

The phonetic code is especially handy for numbers that you need to memorize for tests or for newly acquired phone numbers, addresses, parking spots, hotel rooms, and other numbers that you need to know for just a short while. I find the phonetic code to be useful for remembering partial answers when doing large mental calculations. We'll see more calculation examples that use mnemonics near the end of the course. ■

### Important Terms

**Major system:** A phonetic code that assigns consonant sounds to digits. For example 1 gets the *t* or *d* sound, 2 gets the *n* sound, and so on. By inserting vowel sounds, numbers can be turned into words, which make them easier to remember. It is named after Major Beniowski, a leading memory expert in London, although the code was developed by Gregor von Feinagle and perfected by Aimé Paris.

**peg system:** A way to remember lists of objects, especially when the items of the list are given a number, such as the list of presidents, elements, or constitutional amendments. Each number is turned into a word using a phonetic code, and that word is linked to the object to be remembered.

### Suggested Reading

Benjamin and Shermer, *Secrets of Mental Math: The Mathemagician's Guide to Lightning Calculation and Amazing Math Tricks*, chapter 9.

Higbee, *Your Memory: How It Works and How to Improve It*.

Lorayne and Lucas, *The Memory Book*.

### Problems

Use the Major system to convert the following words into numbers.

1. News
2. Flash

- 3.** Phonetic
- 4.** Code
- 5.** Makes
- 6.** Numbers
- 7.** Much
- 8.** More
- 9.** Memorable

For each of the numbers below, find at least two words for each number.

- 10.** 11
- 11.** 23
- 12.** 58
- 13.** 13
- 14.** 21
- 15.** 34
- 16.** 55
- 17.** 89

Use the phonetic code to create a mnemonic to remember the years of the following events.

- 18.** Gutenberg operates first printing press in 1450.

- 19.** Pilgrims arrive at Plymouth Rock in 1620.
- 20.** Captain James Cook arrives in Australia in 1770.
- 21.** Russian Revolution takes place in 1917.
- 22.** First man sets foot on the Moon on July 21, 1969.

Create a mnemonic to remember the phone numbers listed below.

- 23.** The Great Courses (in the U.S.): 800-832-2412
- 24.** White House switchboard: 202-456-1414
- 25.** Create your own personal set of peg words for the numbers 1 through 20.
- 26.** How could you memorize the fact that the eighth U.S. president was Martin Van Buren?
- 27.** How could you memorize the fact that the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures?
- 28.** How could you memorize the fact that the Sixteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution allows the federal government to collect income taxes?

*Solutions for this lecture begin on page 128.*