

The Memory Aid – If it is not a cheat sheet or a formula sheet, what is it?

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What is a memory aid and who is able to use one?

A memory aid is an academic accommodation that is provided for use on tests and exams to students who have documented disabilities characterized by deficits in rote memory, working memory, sequencing memory, and/or long-term memory. Regulated health professionals, such as psychologists or neuropsychologists, go through extensive assessments with students prior to making a memory aid recommendation.

These students generally have great difficulty retrieving information from memory during tests and exams, even though they have carefully studied and understood the material. A memory aid is intended to level the playing field by providing these students with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of course material.

What does a memory aid look like?

A common misconception is that a memory aid is the same thing as a cheat sheet. Essentially, a cheat sheet is an answer sheet, whereas a memory aid is a tool intended to cue the memory to recall the material that has been studied. Each memory aid is unique and far from obvious. Therefore, it should not be comprehensible to anyone but the student who created it. If the student does not know the material, a memory aid will not be helpful.

A memory aid can be comprised of one or more of the following cues:

Acronyms:

HOMES

(Names of Great Lakes: **H**uron, **O**ntario, **M**ichigan, **E**rie, **S**uperior)

Acrostics:

Never Eat Shredded Wheat

(Compass Points: **N**orth **E**ast **S**outh **W**est)

Visual Imagery (without text):



Mind Maps:



Abbreviations/Symbols:

⊗

Rs → I.S

Visual Imagery (with text):



FOB

: ↑A ↓A

Formulae:

$A = 1/2 bh = 1/2 \times \text{base} \times \text{height}$

How is a memory aid created and approved?

When applicable, the memory aid accommodation will appear on an accommodation letter, along with guidelines to create and evaluate it. Professors are not responsible for devising memory aids. Students create their own. Initially, they may receive direction from a Learning Strategist, or benefit from some tips given by their professor. Once created, the memory aid is submitted to the professor for review. If there is a need for revision, suggestions are given to the student. The student then revises and resubmits the memory aid to the professor. Upon approval, the memory aid is signed and submitted to the Test Centre by the professor with the test/exam.

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