these methods.

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Second, you're going to need to spend a little time familiarizing yourself with the tactic. I'd put this one on par with speed reading, arguing that you'd need about a month of light practice to really imprint the technique in your mind. I'll have a few drills here you can use that will help, but they aren't a substitute for a 30-Day Trial.

Finally, you need something to peg with. In this article, I'm going to talk about the basics of pegging and the phonetic alphabet, which you can immediately use on remembering dates, phone numbers and simple formulas. However, the tactic can be used for wide ranges of material. Lorayne even twists it to use as a tool for memorizing entire map locations!

The Phonetic Alphabet

The peg system gets its power from the phonetic alphabet.

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This is an organization of the consonants in the English language such that they are paired with the 10 digits in the Arabic numeral system. If you don't speak English as a first language, you may need to modify some of these consonants to a version in your native tongue.

To understand why this is powerful, I want you to think of a pizza advertisement. Have you ever seen pizza hotlines where the number is 22-PIZZA, HOT-FOOD, or PIZZA-77? Why is this far easier to remember than a 7 digit number? Because words are easier to remember than numbers, which is what the pizza companies are counting on next time you're starving in your dorm room.

The phonetic alphabet, by converting numbers into consonants, allows you to convert strings of numbers into words. By doing this, you can remember long sequences of numbers as words, which you can chain together using the chain method.

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Here is the alphabet:

1 = T, D

2 = N

3 = M

4 = R

5 = L

6 = CH, J and soft G (as in logic)

7 = K, hard C (as in call), hard G (as in cigar)

8 = F, V, Ph

9 = P, B

0 = Z, S, soft C (as in cedar)

First, why double up the letters? Why does 1 represent T and D, instead of just one of them? Why is 2 only N?

The reason for this is that these consonants are grouped by how they are made with the mouth. T is similar to D, except it is

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produced with more force. The “ch” sound in chug, isn't too different from the J sound in jug. P and B are made with almost the same mouth position as well

Having multiple consonants (especially ones that are produced similarly) paired to the digits makes it easier to use the peg method, as it gives you more options when forming words. More, because the English language has a peculiar spelling of many words, this method focuses you on the sound, rather than a convoluted spelling system many people are apt to forget.

How can you remember which letter goes with which number? It does take a bit of practice and memorization, but there are a few ways you can use it to help. I'm borrowing from Harry Lorayne here in his suggestion for remembering the system:

- 1 = T, D – Remember that a “T” has one downstroke
- 2 = N – Remember that an “N” has two downstrokes

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- 3 = M – Remember that an “M” has three downstrokes
- 4 = R – Think of the word “fouR”
- 5 = L – The Roman numeral for 50 is L
- 6 = J – Think of J as being a slightly incomplete, backwards “6”
- 7 = K – You can actually make a letter K with two sevens (the second, rotated downward)
- 8 = F – Think of a handwritten lowercase f, which looks similar to the number 8
- 9 = P – Think of a mirror-version letter “P”
- 0 = Z – Remember that zero starts with Z

It's a bit of a gimmick, and you'll need to memorize this list of consonants, but once you know the ten digits down quite well, that's all the memorization you need to make the system work. Remembering ten number/letter combinations, can allow you to remember the other millions of number-based trivia without memorization.

Letters to Words

The next step with the system is to convert all of your consonants into words. You'll notice that there are no vowels in the system (nor the consonants Y, W, H or Th) this is because these sounds have no value in the phonetic alphabet and can be ignored. Therefore you can use them to create different words that have the same numeric conversion.

CAME – CaMe = 73

COMB – CoMb = 73 (you don't pronounce the b in comb)

KIM – KiM = 73

COME – CoMe = 73

You can therefore convert numbers to words, simply by translating them into the phonetic alphabet and adding extra vowels, silent consonants or valueless consonants (y, w, h or th).

Words to Memory

Once you have words, you can then form these in memory by using the chain method. Remember that the chain method works by forming bizarre mental images between two different concepts to link them in your mind. You can associate **milk** (357) with **cheese** (60) for example, by imagining a wheel of cheese milking a cow or pouring shredded cheddar from your milk carton.

Drills to Practice

Before I continue discussing how to use these tactics, grab a sheet of paper and fill in the answers to these drills. This will help you familiarize yourself with the tactic and remember the phonetic alphabet.

Drill One - Alphabet

Translate these numbers to letters (try not to look back):

9 = _____ 0 = _____ 1 = _____ 3 = _____ 4 = _____
8 = _____ 7 = _____ 2 = _____ 6 = _____ 5 = _____

Translate these letters to their numbers:

Ch = _____ D = _____ J = _____ P = _____ S = _____
N = _____ K = _____ R = _____ L = _____
G (as in **magic**) = _____ C (as in **castle**) = _____ Z = _____

(Answers are at the end of this guide)

Drill Two - Digits

Convert the following digits into consonants

$$345 = \underline{\quad} \quad 872 = \underline{\quad} \quad 333 = \underline{\quad} \quad 127 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$12 = \underline{\quad} \quad 0129 = \underline{\quad} \quad 18 = \underline{\quad} \quad 23 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$1029 = \underline{\quad} \quad 6388 = \underline{\quad} \quad 2993 = \underline{\quad} \quad 8012 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$8844 = \underline{\quad} \quad 8434 = \underline{\quad}$$

(Answers are at the end of this guide)

Drill Four -- Words

Convert the following words into their digits (remember to omit vowels and silent or valueless consonants). Also keep in mind that double letters pronounced only once count only as one number ("letter" = 514, not 5114):

dog = ____

castle = ____

serious = ____

art = ____

winner = ____

chimp = ____

Revved = ____

forgotten = ____

worried = ____

bomb = ____

climbing = ____

Sinbad = ____

destitute = ____

chrysanthemum = ____

Drill Five - Make your Pegs

Convert the following numbers into words, or a couple words using the peg rules:

$341 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$290 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$18 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$21 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$77 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$123 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$448 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$8907 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$90210 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$88467 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$9978721 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

If you want the answers, just read to the end of this implementation guide. Beyond this, I suggest practicing with numbers you care about, such as phone numbers, dates or birthdays.

Implementing the Peg Method

How would you use the peg method in an actual subject? The phonetic alphabet allows you to convert numbers into words, from there, you can use the chain method to link your words together and to the information you need to link the numbers to.

For example, lets say you needed to remember that there were 10 provinces in Canada and 3 territories. The number 10 could be then converted into “toys” and 3 converted into “home”. You could then imagine toys and a single home playing on the Canadian flag.

Or lets say you wanted to remember when the Berlin Wall fell —1989. You would just need to convert this to words, say, “tip phobia” and imagine a person who is deathly afraid of giving tips

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standing on the Berlin Wall as it explodes into a million pieces. When you need to remember the numbers again, you would think of tip phobia and convert this back to 1989.

What about a formula? Let's say you need to remember that the volume of a sphere is $\frac{4}{3}\pi r^3$. You could remember this by remembering a picture of an oreo (4), sitting over (division) a home (3), next to a pile of ore (r) being pushed into a cube by a pie (π).

How will you ensure you don't get them mixed up? You won't because as you jog your memory by going through the mental associations, you'll remember how you formed them and how they link together. The peg method acts as a powerful supplement to your existing memory, not a replacement.

What About More Complex Things?

In a later guide, I'll go over more advanced uses of pegging, for remembering complex formulas and other numeric information. Until then, practice the technique and use it to remember all the facts and figures you were otherwise forced to learn by rote.

Good luck with this tactic and I'll see you on the other side!

Drill Answers

Here are the answers to the drills. Keep in mind your answers may differ from mine in exercise five since every word can only make one numeric representation, but every numeric sequence can make many different words.

Drill One - Alphabet

9 = P or B

0 = Z, S or soft C

1 = T or D

3 = M

4 = R

8 = F, Ph, V

7 = K, hard G or C

2 = N

6 = Ch, J or soft G

5 = L

Ch = 6

D = 1

J = 6

P = 9

S = 0

N = 2

K = 7

R = 4

L = 5

G (as in magic) = 6

C (as in castle) = 7

Z = 0

Drill Two - Digits

Convert the following digits into consonants

345 = MRL 872 = FKN 333 = MMM 127 = TNK 12 = TN
0129 = STNP 18 = TF 23 = NM 1029 = TSNP
6388 = JMFF 2993 = NPPM 8012 = FSTN 8844 = FFRR
8434 = FRMR

Drill Four -- Words

Convert the following words into their digits (remember to omit vowels and silent or valueless consonants). Also keep in mind that double letters pronounced only once count only as one number (like "letter"):

dog = 17 castle = 7015 serious = 040 art = 41
winner = 24 chimp = 639 revved = 481 forgotten = 84712
worried = 41 bomb = 93 climbing = 75327 Sinbad = 0291
destitute = 10111 chrysanthemum = 740233

Drill Five - Make your Pegs

Convert the following numbers into words, or a couple words using the peg rules:

341 = mart, marred or married

290 = nips, knobs, no boys

18 = taffy, dive, dove

21 = gnat, knot, nod

77 = guck, cook, kooky

123 = tin home, tan ham, teen whim

448 = rarefy, war rave, hairy reef

8907 = phobia sack, VIP sock, off-base oak

90210 = pass nights, basin toes, booze and hose

88467 = favor chug, heavy fire jock, oaf verge queue

9978721 = pub cafe candy, baby cough conned, pope cove gonad

These can then be linked, for the last one (a phone number?) I could link the number with a baby coughing who is getting conned by a thief.