

MEMORY AIDS...What are they, and how are they used?

Students who experience disability that impacts information processing in specific ways may be eligible for liaison services in which Disability Services confirms the potential legitimacy of an instructor approved memory trigger for use in tests or quizzes. This liaison service opens a conversation, but does not mandate an accommodation. It will be up to the instructor to determine if the request is reasonable or not given the particular concepts or skills being assessed. Disability Services is happy to assist faculty in making this determination. The information below is meant to provide general guidance, but will not apply in the same ways for all courses.

Students might think of a proper memory aid as a sort of “pocket reference” or “address book” that will not be useful unless that student has solid knowledge of how to use the information it contains.

The memory aid allows the student to demonstrate knowledge of course material by helping to trigger the student’s memory. The instructor and student should reach agreement regarding the specific information contained on the memory aid in advance of the test or quiz in which it is to be used.

How Are Memory Aids Provided?

Typically, the student devises the memory aid and has it approved by faculty in advance. The instructor needs to ensure the memory aid is not giving away answers or lowering standards. The instructor can then ensure both the test and the memory aid are available during the exam. Students don’t generally take a test using a memory aid in the classroom unless the entire class is using a memory aid.

Instructors are not responsible for devising memory aids. The student selects the information for which cues are needed. The student and the instructor work out the final version. All memory aides must be approved in advance to be allowed in the exam.

What Does a Memory Aid Look Like and what can be on it?

Typically a student would use a half page of 8 ½” X 11” paper or a large file-card, although in situations in which large print or Braille is needed there may be exceptions. The student should use the space to record anything that will allow her or him to remember key information necessary for the test. Pre-requisite math topics and acronyms are allowed. Certain word-for-word definitions, and certain formulae, are among the items most frequently found on memory aids but may not always be appropriate, depending on the exam. **Memory aids do not have steps listed for how to work problems.** Also, memory aides should only provide the memory clue for the student to recall the concepts she or he has studied, it will not be useful if the student hasn’t already learned the material.

Memory aids are often small for two main reasons:

- 1) The small size means that the aid could be used at a workplace,
- 2) The small size requires the student to choose information carefully and efficiently. This process is also a powerful form of studying.

Developing your Memory Aids

The student and instructor can work out specific timelines, but in general at least 5 days should be granted to ensure adequate time to review and approve the memory aid.

This handout was adapted from one used at Humber College