

Poetry Recitation – Developing a Strategy

How do you learn a poem by heart? As with many things in life, there is no definitive way to learn a poem. The way you remember things will be different to the way other people remember things. Your memories might be full of colour, while someone else will vividly recall sounds. You might like lists while someone else prefers pictures. One thing the best memorizers agree on though is that the more pathways you make for your memory, the better your recall will be.

Learning a poem by heart should definitely not be a tedious thing. The livelier and more enjoyable you make your memorization experience, the more likely you are to remember your poem by heart.

Understand Your Memory

Most of us are fortunate to have beautifully functioning memories. Even people who say ‘Oh, I’m no good at remembering things’ are in fact capable of remembering plenty of things on a daily basis.

Look at the things you recollect each day: how to use your phone, where you live, what your name is. You might also remember things such as whether you’re right or left handed, whether or not you like cheese, who your friends are (and who you’re less keen on). You probably remember other things too: the classroom in your first school (maybe even the smell of it!), the time you learned to ride a bike, your most embarrassing moment.

Most people don’t necessarily remember every tiny detail of every single thing they’ve ever done, of course. That might make life overwhelming. Instead our brains have a highly developed filter system that condenses memory to something more manageable. Figuring out how this filter system works is the key to learning how to make even more effective use of your memory. When you know how to make your memory work at full capacity, you can then teach it to remember things you want it to.

Start by taking a peek into your own personal filing cabinet/library/scattered pile of memories in your brain and pick out a couple of significant ones. Which events from your past do you remember vividly? What do you remember about them? Why do you remember them?

POETRY BY HEART

Recitation Competition

Chances are the things you remember most clearly are times of high emotion – the time I fell off my bike, the day my sister was born, the time me and my friend hid from our teacher in the classroom cupboard. When you think back on these times, it's likely that you'll see images in your mind, recall sounds, smells, tastes and maybe re-experience some of the emotions in your physical body. If you remember a time when you were particularly embarrassed, even years after the event, it's fairly common to blush, squirm or even feel your pulse begin to quicken. Our most intense memories take us back to a time and place as if we were there again right now.

Knowing this is very useful when it comes to creating new memories. We know that old memories use all of our senses. So if we want to store something new in our memory files, we need to draw on our senses as much as possible to create a vivid experience for our memory to store. Create plenty of paths to your memory and you'll find it easier to retrieve what's in there. By using movement, images, sound, silliness and all the other strategies listed in 'Get to know your poem' you stand an excellent chance of being able to recall your poem with ease.