Memory Palace: Starter

Build a route you already know, then store what you are learning inside it.

Name _____ Date _____ Time taken _____

1 What you are training

A memory palace (the method of loci) turns a list you cannot picture into a journey you can. You place each item at a fixed stop along a route you already know by heart, then walk the route in your mind to retrieve them. It trains working memory, visual imagery and deliberate encoding — the difference between reading something and actually storing it. Today you build the route and test it; then you load it with work you are really studying.

HOW TO USE THIS SHEET

Work through the pages in order, and do not read ahead. You will need a pen and a timer. Set aside about 25 minutes today, plus two minutes tomorrow for the delayed recall on page 4. Keep the sheet — you will reuse the same route for all five sheets in this set.

2 Build your route

Pick a place you can walk through in your head without thinking: your home, the route from your front gate to your bedroom, or the walk from the school entrance to your classroom. Write fourteen stops in the order you pass them. A stop must be a fixed thing that never moves — a front door, a fridge, a staircase, a window. Not a person, and not a chair that gets shifted.

1		6		11	
2		7		12	
3		8		13	
4		9		14	
5		10			

Now close your eyes and walk the route twice. You should not have to hunt for the next stop before you turn the page.

Prove the Method Works

A practice run on fourteen ordinary words, so you trust the route before you trust it with marks.

What makes an image stick

Oversized
A kettle the size of the staircase.

Moving
Pouring, falling, exploding, running.

Interacting
The image touches the stop, not sits beside it.

Meaningful
Built from what the term means, not what it rhymes with.

3 Study the practice list — 2 minutes on the timer

Place word 1 at stop 1, word 2 at stop 2, and so on, building each image as described above.

anaerobic	bioreactor	chromatid	denature	enzyme
fermentation	gradient	haploid	inhibitor	ligase
mutagen	nucleotide	operon	plasmid	

4 Cover the list and walk the route

Fold the panel above out of sight, wait sixty seconds, then write what you find at each stop.

1		6		11	
2		7		12	
3		8		13	
4		9		14	
5		10			

5 Score the practice run

WORDS RECALLED	AT THE RIGHT STOP	STOPS LEFT EMPTY
/ 14	/ 14	

11 or more? The route holds — turn over and put it to work. Fewer than that: rebuild the weak images and run this page again.

Load It With Real Work

Same fourteen stops. This time the contents come from your own syllabus.

6 Choose something you are actually studying

Pick key terms and their definitions, especially ones that sound alike from this term's work — fourteen items that belong together. Write the subject and topic below, then place them in order down the table.

WORKED EXAMPLE · PHILOSOPHY: THEORIES OF JUSTICE AND THEIR TERMS

Stop 1 is the front gate → utilitarian calculus weighs the crowd at the gate. Stop 2 is the shoe rack → Rawls makes you choose shoes behind a veil of ignorance. Stop 3 is the staircase → Nozick says the stairs are yours if you justly acquired them.

Notice what makes these work: the image sits at the stop, it moves, and it carries the meaning of the term — not just its sound.

Subject _____ Topic _____

7 Place each item, then write the picture

Work down the table in order. The image column is the real work — if you cannot see it, you have not encoded it. Give yourself 6 minutes, then cover the table.

STOP	ITEM FROM MY SYLLABUS	THE PICTURE AT THAT STOP
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		

COVER THIS PAGE. Do not look back at it once page 4 begins.

Recall, Then Recall Again

The palace is only worth building if it still stands tomorrow.

8 Recall now — page 3 stays covered

Walk the route and write the syllabus item you find at each stop.

1		6		11	
2		7		12	
3		8		13	
4		9		14	
5		10			

9 Delayed recall — 24 hours later, 2 minutes

Do not revisit any page before you try this. Walk the same route and write what is still standing.

1		6		11	
2		7		12	
3		8		13	
4		9		14	
5		10			

TODAY	TOMORROW	WHAT I KEPT (%)

10 Think it through

› Which item survived most firmly, and what made that image different from the ones that faded? Name the next set you will load into this same route.

NOTE FOR PARENTS & TEACHERS

The gap between today and tomorrow matters more than either score. Losing one or two overnight means the work was properly encoded; losing most of them means it was held in short-term memory, not in the palace. Keep the same fourteen stops across all five sheets.