

Never Forget a Word: Memory Champion Secrets for English Learners

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

248 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

A young man walks into his grandmother's house.

She looks at him... and smiles politely.

The way you smile at a stranger.

She has no idea who he is.

And he is her grandson.

That moment broke his heart.

But it also started something extraordinary.

Because that young man decided to fight for memory itself.

He trained every single day... and became a four-time USA Memory Champion.

His name is Nelson Dellis.

And today, we are taking his best techniques... and turning them into tools for your English.

Welcome to Your English Toolbox, where we train your ears step by step.

I am Martin.

And I am Julia.

Friends, we are so happy you are here today.

Before we open the book, remember that this episode has a home.

Your English Toolbox... dot... com.

There you will find this episode with its interactive transcript... and translations in Farsi, Spanish, German and French.

Plus the vocabulary list, flashcards, games and PDFs... all completely free.

Keep it in mind while you listen... because today's method and those tools were made for each other.

So... today we are opening a book called Everyday Genius, by Nelson Dellis.

A man who can memorize a full deck of cards... in minutes.

But relax — this episode is not about becoming a champion.



It is about one question.

Why do you forget English words... and how can you stop it?

If you stay with us until the end, you will walk away with three things.

One — the three-step formula memory athletes use... adapted for vocabulary, idioms and even irregular verbs.

Two — the Memory Palace... a technique older than the Roman Empire... that turns your own home into a dictionary.

Three — and a way of reading in English that plants words so deep... they never leave.

So let's open the book.

Chapter one starts with an idea that changes everything.

A good memory is not a gift.

It is a skill.

Nelson Dellis says his natural memory is completely average.

Normal... like yours... like mine.

The difference is not talent.

The difference is technique.

So when you say...

I have a terrible memory for words...

That is not a fact about your brain.

It is a fact about your method.

And a method can change today.

The formula has three steps.

Encode... visualize... store.

Step one sounds simple... and almost nobody does it.

Pay real attention.

Here is an uncomfortable truth, friends.

Most words are not forgotten.

They were never truly heard in the first place.

Think about the last time someone told you their name.

Five seconds later... gone.

Not because your memory failed.

Because in that moment, you were busy preparing your own answer.



Attention comes first.

Memory comes second.

Step two is where the magic begins.

Turn the word into a picture.

And not a polite, reasonable picture.

A ridiculous one.

Your brain ignores boring things.

But it cannot ignore something absurd... enormous... emotional.

And here is a detail most people miss.

Use all your senses.

Do not just see the image.

Hear it... smell it... touch it... make it move.

A picture with sound and movement is ten times stronger than a photograph.

Let's do one together, right now.

Take the verb... to grasp.

It means to hold something firmly... or to understand an idea.

Now listen to it... grasp... it sounds almost like grass.

So imagine this.

You are walking barefoot in a park.

And suddenly... the grass comes alive... and grasps your ankle.

Green fingers... cold and wet... holding you tight.

You can feel them on your skin... you can even hear the grass laughing.

It is silly... it is impossible... and that is exactly why it works.

Tomorrow, when you hear grasp... that crazy grass will appear.

Your brain keeps what surprises it.

Step three... give every word a home.

This is the Memory Palace.

The oldest memory technique in the world... and still the most powerful.

Choose a place you know perfectly... your own home.

Now create a route... front door... hallway... kitchen.



And place one image... one expression... at each stop.

Your brain is brilliant at remembering places.

So the place remembers the word for you.

Let's make it real.

Imagine you just finished a podcast episode, and you chose your expressions.

Only five to eight... never fifty.

Fifty words on a list is collecting... not learning.

Now walk through your home.

At the front door... the grass is grasping the door handle.

In the hallway... you run into an old friend... you literally crash into him... papers flying everywhere.

And in the kitchen... someone spilled the beans... beans on the floor, in your shoes, inside the coffee machine.

Three stops... three expressions... and you still have the sofa and the bedroom waiting.

Tonight, close your eyes and take that walk again.

Five steps... five crazy pictures... five expressions that are now yours.

Your house just became a dictionary.

And friends... this technique is not only for single words.

It works beautifully with idioms... those expressions that make no logical sense.

Take a classic... to bite the bullet.

It means to face something difficult... something you cannot avoid any longer.

But the words say nothing about that... and this is exactly why learners forget idioms.

So the book gives us a trick with two pictures.

First... film the literal scene.

A soldier takes a real metal bullet... puts it between his teeth... and bites.

You can hear the crunch... horrible.

Then... connect it to the real meaning.

That same soldier stands up... takes a deep breath... and walks into the storm... because he has no other choice.

Two images... one crazy, one true.

The crazy one makes you remember.

The true one gives you the meaning.

Try it tonight with any idiom that refuses to stay.



And now... the nightmare of every English student.

Irregular verbs.

Go... went... gone.

Three words... no logic... pure memorization.

Unless... you turn them into a tiny movie.

Watch this.

You are standing at a green traffic light... and green means go.

Suddenly a wet winter storm arrives... the wind... went... it sweeps you off the street.

And the storm drops you inside a dark gold mine... where nobody can find you... gone.

Go... went... gone.

One little film... three forms... in the right order... forever.

Make your own movies for the verbs that always escape you.

The stranger the story... the stronger the verb.

Now, let me tell you about Ravi, one of our listeners.

Ravi moved to Manchester two years ago.

And he had a small... painful problem.

His neighbour introduced himself three times.

And three times...

Ravi forgot his name.

So he started avoiding him... crossing the street... just to escape that embarrassment.

Then he tried the technique.

The neighbour's name was Bill.

So Ravi imagined him covered in dollar bills... bills falling from his jacket... flying out of his ears.

Ridiculous?

Completely.

But the next Saturday, Ravi opened his door, looked up, and said...

Good morning, Bill.

And that tiny sentence changed how he felt on his own street.

That is what memory really is, friends.

Not a trick for competitions.



Confidence... in real life.

One warning before we continue.

Crazy images are powerful... but they are not permanent.

The glue is review.

Visit your palace tomorrow... then in three days... then in a week.

Every visit makes the path stronger.

And if you use flashcards, you already know this engine.

Active recall... spaced repetition.

The champions run on exactly the same fuel.

And that takes us to chapter two... reading.

Because Nelson Dellis also competed in speed reading.

And here comes the beautiful surprise.

He was one of the slowest readers in the whole competition.

Some competitors claimed two thousand words per minute.

He read about four hundred.

And he went home with a medal.

How is that possible?

Because when the reading finished, he remembered almost everything.

And the fast readers... remembered almost nothing.

Speed is vanity, friends.

Comprehension is wealth.

And for English learners, this changes the whole game.

You do not need to read fast.

You need to read deep.

So here is the first reading technique.

Stop translating... start filming.

We call it the mental movie.

When you read... a rainy evening in London...

Do not translate word by word in your head.

Close your eyes for one second.



See the grey sky... hear the rain on the umbrella... feel the cold air on your face.

Now English is not connected to your language anymore.

It is connected to life.

And words connected to life... stay.

Here is the second reading secret... and it almost sounds illegal.

Do not read every single word.

Your eyes do not need every little word... the... a... of... to.

Your brain fills those gaps automatically... yes, in English too.

So train your eyes to jump between the important words... the nouns... the verbs.

Read... cat... sat... mat... and your brain quietly builds... the cat sat on the mat.

This is called chunking... reading in groups of words.

It is exactly how native speakers read.

Less effort... more speed... and the same understanding.

Third technique... an old idea with a beautiful name.

The commonplace book.

A small notebook where you collect treasures from everything you read.

But here is the key for English.

Do not collect single words.

Collect full expressions... out of the blue... take it for granted... sooner or later.

Write them by hand... because your hand teaches your brain.

And once a week, open the notebook... and read your treasures out loud.

Slowly, that notebook becomes your personal English.

Built from everything you love reading.

And one more secret... this one sounds strange.

Change where you study.

Monday on the sofa...

Wednesday in a café...

Saturday in the park.

Your brain records the place together with the words.

So every location becomes another door into the memory.



More places... more doors... more English available when you need it.

One last gift from the book... how to actually finish books in English.

Because many of us start them... and abandon them on page twenty.

Rule one... choose books by love, not by level.

If the story matters to you... emotion does half of the work.

Rule two... if a book bores you... stop reading it.

You are not in school... there is no exam... drop it without guilt.

And rule three... make the goal small.

Ten pages a day... every single day... beats fifty pages once a month.

Put a little sticker on page ten... and enjoy that small victory every night.

Thirty days later... you have finished a whole book in English.

And that feeling, friends... changes how you see yourself.

Quick recap, friends.

Memory is a skill... not a gift.

Three steps... pay real attention... turn words into ridiculous pictures with all your senses... and store them in your Memory Palace.

Idioms need two images... the crazy one and the true one.

Irregular verbs become tiny movies... go... went... gone.

Five to eight expressions... reviewed tomorrow... in three days... in a week.

And when you read... film the mental movie... jump between the important words... collect expressions in your commonplace book... and change your location.

Choose books by love... quit the boring ones... ten pages a day.

One book... one method... and your vocabulary stops disappearing.

So here is your mission for tonight.

Choose five expressions from any episode you love.

Create five ridiculous images... place them around your home... and take the walk before you sleep.

Tomorrow morning... walk through your palace again.

And notice what happens.

The words are just... there.

Waiting for you.

And remember, friends... you do not have to do any of this alone.



Everything we described today is already waiting for you at Your English Toolbox... dot... com.

The interactive transcript of this episode... perfect for training your mental movie.

The vocabulary section... where the five to eight expressions are already chosen for you.

Translations in Farsi, Spanish, German and French... a safety net under every English line.

Flashcards with active recall... memory games... and PDFs you can print for your commonplace book.

All of it... completely free.

Your toolbox is open... you only have to walk in.

Nelson Dellis started this journey because of a painful goodbye.

You can start yours tonight... with five words and your own front door.

Because from today, you are not a person with a bad memory.

You never were.

You are a person who finally has the technique.

And that changes everything.

Thank you for being here with us, friends.

Take care... and enjoy building your palace.

Bye for now.

