

Strategy 1: Chunking

Did you ever notice that it's hard to eat a big burger in one bite? It's much easier if you take bite-size chunks. The same is true when you have to memorize information. It's easier to memorize information when you break it up into small chunks. This is called **chunking**.

You may not realize it, but you use chunking often. Examples include: telephone numbers, zip codes, and social security numbers. See for yourself. Fill in the boxes on the chart.

Write your full telephone number.	
Write your zip code.	
Write an 800 telephone number you know.	
Write your social security number.	

What do they have in common? _____

You probably noticed that the digits are grouped together, mostly in threes, fours or fives. Why do you think the numbers are grouped this way?

It has been shown that most people can only remember about 5 bits of information at a time. You can see this for yourself. Do the following tasks.



"Let's see, if I can chunk my classes together—English, History, Math, & Science, I can be outta here by 9 A.M. every day."

1. Try to memorize this number in ten seconds: 105698237.

Now cover it up and see if you can write it.

2. Try to memorize this number in ten seconds: 490—587—213.

Now cover it up and see if you can write it.

Didn't chunking make it easier for you?

Let's try a longer list. Study these items for 30 seconds. Then cover them up and write as many as you can remember.

shirt, piano, train, black, yellow, trombone, hat, grapes, apple, green, pink, drum, banana, skirt, shoes, blue, ship, bus, slacks, violin

Check your answers. How did you do?

Try it again, but this time, before you begin to study them, group the items according to their **common characteristics**. Use the table below.

Fruit	Colors	Musical Instruments	Clothing	Vehicles

Now, study them for 30 seconds. Cover them up and write as many as you can remember.

How did you do this time? Isn't it easier when you chunk items by common characteristics?