

# Mnemonojitsu – The Art of Memorization

## Using Memory Strategies to Learn Jujitsu Technique Names

Hillary Kaplowitz

Most fields of endeavor require practitioners to learn the vocabulary of the discipline, which then becomes the common language for communication about the subject. The same is true for our study of Danzan Ryu Jujitsu. The added complication for most jujitsu students is that Japanese is not our native language. So, on top of learning the technique names, we need to learn them in another language.

For some jujitsuka, learning the technique names comes rather easily. They pick them up as they learn and practice the art. For others it is a daunting task and one that can cause problems on black belt examinations. What can we offer our students to assist them with this difficult task? In most cases, we suggest rote memorization. It turns out that rehearsal alone is not the most effective memory technique.

### Organization

When we learn new information we try to connect it to something we already know so it has a place in our semantic network. Finding ways to group and categorize new information can help with recall. Organize techniques by common

names or motions to make associations between them. A good exercise is to make a copy of all the lists and go through them crossing out the words you already know. If there is a word that occurs often you don't know, then you should look it up and make it a point to remember it. After completing this exercise you will likely find that you know more terms than you thought you did and that you have some focus on what you need to work on.

### Elaboration

The more time you spend on something the more likely you are to remember it. By developing connections between new information and a familiar image or phrase the connection becomes stronger. Many of the techniques in Danzan Ryu are imagery based. Techniques like Yama Arashi (Mountain Storm), Hagai Shime (Wing Pinion) and Mizu Kaguri (Diving Under Water) all evoke an image that can be associated with the motions of the technique. Any kind of elaboration can be useful whether it be examples, stories, visuals, etymology or physical actions. For example, after hearing the story of how Okazaki defeated the boxer KO Morris using Genkotsu Ude Tori, it was a lot easier for me to remember that

technique because I had spent more time hearing and thinking about it.

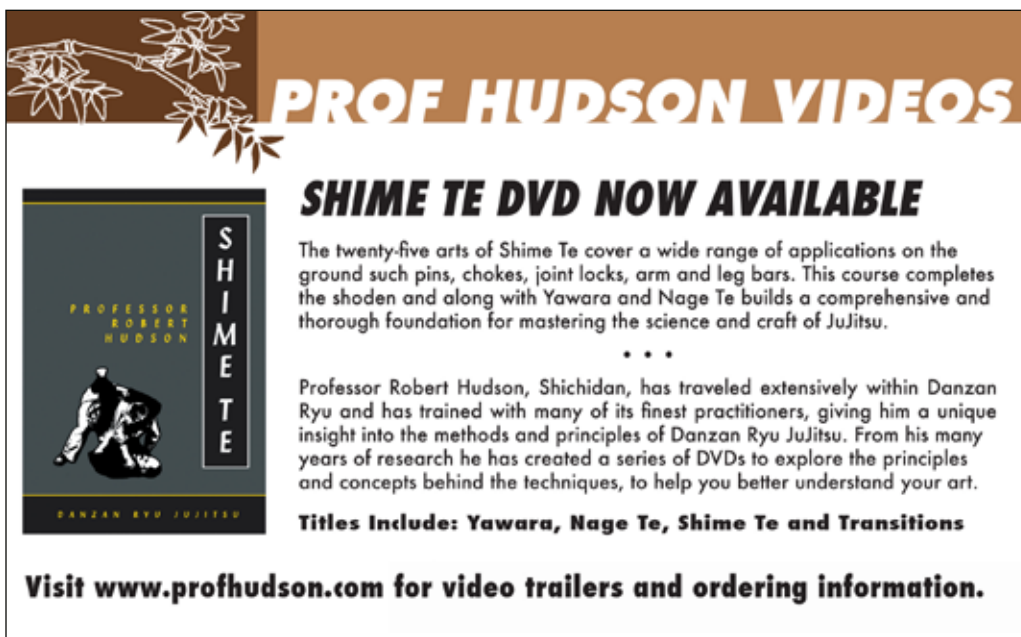
### Mnemonics

Mnemonics are one of the most commonly used memory assists and are extremely effective. They combine qualities of both organization and elaboration. Probably the most widely used mnemonic is the keyword technique, especially when learning foreign language vocabulary or in our case Japanese technique names. To use the keyword method you associate the to-be-remembered word with another word that sounds similar. Then you associate that word to an image. For example the word Eri means collar and appears in a few techniques. Eri sounds like airy. Imagine a collared shirt hanging on the clothesline flapping in the airy breeze. It is kind of stretch but if you take the time to actually picture the shirt and make the connection, you won't likely forget that eri means collar. Turns out the more ridiculous the mnemonic, the more likely you are to remember it. The ones you make up yourself tend to be the ones that work best for you.

### Rehearsal

No strategy will be effective without practice and this is when rehearsal techniques are best employed. You cannot expect to master a new throw after practicing only a few times. The same goes for memorization. Just like anything it takes time and effort. Flash cards can be effective tools for drill and practice. The process of creating the cards is elaboration since you are putting your attention on each word as you write it on the card. Add your memory strategies to the cards as well. Then if you cannot remember the answer, look first

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at your hint and see if that can jog your memory. It also helps to study with your fellow jujitsuka. They may have different mnemonics that they can share with you.

*Conclusion*

I have used these methods in my own training and in working with my students. The interesting thing is that my students differ in what memory strategies they feel are the most effective. This is significant since it points to the fact that each of us has our own preferences and strengths when it comes to memorization. Be sure to try a number of techniques and then concentrate on what works best for you. We all have different preferences on how we like to learn.

Remember that many people have trouble learning the names of the techniques and it is especially difficult to recall the correct art when you are in the pressure situation on your exam. Take the time to learn the names as you go through the ranks. Don't always rely on the boards on the wall or the lists in your notebook. Say the technique name in your head each time you do the art. Take time off the mat to review your notebook and study the names. Find ways to categorize and organize the technique names. Do research, ask questions, study with your peers, just take the time to work with the names and they will be a lot easier for you to master. Maybe you will become someone who just picks it up naturally over time.

Prof Cross said something to a class at a convention many years back that really struck me. He said that when you want to do Ogoshi you don't translate it first to hip throw and then do it. You just do it. You don't need to translate it first. That's because you know that technique. You know Ogoshi. It isn't until the name and the technique become one that you really know the technique.

So learn your names!

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