



UNC  
GREENSBORO

The University Speaking Center

## General Pattern of Aristotle's Method of Remembering and Memorization as it is Outlined in *De Memoria Et Reminiscentia*

- 1) Before one can recall a memory, one must first have time to process the "thing/event" being remembered; unless this happens, recollection cannot take place. This distinction between memory and the "thing/event" is important because when one first experiences something it is not a memory, rather, it is a direct experience. Since a memory and the actual experience of something are always different, they are not and cannot be the same thing. Therefore, memory is created by the time lapse between direct experience and recollection.
  - The above concept is integral to understanding Aristotle's method for memorization, because the individual who attempts to do the memorizing must have time to digest the information before memorization is possible.
  
- 2) Aristotle says that "acts of recollection, as they occur in experience, are due to the fact that one movement has by nature another that succeeds it in regular order." This concept of linear succession is also extremely important in understanding the basis of Aristotle's method of memorization. According to Aristotle, when one wishes to recollect a "thing/event" this is what he will do: "He will try to obtain a beginning of movement whose sequel shall be the movement which he desires to reawaken." In other words, one will follow a linear movement from something that is easy to remember to something that is difficult to remember. This is the easiest way to remember a difficult thing.
  - An example of this linear process in trying to remember to buy milk at the grocery store would be:  
**Ex:** From farm to cow, from cow to milk, and then to the store, from which one remembers to pick up milk at the grocery store.

The farm in this case is the “locus” or point of origin, something easy to remember. By following the linear trend of thought from farm, to cow, to milk, one should invariably arrive at the place where one obtains milk, the store, which is what is trying to be remembered.

The pattern is like this:

A -> B -> C -> D -> E

A = farm (locus) (beginning point)

B = cow

C = milk

D = store

E = pick up milk at the store (end point)

## Tips for Memorization

- **Give yourself plenty of time:** If you try to cram all of the information in your head at once you will forget it when it is time to present. Make sure you give yourself plenty of time to memorize a speech.
- **Take it line by line, or thought by thought:** Try to memorize one sentence at a time. Once all those memorized sentences form a complete thought, speak the entire thought over and over. This will help you remember where you are in your speech.
- **Memorize in sections, and then add transitions:** Memorize the speech in sections and then put it together. Remember to add transitional words and phrases when piecing it back together so that the speech still flows smoothly.
- **Type it, See it, and Say it:** Another way to memorize lines is to type them up. Type a sentence over and over, and repeat it while you type looking at the screen. That way you are taking in the material in three ways: Physically because you are typing it, visually because you see it on the computer screen, and aurally because you are listening to yourself speak it.
- **Repeat, Repeat, Repeat:** Once you have learned the entire speech, repeat it over and over again. This will help you see how the entire speech fits together. It will also help you see where your trouble spots are.
- **The True Test:** You will know that you have completely memorized the speech when you can do a physical activity (run, jumping jacks, sit-ups, or pushups) and say the speech at the same time.