Well, hello everyone. I'm Cecily, and welcome to the Memory and Concentration Workshop. There's an attendance sheet coming around for those of you who came in late. So today we're going to talk about memory and concentration: improving those as it pertains to your studying skills.
So first we'll start off by talking about concentration. There are two main things that keep you from concentrating, and that's internal and external distraction. First we'll talk about internal. That's daydreaming. Have you ever been sitting in class and you start thinking about something else or you think about, "Oh, I gotta pay my car payment" or "my rent"? You know, you start getting distracted by everything you having going on. So here's a couple of tips to get rid of internal distraction. Set a date to study. If you have a specific day, you know that Wednesday at 6:00, you're gonna study Biology and every Wednesday at 6:00, you study Biology, then you know that time is devoted to studying. And it's a lot easier to keep yourself set on it if you have a specific time. Study in chunks. You don't wanna sit down and study for ten hours straight obviously. Those of us that have tried it probably didn't get the best results. So you wanna study in about like 20 to 50-minute increments. And switch up the subject that you're studying, 'cause it gets really boring when you study the same topic for hours on end. Keep a list of thoughts to come back to later. So if you have a thought invading your brain, like your boyfriend or girlfriend, or like I said, bills you have to pay, or something that you've gotta take care of that's really stressing you out, kinda just jot it down on the list and make a mental note that you'll come back to it after you're done studying so you can be present in the moment. You wanna set realistic goals for yourself. How many of you have ever sat down and you tell yourself you're gonna read like five chapters, knowing that you're not gonna be able to do that? [Chuckle] I know I tend to set really high goals for myself. So you wanna be realistic. If you know it takes you an hour to read ten pages, don't sit down and attempt to read a hundred pages at once. Reward yourself. And this doesn't have to be anything big, but you can say, "Alright, after this chapter, I get to spend half an hour on Facebook," or "text my boyfriend," or whatever it is. Take a walk, eat a brownie, whatever it may be that really gets you going. Any questions so far? No? Okay.
Tip number two is to eliminate external distractions. So that's your roommates, noise going on around you, the TV. I mean, today we have so many electronics all the time. We've got our boyfriends and girlfriends, computers, phones, iPods, there's so much going on all the time. So in order to get rid of those distractions, have an area that's meant just for studying. Don't keep pictures of people there. It's just your designated study space and that's all that you do there. You don't wanna study in your bed, or you might fall asleep. Study right in front of the TV, that's not smart either. Keep your desk area clean. Again, no pictures, you don't wanna have your iPod and a bunch of junk all around the place. Clear it off. Only have papers that pertain to the specific subject that you're studying right then. This one's a no-brainer, but find the quietest place possible. Some people like a little bit of noise, 'cause if it's too quiet, it's gonna bug them, but you obviously don't wanna be around when all your roommates are screaming at the top of their lungs. And if you can't find a place that's really quiet, or if you have -- like you live by the train tracks or something, then play some soft music. And I put soft boldly 'cause some people, they hear about the studies that listening to music can help you [chuckle], but then they start blasting like really, really loud music at the top of their -- the highest the speakers can go. So maybe just some soft -- like some R & B or some alternative music or something. You don't wanna probably bust out the Tupac records at that moment. Leave your dorm, your house, your apartment, wherever you stay, if you have to. If you can't get away from distractions, then go to the library. I mean, it's open really late.
And here are just a few more miscellaneous tips. Set aside a specific time to worry, which sounds really, really weird, but it shows -- they have studies that show that it works. So if you know, "Okay, 4:30 to 5:00, I'm just gonna worry, and get all my worrying out then," then if you're studying at 2:00 in the afternoon, you can tell yourself, "Don't worry. Get it out of your mind, 'cause you're gonna worry at 4:30." I know it just sounds really weird, but if that's what you have to do, if you're a worry wart, like me, then it really helps. Remind yourself to be here now. If you're starting to stray, your thoughts are straying, just tell yourself, "Be here now. Be here now." And eventually, even though you'll feel corny doing it, it will help you. Keep your study schedule. I know a lot of people are good at making schedules, and then we don't keep them. So if we decide that we wanna go have lunch with somebody or do something else instead. So keeping your schedule is really important too. Take care of your basic needs before you study. So go to the bathroom, eat, do what you gotta do, 'cause if you have to pee, or you're starving, you're obviously not focusing on what you're trying to do. Study your toughest subjects earlier in the day. Most people focus a little better -- I'm not saying wake up at 6:00 in the morning to study. But you know, in the early afternoon, or maybe right after lunch or something like that. And your easier -- and if you don't have any easy subjects, than the ones you enjoy the most -- at night. Most people tend to save the hardest ones for the night, but really most of us can't study that well during the nighttime. And know yourself. You know what you're capable of, you know how quickly you can read, and you know what you usually do when you study and what works for you best. So know yourself. If you know that you hate History, you don't -- and it's really hard for you to keep straight all those facts, then don't wait until the day before an exam.
So now we're going to go into memory, and I'm gonna throw some facts at you that I don't expect you to remember. But people remember ten percent of what they read, 20 percent of what they hear, 30 percent of what they see, 50 percent of what they see and hear, 70 percent of what they say aloud and 90 percent of what they use when they perform a task. So obviously, if you do a combination of these things, or if you say things aloud or perform a task, then your odds get a lot better of actually remembering what you've gotta do. Okay.
So now we're just gonna do a little exercise; nothing big, but I just wanna see where you guys are at so far memory-wise. So I'm gonna show you the next page, and I'll give you ten seconds to look at it, and then you just wanna try to remember as much about the pictures as you can. And then I'll just ask you a couple of simple questions to see how much you can remember. Alright? Go.
You have 10 seconds to look at the pictures. [Silence]
Alright. Does anybody remember how many bananas there were? Five, four...five anyone else. Okay [giggle]. And what order were the fruits in? [Inaudible response]
Alright. Let's see. So you guys were right if you said five, and it was orange, watermelon, bananas, grapes. So that was a pretty simple one, but you guys have a pretty good memory so...nice demonstration there just to kinda see. And we'll do something similar a little bit later to see if your memories improved once you get some skills.
Alright, so memory. So my first tip was to assign meaningfulness to things. And my example is, do you remember what you had for dinner on April 2nd of this year? Anyone? No? [Giggle] Do you remember what you had for dinner on your last birthday? No? Nobody does? Do you remember what you had for dessert? Probably birthday cake? [Giggle] Okay. Well, more often than not, people remember what they had for their birthday before they would remember what they had on April 2nd, unless their birthday's April 2nd, obviously. So when you have a reason to remember something, it's easier to remember. So you should do the same thing when you're studying a subject. "How does it relate to your experience? Why is this information important? How can I use this info in my future career? In my life?" You know, how many times have you sat down and you're like, "Why do I need to know this?" If you have that attitude, then you're not going to retain it, because if you feel like it doesn't apply to your everyday life, you're not going to -- you're just gonna remember it as, you know, in the immediate time, and you're not gonna remember it in the long run. And what parts are most interesting to you? You need to find a way to link it to something you already know and make associations with things you already know. Any questions yet? Alright. [Giggle] This is going to be a shorter workshop. [Giggle]
Top number two: use your nose. Scents can help trigger memory, so if you smell a scent while you're studying, and then you smell it again when you're taking your test or writing your paper or whenever you need to recall the information, it can help you to trigger that. But you don't wanna try anything like lavender, which is really relaxing and has actually been shown to reduce memory. You wanna try something like peppermint or citrus, something a little more invigorating and lively. Think what you wanna smell when you first wake up in the morning that gets you going.
Number three: recite, recite, and recite. So say things out loud to yourself that you need to remember, but don't just say word for word what it says in the book. You wanna use your own words, paraphrase and that really, really works. Just like I said. I believe it was, you remember 70 percent of what you say aloud. So we all love to hear ourselves talk and you might feel a little crazy doing it. You can shut yourself in your room. But say things out loud. Number four: learn from the general to the specific. So you can go ahead and skim the reading first, pick up the main points, and then go back and actually read it to get all the specifics about what they're trying to reach. I've also been advised by some professors to read the beginning and the end. Because the beginning talks about the -- it shows you, "This is what you're gonna learn, and you know, the questions that are gonna be asked," and then the end shows you, "Here's the answers and here's what you learned," and then you go to the middle and see, "Now, here's where you're learning what we want you to learn." So that might not work for all subjects; I'd recommend it more for things like Pol Sci or Sociology. You don't wanna do that for Math or Biology probably. But certain topics you might wanna try that. No questions? We got a quiet group today. Okay.
Now we're gonna look at pneumonic devices. And I had to Google the pronunciation of that word. But pneumonic devices are a mind memory or learning aid. They're usually verbal, but they can be any kind like visual, kinesthetic or auditory. And here are a couple types: acronyms, acrostics. I'm not sure if it's lo-see [phonetic] or lo-sy; I actually didn't look that one up, but I'm assuming it Loci and chaining. And there's a lot more, but I didn't wanna bore you guys to death. So in my next slide, I'll describe some of those.
Alright. So tip number five is acronyms. Most of us have heard of acronyms. They're invented combinations of letters with the first letter cue, which is a more sophisticated definition than I would probably put to it [chuckle]. But an example is PEMDAS, which we... probably used that maybe in elementary or junior high, to remember the sequence of solving an equation: parentheses, exponents, multiplication, division, addition, subtraction. So you can create your own -- you've probably have all heard of ROYGBEV [phonetic] to remember the sequence of the colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow... maybe you haven't heard of it? But I found that really helpful for me because there's no way I would remember all the colors of the rainbow in order without that. Acrostics are another one, and it's similar, but you make up a little poem or a sentence. So using the same thing, the sequence of solving an equation, we have, "Please excuse my dear Aunt Sally." And I'm sure -- I remember that one from about like 6th or 7th grade. And again, that's to remember the order of solving equations. So you can make up your own, whatever you need to remember. Use your creativity.
Tip number Seven. The method of Loci, select a location that you know well and imagine yourself walking through that location and pick a few specific areas, like it could be your house, and imagine your bathroom sink, your refrigerator, your couch in your living room. And then imagine yourself putting objects you need to remember in these places. This could be vocabulary words, people... you probably don't wanna use it for dates and things, but people, objects. So for example, if you needed to remember the words "cucumbers," "dog" and "soap," which I don't think you really would for a test, but just bear with me, you could imagine cucumbers dancing in the kitchen sink, the dog lounging on the sofa and soap boiling on the stove. So it doesn't have to make sense, and usually, the weirder that it is, the more you remember it, because you're like, "Why would cucumbers dance in the sink?" But it works because it makes absolutely no sense. And this works really well for kinesthetic learners. So, do most of you know what your learning style is? Or at least have an inkling? Show of hands? What are the types of learning? What learning style you are? If you're kinesthetic, auditory, visual. Most of you know? So this works really well for kinesthetic 'cause you're actively doing something. If you have to actually walk through your house and envision, you know, a monkey sitting in a chair if the word you need to remember is "monkey," then that's what you can do too. Another pneumonic device is chaining. Or I like to call it storytelling, 'cause that makes sense to me. And this is similar to the method of Loci. You create a story using cues to remember the next item you need to remember. And one example I found was, if you had to remember "Napoleon," "ear," "door" and "Germany," then you'd tell yourself a story, "Okay, Napoleon's standing with his ear to the door, listening to German." So it just kind of helps give you that cue of remembering a sequence of words. And again, it doesn't have to make sense, and if it doesn't make sense, it'll probably be better.
Flash cards. Very popular for the college crowd. Of course, you wanna use this mainly for factual stuff like dates, names, places, vocabulary words, equations, formulas. Really, really helpful for foreign languages. I think we all had those in high school. Because they're so convenient, one of the bonuses of flash cards is that you can review the cards frequently. So you really wanna look over them a lot. And look at the ones you don't know. It's really tempting to look at the ones that you already know, because it makes you feel good about yourself, but obviously, you wanna go through -- the ones that you're having a little bit of a harder time recalling, you wanna look over those more often. Say the information out loud. Again, talking out loud really really helps you retain information. So even if you feel stupid, go ahead and say it out loud. I find that it really helps to have somebody read them to you as well, whether it be if you're studying for a Spanish exam, having the word in English or having a picture of the word, and then having them say, "How do you say this?" And that way you can't really cheat, 'cause sometimes I try to cheat on myself when I use flashcards. And shuffle the cards up and go through them quickly to avoid just memorizing the order of words. You wanna surprise yourself and not expect what word's gonna come next. Any questions yet? Yeah.

Question from Audience: Is there a tip nine?

Oh, you know what? Did... I not do tip nine? I was moving things around, so I might've missed one. You caught me [giggle]. I guess I must've missed that one.
Alright. So technically, tip number ten then [giggle], sing a song. And, okay, this one will probably make you feel the stupidest out of all of them, but make up a simple song, not anything really eloquent. It doesn't have to be like worthy of being on the radio. But just a little song, or even just a rhythm to remember vocabulary, numbers, dates, people... things like that. And I also think that rhythms help. So what I mean by that -- like I use the example of this number, and I was saying, you could say, four eight three two nine zero one, or something where you have kind of an up and down rhythm. That helps me remember numbers instead of just saying four eight three two nine zero one. Kind of changing my pitch a little bit so that I remember that. Yeah. But that's more for working memory, of course. Any questions now? No? Okay. Any errors on my slide? [Giggle]
Alright. So now we're gonna try the exercise again. So you have ten seconds to try to remember as much about the pictures as possible, but this time, I would like it if you could try to utilize one of the methods I explained. Obviously some of them you can't really do; it's a little too complex. But maybe one of the more simpler ones. Maybe the rhythm or singing yourself a little song. Okay? Alright. You guys are just a very talkative bunch [giggle]. Okay.
You have 10 seconds to look over the pictures. [ Silence ]
Alright. So how many seeds did the watermelon have? Eight? [Giggle] Okay. Okay, what about, where was the orange?
Okay, yeah, and I put, "between the banana and the watermelon," but it was. And there were 13 seeds. That one was a little bit harder, so [chuckle] nice guess with eight. But again, and this might not be the best illustration for you, but if you really apply these methods, you should be able to do better in your classes in remembering stuff. Half of college is memorizing, so that brings us to the conclusion of the workshop.
Thank you guys for coming. And I give you guys a little applause because not many people come to study skills workshops.