Lessons from Using SuperMemo and Spaced Repetition

Steven Jonas – 9/16/12

WIRED MAGAZINE: 16.05

MED-TECH : HEALTH

Want to Remember Everything You'll Ever Learn? Surrender to This Algorithm

By Gary Wolf M

04.21.08



GET SMARTER: 12 Hacks That Will Amp Up

Your Brainpower

1: Distract Yourself

2: Caffeinate With Care

The winter sun sets in mid-afternoon in Kolobrzeg, Poland, but the early twilight does not deter people from taking their regular outdoor promenade. Bundled up in parkas with fur-trimmed hoods, strolling hand in mittened hand along the edge of the Baltic Sea, off-season tourists from Germany stop openmouthed when they see a tall, well-built, nearly naked man running up and down the sand.

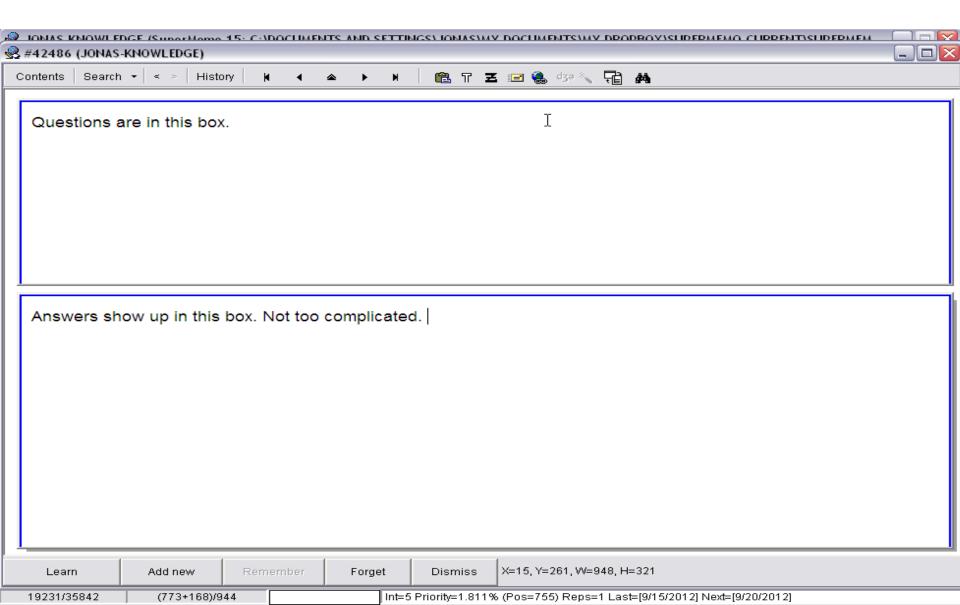
"Kalt? Kalt?" one of them calls out. The man gives a polite but vague answer, then turns and dives into the waves. After swimming back and forth in the 40-degree water for a few minutes, he emerges from the surf and jogs briefly along the shore. The wind is strong, but the man makes no move to get dressed. Passersby continue to comment and stare. "This is one of the reasons I prefer anonymity," he tells me in English. "You do something even slightly out of the ordinary and it causes a sensation."

Piotr Wozniak's quest for anonymity has been successful. Nobody along this string of little beach resorts recognizes him as the inventor of a technique to turn people into geniuses. A portion of this technique, embodied in a software program called SuperMemo, has enthusiastic users around the world. They apply it mainly to learning

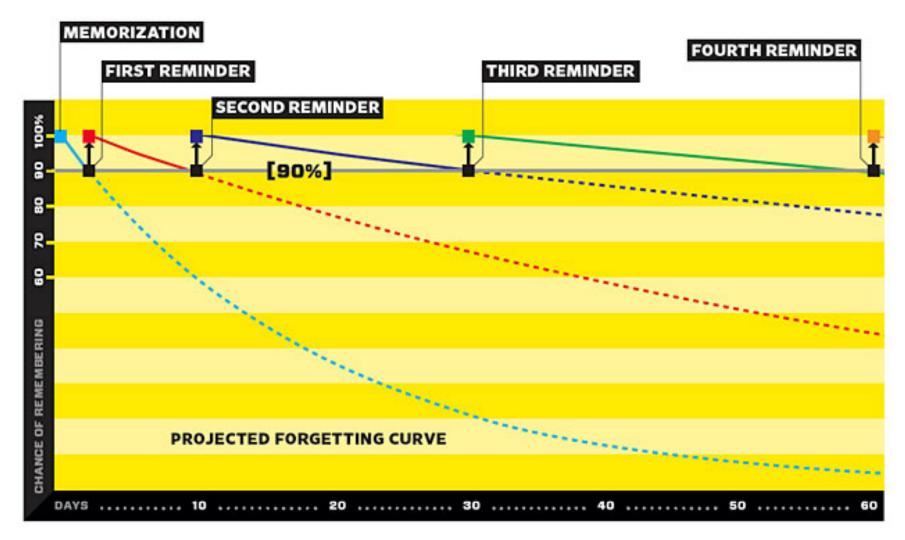
SuperMemo

- -Developed in 1987 by Piotr Wozniak
- -Currently in it's 15th version
- -Name is short for "super-memory"
- -Spaced-repetition software (SRS)
- -Most commonly used for learning languages

The SuperMemo Interface

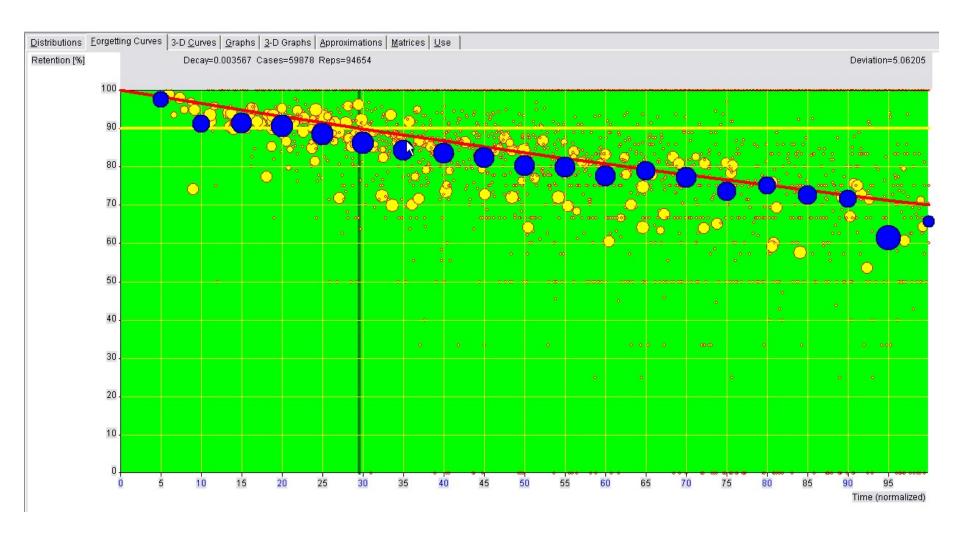


The Forgetting Curve & The Spacing Effect



Source: Wired

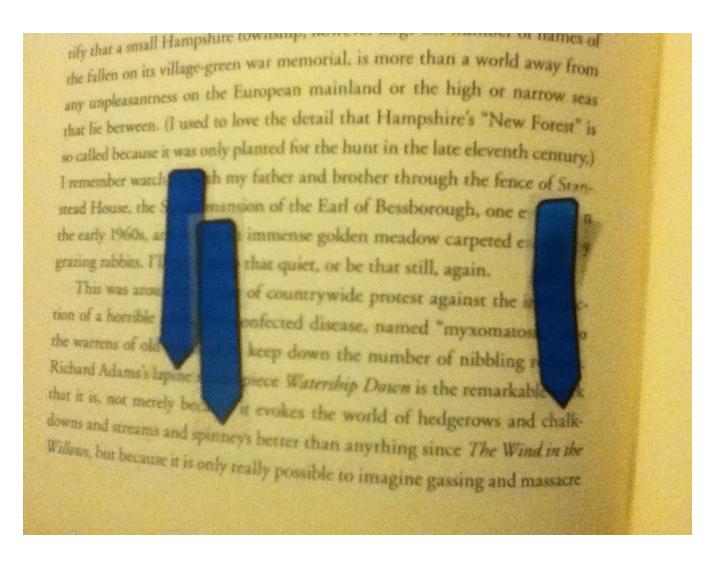
A Graph of My Forgetting Curve



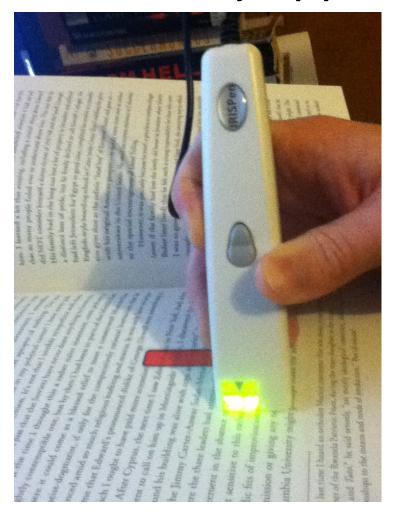
Calender of items scheduled for review by day

No	Sep 2012	Reps	No	Oct 2012	Reps	No	Nov 2012	Reps
1428.	9/1/2012, Sat	-	1458.	10/1/2012, Mon	82+65	1489.	11/1/2012, Thu	51+34
1429.	9/2/2012, Sun	-	1459.	10/2/2012, Tue	71+73	1490.	11/2/2012, Fri	65+37
1430.	9/3/2012, Mon	-	1460.	10/3/2012, Wed	68+55	1491.	11/3/2012, Sat	42+28
1431.	9/4/2012, Tue	-	1461.	10/4/2012, Thu	89+50	1492.	11/4/2012, Sun	48+32
1432.	9/5/2012, Wed	-	1462.	10/5/2012, Fri	91+68	1493.	11/5/2012, Mon	46+31
1433.	9/6/2012, Thu	-	1463.	10/6/2012, Sat	68+39	1494.	11/6/2012, Tue	69+27
1434.	9/7/2012, Fri	-	1464.	10/7/2012, Sun	71+46	1495.	11/7/2012, Wed	46+20
1435.	9/8/2012, Sat	170+0	1465.	10/8/2012, Mon	82+50	1496.	11/8/2012, Thu	62+26
1436.	9/9/2012, Sun	25+0	1466.	10/9/2012, Tue	73+56	1497.	11/9/2012, Fri	53/29
1437.	9/10/2012, Mon	32+0	1467.	10/10/2012, Wed	59+45	1498.	11/10/2012, Sat	55+33
1438.	9/11/2012, Tue	59+0	1468.	10/11/2012, Thu	60+47	1499.	11/11/2012, Sun	41+33
1439.	9/12/2012, Wed	48+0	1469.	10/12/2012, Fri	70+54	1500.	11/12/2012, Mon	51+28
1440.	9/13/2012, Thu	14+0	1470.	10/13/2012, Sat	59+35	1501.	11/13/2012, Tue	52+28
1441.	9/14/2012, Fri	188+96	1471.	10/14/2012, Sun	66+37	1502.	11/14/2012, Wed	72+31
1442.	9/15/2012, Sat	236+72	1472.	10/15/2012, Mon	57+52	1503.	11/15/2012, Thu	46+22
1443.	9/16/2012, Sun	132+66	1473.	10/16/2012, Tue	47+45	1504.	11/16/2012, Fri	44+23
1444.	9/17/2012, Mon	118+57	1474.	10/17/2012, Wed	66+52	1505.	11/17/2012, Sat	48+33
1445.	9/18/2012, Tue	117+74	1475.	10/18/2012, Thu	62+42	1506.	11/18/2012, Sun	51+24
1446.	9/19/2012, Wed	107+64	1476.	10/19/2012, Fri	68+43	1507.	11/19/2012, Mon	48+31
1447.	9/20/2012, Thu	95+94	1477.	10/20/2012, Sat	64+48	1508.	11/20/2012, Tue	44+17
1448.	9/21/2012, Fri	78+76	1478.	10/21/2012, Sun	44+42	1509.	11/21/2012, Wed	45+28
1449.	9/22/2012, Sat	82+45	1479.	10/22/2012, Mon	60+46	1510.	11/22/2012, Thu	48+30
1450.	9/23/2012, Sun	76+78	1480.	10/23/2012, Tue	56+31	1511.	11/23/2012, Fri	41+14
1451.	9/24/2012, Mon	92+57	1481.	10/24/2012, Wed	56+36	1512.	11/24/2012, Sat	43+31
1452.	9/25/2012, Tue	68+67	1482.	10/25/2012, Thu	68+49	1513.	11/25/2012, Sun	44+27
1453.	9/26/2012, Wed	81+60	1483.	10/26/2012, Fri	49+48	1514.	11/26/2012, Mon	40+31
1454.	9/27/2012, Thu	67+56	1484.	10/27/2012, Sat	56+29	1515.	11/27/2012, Tue	33+24
455.	9/28/2012, Fri	87+49	1485.	10/28/2012, Sun	58+39	1516.	11/28/2012, Wed	39+24
456.	9/29/2012, Sat	73+55	1486.	10/29/2012, Mon	60+27	1517.	11/29/2012, Thu	45+16
1457.	9/30/2012, Sun	60+68	1487.	10/30/2012, Tue	45+41	1518.	11/30/2012, Fri	40+21
			1488.	10/31/2012, Wed	48+31	-		
	SUM	3239		SUM	3394		SUM	2265
	AVERAGE	140.8		AVERAGE	109.5		AVERAGE	75.5

I mark words I don't know as I read.

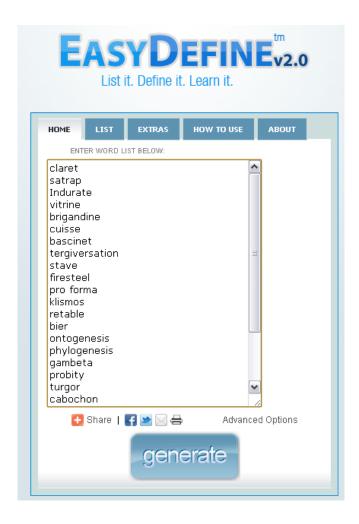


And scan the words, as well as, the sentences they appear in.

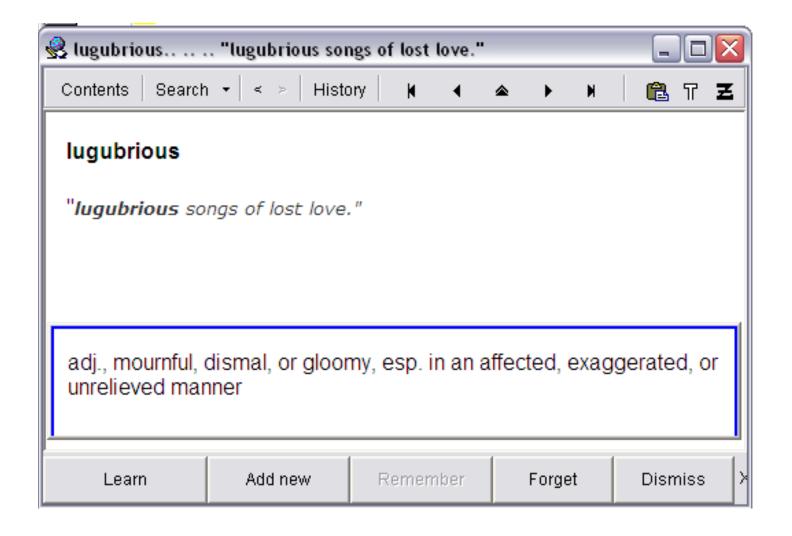


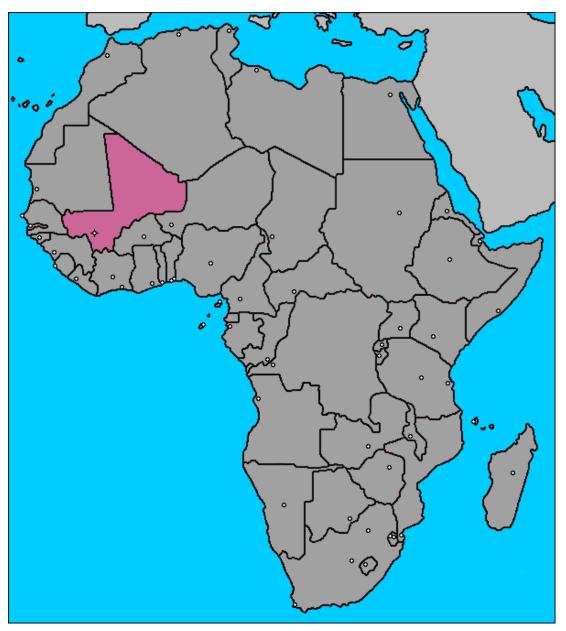
3 to 4 times faster than typing.

I use EasyDefine to batch-grab many definitions at once.



Finished Product





Source: luventicus.org

The Fearsome Tuareg Uprising in Mali: Less Monolithic than Meets the Eye

By JULIUS CAVENDISH / BAMAKO Friday, Mar. 30, 2012



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Tuareg rebels stand near a truck in Mali on March 19, 2012. After the libyan unrest the civil war in Mali between Tuareg rebels and government forces has escalated. The UN say that about 130.000 displaced person are facing a human catastrophy due to the food shortage in Sahel.

DPA/LANDOV



Somewhere close to the Algerian border a delegation of Tuareg notables hurried through the desert for a summit. It was mid-





- 1. 7 Waj
- 2. The 2
- 3. Mike Minu
- 4. You C Reall
- 5. Top 1
- 6. The F

Source: Reuters

Familiarity Increases Interest

Memory Interference

Memory traces with similar wording or associations compete for retrieval.



Source: sitesatlas.com



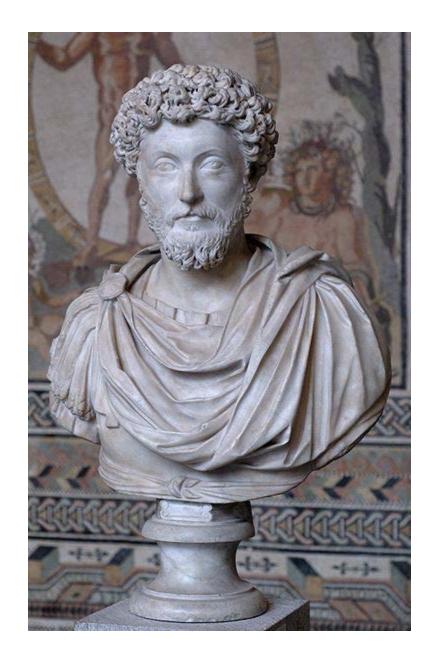
Source: yourgolftravel.com



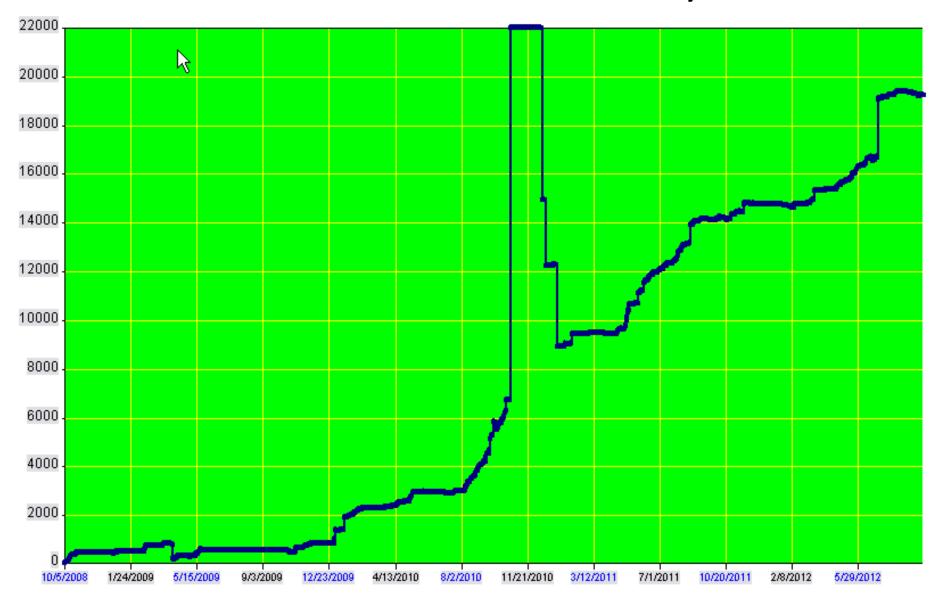


The soul becomes dyed with the color of its thoughts.

—Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor and Stoic



Number of items I've added to my collection



My SuperMemo Collection

- Created 10/5/2008
- 12,500 flashcards
- 6,000 items that I review but am not tested on
- 7 flashcards added per day, on average
- Daily Workload: 100 flashcards; 100 Items to review
- Weekday use: 50 minutes (during bus commute)
- Weekend use: 90 minutes per day

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If you use spaced repetition, or am interested in it, I would love to talk to you.