

# How to Study/Remember Vocabulary Words in a Second Language Better

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUyS1RlwDiU>

I came across this podcast episode and based on the title thought that it might be relevant to me. I have an issue with remembering words in Spanish. I read and listen to so much content in Spanish, and when I do, am constantly learning new words. However, I also often find myself, when I need to use or know a word during a conversation with someone, forgetting the one I need. I get sick of and constantly lose confidence because of having to look up the same word multiple times.

The presenters explained that there are three steps to learning/remembering:

- **Codificación:** This is when you first learn new information.
- **Almacenamiento:** *Almacén* means “warehouse,” so this must refer to the storing of information in your brain.
- **Recuperación,** or recovery: This is when you recall information from the past to use in the present.

They seemed to imply that the last part is the hardest. They said most people forget 60% of what they learn.

This stat made me feel less bad about myself. Still, though, I would like to improve my ability to remember new words in Spanish. And, if I have this problem, I’m sure that my students do, too. So, below I will document the learning/practicing/studying methods that the podcast shared and that we teachers and learners can use to improve our vocabulary word memories.

Some of these tips I already knew, or seem like common sense. I highlighted the more interesting, less likely to be known pieces of information in yellow.

- 1) **Repetition:** First, they said that repetitive exposure to words is key to remembering the words. I feel like this is pretty common sense.
- 2) **Convert words to images**
  - a. Create images that relate to the words that you are learning/using.
  - b. Add images to your flashcards.

### 3) El Palacio de Memoria

- a. Invented by the Greeks
- b. Make the word (intangible) visual (tangible)
- c. The method: Imagine a place (your bedroom closet, office, etc.) that you know with your eyes closed. When you learn a new word, imagine an image of it, and “put it in the place.” The next time you imagine this place, it will have the new object/word in it.
- d. Pros: Good for learning nouns and adjectives that describe appearance; Cons: Not good for learning verbs, adjectives that don’t describe appearance, expressions, etc.
- e. My idea:

- i. At the beginning of a section of new vocabulary, have kids create (draw?) their memory palace. Remind them to leave empty spaces where they can add new objects over time. (For example, they could draw the inside of a closet with empty shelves.) This is the “foundation of the house.”
- ii. Second, have them practice describing the palace in order to memorize it. (In the closet, there are three columns of shelves. The first column is red, the second column is blue... etc. etc.)
- iii. Third, when I introduce the new vocabulary words, have them add the new vocabulary objects to the palace.
- iv. Fourth, practice reciting the contents of this place in order to improve your memory of it with the new words/objects, as well as your ability to describe the location and appearance of objects. (On the fourth shelf in the middle column, there are four objects. From left to right, they are... etc. etc.)
- v. Finally, the vocabulary quiz: What about simply having kids re-draw their palace, label “x” number of objects, and write a paragraph to describe the location and appearance of everything?

#### 4) The Method of *Apilación*

- a. *Apilar*: Poner una cosa sobre la otra
- b. Example: *En la cocina, hay un plato. Sobre el plato, hay una taza, sobre la taza, hay café. Al lado de la taza, hay azúcar y una cuchara.*
- c. The image mental of all these things make them easier to remember.
- d. When you create these images, make them absurd (above the dog, there is a spoon and the tail of a cat) because the absurdity makes the group more memorable and easier to remember.
- e. Note to self: I suppose that this method applies itself within the “memory palace” practice.

#### 5) *Mnemotécnica = Asociar cosas*

- a. Examples:
  - i. Create an acronym
  - ii. Rhymes
  - iii. Canciones

#### 6) La Lista de Oro

- a. The method:
  - i. Make 4 sections (a, b, c, d) on a page of paper.
  - ii. Day 1—Write 20 words in section A in both English and Spanish. (Write them in columns so that the Spanish column can be covered while you look at the English column when it comes time to check which words you remember.)
  - iii. Repeat this 14 times so that you have 14 pieces of paper with section A filled.
  - iv. Day 15—Return to page 1, look at the words in English and see how many you remember in Spanish. It’s okay if you forget some. You are expected to retain 30% of previous words.
  - v. Write the words that you didn’t remember in column B.

vi. Remember to date each section.

vii. Repeat this process for each page, sections C and D.

viii. After 8 weeks, you will have learned a ton of new words.

b. More info: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/languages/learning-languages/the-goldlist-method>

c. Good for learning/studying words that are hard to represent with images (verbs, some adjectives, adverbs, expressions, etc.)

7) ***Escribir a Mano***—Not the computer. Writing manually makes a stronger connection with the brain.

8) **Teach others.**