

Center for Disability Access and Resources

Memory Aid Guidelines

Memory aids provide students with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their competence, knowledge, and understanding of course content. They are approved only for those students who have a well-documented functional limitation related to memory. It is essential to consider whether or not you are evaluating your students' ability to memorize or apply the material.

A memory aid is a resource that is used during test-taking. It is designed by and for the student to support the recall of information that has already been learned. Its main purpose is to allow a student to access their learning. A memory aid does not replace the need to study or the mastery of a course learning outcome.

Memory Aid Guidelines

An overview of the content, layout and submission requirements for using memory aids as an academic accommodation.

What is permitted on a memory aid?

1. **Content Requirements:** Cues, or personal hints to help trigger the understanding of information that the student has already learned. These are also known as mnemonic devices. Mnemonic devices are not a complete answer but represent the information needed support in remembering. They can come in the following forms: key terms, personalized phrases, diagrams, tables, and category headings, list of steps in a procedure, formulae, and acronyms. Mnemonic devices are very individualized and will vary from student to student. To review some examples, please see the Sample Memory Aid Content below.
2. **Formatting Requirements:** One 8 ½ x 11 document (hard copy or electronic document), Single-sided, Single-spaced and Minimum of 12-point font or handwritten equivalent. Audio and large print equivalents are permitted if the student also has an accommodation for a specific alternate format.

What is not permitted on a memory aid?

- Complete answers
- Full course notes
- Word-for-word choices

Who is responsible for creating the memory aid?

The final draft of the memory aid is a collaboration between the student and the instructor.

Student responsibilities:

- To learn the course material
- To decide on what cues/mnemonic devices are needed to support the recall of information
- To create the memory aid content
- To make any necessary revisions, as advised by the instructor, if the first draft provides a complete answer

*Students are to submit their memory aid to their instructor for approval at least 3 days before the test/exam date.

Instructor responsibilities:

- To inform the student if memory aid content compromises academic integrity. *If yes, see FAQ below for instructions on fundamental alteration and exemptions for allowing a memory aid in your course.
- To provide the student with feedback in a timely manner that provides time for revision
- To submit the memory aid to CDAR Testing Services, attached to the exam materials

ADDITIONAL WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS:

- Leave a trail. When you start a new teaching unit, announce to the class and on Blackboard the areas that you intend to test. Students with memory aids can create and use their memory aid as the course progresses, rather than just before the test.
- For the few students who may require memory aids, it helps to confidentially remind them to submit their memory aid to you at least 3 days before the test, so that you can review it and provide direction in person or by email on the acceptability of the content.
- Consider allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in ways other than traditional tests/exams which by their design often constrain students with memory-related disabilities.

Memory Aid Submission and Approval Process for Students:

What You Need to Know, in 5 Steps

1. Plan Ahead

- Review your course outlines in advance. Make note of your test dates.
- Look over your course materials to determine if you will need to use a memory aid for the next, upcoming test.

2. Communicate

- Notify your instructor in *advance and discuss the possibility of using a memory aid for the test.
- Once this has been determined, familiarize yourself with the learning outcomes of the test. Discuss with your instructor what type of content would be permitted on the memory aid.

- *Note: advance notice also allows your instructor time to review your memory aid draft and provide feedback.

3. Create

- Study your course materials.
- Create cues for the information you will need help remembering during the test.
- Compile your content into your final document. Ensure that it follows the memory aid guidelines.

4. Submit

- Submit the memory aid to your instructor for review, at least 3 days before the test date.

At this stage, your instructor may either:

1. Approve of your memory aid and deliver it, along with your test, to CDAR Testing Services
2. Return the memory aid to you with suggestions and feedback for revision

5. Attend

- Attend your test/exam, as scheduled. Your memory aid will be administered with your test/exam materials.
- Please note that once a memory aid is submitted, students are not able to bring in additional notes or a revised memory aid to the test.
- Please note that memory aids will be retained by CDAR Testing Services and returned to the course instructor with the completed exam.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What happens to the memory aid after the exam?

CDAR Testing Services will return the memory aid to the instructor along with the completed exam, unless otherwise directed by instructor.

2. What if the Memory Aid would be permitted for only part of the exam?

When a memory aid is permitted for part of the exam, submit the exam to CDAR Testing Services in two parts. In the instructions, state which part the memory aid will be permitted. When the student takes the exam, they will be given the exam following the instructions provided. For example: The student will be given part one of the exam without a memory aid and they must return part two to the proctor to then receive part two of the exam and their memory aid.

3. What if the memory aid compromises the integrity of the exam?

What is a memory aid in one situation could be an answer sheet in another. If remembering the information on the memory aid is deemed to be an essential learning

objective or outcome of the course, it should not be allowed. For example, if the learning objective or outcome of the course is to know a formula, it should not be allowed on the aid sheet; however, if the learning objective or outcome of the course is to demonstrate the ability to apply the formula, then it could be allowed on the aid sheet. Aid sheets must be reviewed and approved by the instructor as the instructor decides the learning objectives and/or essential requirements of the course. Instructors can choose to remove memory triggers that are deemed to be essential learning objectives for the course.

4. What if the presence of any memory aid will fundamentally alter the course?

If the instructor is concerned this accommodation is unreasonable because it will compromise an essential component of or fundamentally alter a course or program, the instructor should notify CDAR upon receipt of the “Notification of Academic Accommodations” email. The determination that an accommodation is unreasonable is an institutional decision that must be made within legal parameters and in consultation with CDAR. Instructors should not unilaterally render and attempt to implement a judgement that an accommodation is unreasonable.

Steps to determine a fundamental alteration

1. Instructor informs CDAR of concern regarding the memory aid accommodation creating a fundamental alteration in their course
2. Instructor and CDAR work together to review course content, structure and purpose of exams (memory-based or application-based) and determine if the accommodation will/will not fundamentally alter the course.
3. If the Instructor and CDAR cannot find a solution, the Instructor would solicit support of their college Dean to deny the accommodation. University legal counsel will need to be informed of the college’s decision to deny the accommodation.
4. Legal counsel may require written evidence to support the denial and inform CDAR that the university supports the denial of the accommodation for the particular course.

Sample Memory Aid Content

The type of mnemonic devices used on a memory aid varies from student to student. Below you will find sample content that can be typically found on a memory aid. Memory aid content may represent learned information through some of the following ways:

Personalized Phrases

Example 1: To remember the meaning of the philosophy of “Hedonism, (to maximize pleasure and minimize pain):

“H = 100% Yay; 0% Ouch”

Example 2: To remember Maslow’s Hierarchy Needs –physiological, social and the “I”, representing personal:

“P.S. I Love You”

Images

Example 3: To remember the name of the 50 US States:



Example 4: To remember the meaning of “cluster sampling data” as a form of research:



Short Form Words

Example 5: To remember a group of related terms, such as Behaviorism, System Theory and Conflict Theory

Bhvrsm., Sys.Th., Con.Th., etc.

Lists

Example 6: To remember the order of steps in the Scientific method:

1. Survey
2. Observe and
3. Experiment

Example 7: To remember the 50 US States in order (Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut):

Active
And
Alert
As
Cars
Came
Closer

Acronyms

Example 8: To remember the anatomy of the human scalp: Skin, sub-Cutaneous Tissue, Aponeurotic, Loose Skin and Periosteum

S.C.A.L.P.

Example 9: To remember the term “Anti-Oppressive Practice”:

A.O.P

Formulae

Example 10: To remember the variables of a mathematical formula:

$$y = MX + b$$

$$L = |4p|$$

Key Terms

Example 11: To remember a group of related terms to elaborate on for an Environmental Science essay test:

Carbon Footprint
Carbon Neutral
Paris
Greenhouse Gases

(Adapted from handouts used at Humber College, Washington State University, Seattle Central, Oregon State University, Fanshawe College)