

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 22 Issue 36 2014-09-12

## My Home is My Campus

Commuting to the Couch

## Sultans of String

Reviewing *Symphony!*

## It's an Evolution

The Mutants are Us

*Plus:*

*Council Connection  
From Where I Sit  
and much more!*



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***The Voice  
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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



**We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org), and please indicate if we may publish your letter.**

## EDITORIAL

Karl Low

**The Grind**

What's been entertaining you lately?

I've been working with our survey software trying to translate my notes for exactly the type of things I'm going to be asking AUSU students into a coherent survey. Ideally, you want a survey to quickly get to the things that you're interested in, and mostly avoid asking about the things you really don't care about.

It came to me that I could make my work a lot easier by simply making the survey a single question, "What entertains you?" Unfortunately, such open-ended questions often don't address what people really enjoy. Few people will write about their guilty pleasures; how they enjoy watching Big Brother on TV, even though they know it's mindless; or how they spend too much time reading comments on internet forums (my own weakness) even though there's rarely any information of use posted.

Lately, a good chunk of my leisure time has been spent playing a game called "Hay Day" on the iPad. I'm not going to defend it. The game is essentially a mindless Pavlovian experiment, where you make various items on your farm through "planting" crops, or loading machines, and the reward for this behavior is being able to sell those items to other players so that you can make enough of the game's currency to eventually buy a new machine and have a whole new class of items to make. That's it. It's got just enough interactivity to engage your brain slightly, and rewards spaced out just far enough that you get that lovely sense of accomplishment when you finally achieve one. It's also a total waste of time. Yet I keep playing, keep trying to reach that next machine, that next level.

I bring this up not because I'm terribly proud of it, but as an example of the exact type of thing that so many of us do, but which we'll be reluctant to admit that we do it. But why is that? Why are we so concerned that even when we're taking a break, when we're engaging in leisure, that it seems somewhat shameful to do something that is such a waste of time? Yet this isn't consistent either. People regard camping as a lovely thing to do with your leisure. After all, you're out in the woods, communing with nature, perhaps getting exercise and fresh air, or at least, that's what we like to tell ourselves. In reality, at least with my family, camping involved sitting in a car listening to music for several hours before arriving at the campsite, where, once the cursing at setting up the tent was done, we would sit around the campfire and talk, listen to music, and keep shifting our chairs to avoid the smoke. We'd also climb into the boat and go sit in the middle of the lake for hours on end. The difference there being that we could no longer listen to music, for fear of frightening the fish.

Honestly, I prefer the fake farm. At least with that, I can get up and go into the kitchen to make a decent meal. Camping food consisted mostly of hot-dogs, marshmallows, and hot chocolate. Vegetables were rare except during the trip up and back where we'd stop at the fruit stand along the way.

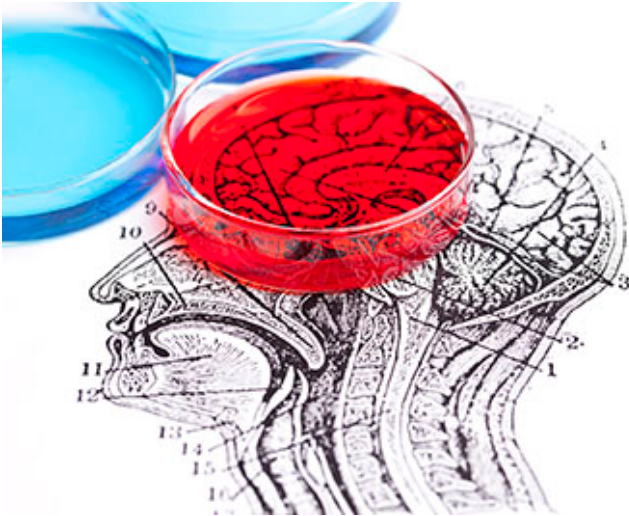
So, when you take the Voice Survey sometime in the next few weeks, don't be ashamed to tell me your guilty pleasures. They can't be worse than camping. Enjoy the read!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karl".

## Primal Numbers

### It's an Evolution

S.D. Livingston



In the evolutionary race, humans have pretty much nailed it. We're the highest form of life, perfected after millions of years of conquering harsh environments and ferocious beasts. It just doesn't get any better. Or does it? As recent discoveries remind us, evolution doesn't sleep—not even for us.

It's true that, as life forms go, human beings are pretty impressive. We've got opposable thumbs and uniquely complex abilities in language and thought. For example, even though animals can use language to communicate with us, and each other, humans are the heavy hitters—able to

record that language, and even beam it into space on radio waves.

So if you could somehow travel a thousand years into the future, you'd expect that the humans you meet would look just like you. Except they'll have much cooler gadgets and some shiny space clothes. It's a comforting thought, but the truth is that we're still an evolutionary work in progress. And a few thousand years from now, pictures of 21st century people might look an awful lot like Neanderthals to those humans of the future.

The proof that evolution is alive and well can be found all around us. In one study, researchers at the University of Ottawa showed the clear adaptation of bichir fish from life in water to life on land. As this *New Scientist* article reports, the land-raised fish not only became better at walking on their front fins, their skeletons changed as well, with "changes in bone structures that gave the land-living bichir something resembling the beginnings of a neck."

But what about humans? Surely our final evolutionary form was reached some 100,000 years ago. Wrong. As this *New York Times* article reveals, some adaptations are as little as 3,000 years old, a mere blink on the scale of evolutionary time.

Even assuming that climate-controlled environments mean we don't need to adapt to survive (say, by growing body hair to live through a brief ice age), our scientific advances have put the tools of evolution firmly in our own hands. The term "designer baby" might smack of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, but the truth is that it's getting more and more common to create and implant embryos that have been screened to prevent certain diseases or birth defects. And, as the *Wall Street Journal* reports, at least one company has already been awarded "a broad U.S. patent for a technique that could be used in a fertility clinic to create babies with selected traits."

Outside the lab, technology's also changing the way we mate. In a world where computers and machines have taken over much of the heavy lifting, it's intelligence rather than brute strength that determines who gets the most resources. Desirable mates will be the ones whose brains, not brawn, allow them to hunt or gather the best food, shelter, and other resources. Over a few thousand years, those natural mating selections can't help but be seen in the generations that follow.



Those changes could be small—mainly cosmetic alterations that would leave tomorrow's humans still recognizable to us. Or evolution could move quickly as our use of technology speeds up. We could, indeed, end up with huge eyes (the better to see all the screens, my dear), tiny muscles, and elongated thumbs.

Whatever our evolutionary future holds, there's only one way to find out. So climb into the stasis pods and get ready for a long nap. Just don't expect to catch evolution sleeping when you finally wake up.

*S.D. Livingston is the author and creator of the Madeline M. Mystery Series for kids, as well as several books for older readers. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing.*



### Council Connection

Karl Low

With only one motion up for discussion, the September 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of AUSU Council was rather short. All current councillors except Corrina Green were present. Corrina's absence was due to her being on a plane to Alberta to meet with the AU Board of Governors at their orientation meeting.

Also in attendance were two observers, and myself. While I think more students should be taking an interest in what this Council is doing, it's good to see the number of observers slowly climbing.

The only motion on the table was to approve a draw from AUSU's reserves of \$5,000 to hire a consultant who will be assisting AUSU with developing a succession plan for Council, including AUSU staff, and who will also be ensuring that AUSU executive pay is reasonable when compared with other student organizations.

Concerns were raised as to whether the consultant was an expert with student union issues, and it was explained that while the firm does not specialize in student union issues, they are a firm with a broad scope involving all aspects of personnel management.

After some further discussion, Council approved the draw unanimously.

In the reports from the executives and committees, there was some discussion of a special meeting of the General Faculties Council (which represents most of the professors and tutors of AU) where a motion was brought forward to essentially stop the roll out of the call-centre project. This motion was put on hold, however, and since then amendments have been made to soften the position of the faculty to slowing the process down and ensuring that all stakeholders are fully consulted about the new model.

Also discussed was whether AUSU will be joining with any external lobby groups such as the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS). Initial meetings with the group are scheduled for late September or early October.

The Awards Committee report noted that there has been a lot of applications for the AUSU e-reader bursary, as well as a few computer bursaries. A lot of discussion ensued over the development of AUSU's online application system and what kind of savings it would bring for AUSU as a whole.

For those wondering about the AUSU Health Plan, timelines on the project have been slightly delayed, but we are assured that both AU and the insurance provider are putting every effort in to get it up and running ASAP.



### That's a Job

With the Babas & Borshch Ukrainian Festival behind me (except for post-event reporting, packing up supplies, and booking acts and sourcing funding for 2015) it's time for my time and energy to be directed elsewhere.

In the near future my focus is on my role in getting the crop off to market. I operate one of the combines, do all the meal prep, and assorted go-fer jobs. With grain prices in the tank it's hard to get too excited about our prospects for a profitable year. But like childbirth, we're committed and there's no turning back now. This baby must be delivered!

In between the farm work I have three weddings to perform. That's meant finding time to meet with the couples to go over my questionnaire and discuss the logistics of their perfect day. Then I do the paperwork associated with making their vision a reality and satisfying the requirements of the provincial government and Vital Statistics. Then, on the day of, I travel to the site of the marriage and perform my duties.

It's also important to do some of the pre-snowfall drudgery that exists on a much larger scale when you live on a farm. Cleaning flowerbeds, storing patio pots and furniture, and getting a jump-start on spring are all jobs that have us praying for snow by mid-November.

This fall, just to add additional pressure, we've ordered four 5000-bushel grain bins to store the yield. Many farmers are doing the same. We're holding onto last year's crop because we refuse to sell at those low prices. Hence the looming storage crunch.

If that isn't enough we also plan on building a garage for *moi*. I've finally put my foot down. I think at least once before I'm dead I should have a garage to, like, park an actual vehicle in. Not collector cars, not tools and machinery parts, not man-cave junk, but the actual workhorse of a vehicle that gets me reliably from point A to point B. I know, it's crazy talk, but hell, yes it's going to happen. We have some able workers, Dial before You Dig guys have been here, we're bracing for the cost, and yes, a concrete slab will be poured before freeze-up.

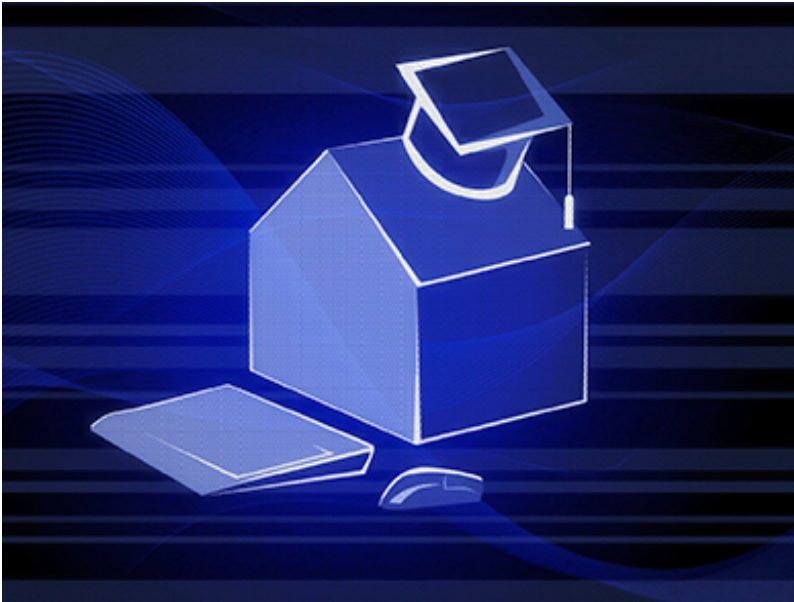
And that's a good thing because yesterday we picked up our 2014 Toyota Venza from an Edmonton dealership. Roy's been coveting this car since my mom bought one in 2009 and not long after we bought the Honda CRV. It's truly too bad that we have about three miles of gravel roads to negotiate before we hit pavement because it's hard on the paint and is impossible to keep a vehicle clean. Roy will drive the CRV til it stops. We chose not to spend \$2800 on the ring gear/starter problem. Seven years and 280,000 kilometers later that ship has sailed.

Besides all that, I need to plan a vacation getaway for this fall or winter. Now that's a job I can embrace, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is Lucky Dog. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

## My Home is My Campus

Barbara Lehtiniemi



When Athabasca University (@AthabascaU) tweeted on September 2, "Many of you have been back to school for a few hours now...how's it going?" I was tempted to reply, "It's going great! I'm taking the day off."

My latest AU course started September 1, but I didn't. While the majority of Canadian university students trundled off to orientation week activities or directly to classes, I put my feet up. Because I take AU courses year-round, I decided I deserved a little break. After writing the exam for my last course in mid-August and before cracking open the books for my next one in September, I carved out a few weeks of down time.

The beauty of online study is I make my own schedule. Instead of starting my course on the contract date of September 1, I decided to start on the 15th. It's up to me to decide when, and if, to work on my course, and when to play. And I don't have to leave my house to study—unless I want to. I don't have to lug books around campus corridors; I don't have to move. My home is my campus.

For on-campus students, however, September often begins in chaos and uncertainty. Last week in Waterloo, Ontario, for example, hundreds of University of Waterloo students discovered that the new off-campus apartment building they planned to move into would not be finished in time for the fall semester. According to this [article](#) in *The Record*, up to 500 students found out on September 1 that they would have to make alternative arrangements for accommodation. Instead of settling into a new semester's study routines, students are scrambling for a place to stay.

As an AU student, I'm immune to these housing glitches. AU's campus comes to me. So while hundreds of UW students spent last week couch-surfing and stressing, I took the week off. While university students everywhere navigated unfamiliar campuses, I hopped an intercity bus and let someone else do the driving. While other students tried to make connections in the chaos of orientation week, I reconnected with family and friends. While others attended sessions on how to ward off attacks on campus, I let my mother slaughter me at cribbage.

The first week of September may brim with bustle for on-campus students, but it was a relaxing week for this off-campus learner. Even the annoyance of a missed bus connection on Sunday's return trip didn't rattle me. As I languished in the Toronto bus terminal for over four hours waiting for a vacant seat on a later bus heading home—or at least in that general direction—I watched the tense faces of similarly stranded students as they tried to get back early enough to get a decent night's sleep before the first day of classes. Like them, I wasn't thrilled to arrive in Ottawa in the wee hours of Monday morning; unlike them, I'm not obliged to show up for any classes.

With five AU courses successfully completed, I have confidence in my study schedule. I know when and how much I need to work, and when I can chill. I may stress about essays and exams, but I faced the first week of a new school year with calm.

So AU, you want to know how it's going so far? Just fine, thanks. See you online tomorrow.

*Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU student. She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario*



## Music Review

### Sultans of String

Samantha Stevens



**Album:** *Symphony!*

**Artist:** Sultans of String

After their launch seven years ago, Sultans of String continue to bring their entrancing and rhythmic instrumental sound to audiences across North America and around the world. The band has won many awards, including two Canadian Folk Music Awards, first place in the International Song Writing Competition, and even a Juno nomination. *Symphony!* is the band's fourth album, and this time they combined their masterful rhythm and international sound with a full symphony orchestra. Accompanied by special guests Paddy Moloney of The Chieftans, Dala, Bassam Bishara, and James Hill, *Symphony!* has something for everyone.

Band leader and six string violinist Chris McKhool is joined by guitarists Kevin Laliberté and Eddie Paton, bass master Drew Birston, and Cuban master percussionists Chendy Leon and Alberto Suarez. Together, the Sultans of String have created a sound that captures the common voice found within music and demonstrate how music can bring people together.

Often compared to bands like Gipsy Kings and The Irish Rovers, Sultans of String blend Spanish Flamenco, Middle Eastern Folk, Cuban rhythms, and French Manouche Gypsy-jazz to create one of a kind music. By adding a full orchestra to add a sense of fullness to the sound the songs expand from simple rhythmic melodies to epic masterpieces. The music is dramatic, exciting, and, for those not typically not a fan of instrumental music, *Symphony!* is anything but ordinary.

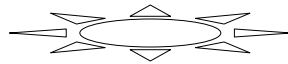
Each song is distinctively different. The album begins with the track "Monti's Revenge." Quickly the listener will recognize that the musicians are telling a story with their music. The sound is theatrical, and, with a touch of imagination, a tale blooms forth from the music. The orchestra sets the stage and the masterful musicians bring the characters to life. The song is exhilarating and fun, but "Monti's Revenge" is only the beginning of this astonishing album.

Need an escape to a warm and tropical land? The song "Palmas Sinfonia" combines flamenco with a dash of rhythm that will make you feel like you're dancing on a sandy beach in some exotic location. In fact, *Symphony!* has a style of music for every taste. From songs like "Road to Kfarmiski" that will take you away to an ancient land, to "A Place to Call Home" which is imbued with an earthy harmony and a relaxed elegance that can be found in every home.

Sultans of String even venture to capture the music found outside of the human experience with the song "Luna." Inspired by a killer whale and the legend that surrounds her, "Luna" incorporates the emotional violin and superb orchestra with the soul-stirring sounds of the killer whale.

*Symphony!* is a superb album that captures the essence of diversity found throughout the world, and by using music, Sultans of String bring together that diversity in an epic auditory celebration. This album is perfect for any occasion, whether studying, relaxing, or just as background music during a evening meal. *Symphony!* just needs to be heard, enjoyed, and shared with others.

*Samantha Stevens is an aspiring writer who loves combining her love for literature with photography, painting, music, and all creative pursuits.*



## Writer's Toolbox

### I'm Talkin' to You

Christina M. Frey



Have you ever, during the course of a conversation, used the name of the person (or object!) you were speaking to? That's a noun of direct address.

Chances are you gave it very little thought, and that's perfectly normal. But if you tried to put it in writing—especially if you were writing dialogue—you might have struggled with punctuation. In this mini-series we'll look at using nouns of direct address: where to put commas and whether to capitalize.

### Save Grandma's Life!

The general rule is easy: **set off direct address nouns with a comma (or a pair of commas, if it's in the middle of the sentence)**. You do this because the noun of direct address is separate from the sentence—and because it avoids confusion.

The *Let's eat, Grandma! / Let's eat Grandma!* meme is a great illustration of what can happen when you don't follow the general rule. *Grandma* is a noun of direct address, and if you don't set it off with a comma, it becomes the object of the verb *eat* (and the butt of many jokes).

### Beginning or End

The general rule applies whether the direct address noun is at the beginning of the sentence:

*Example A: Sarah, what's the matter?*

...or at the end:

*Example B: We really need to talk about this, John.*

...or somewhere in the middle:

*Example C: I think, Sarah, that you're reading too much into it.*

### Not Just Names

Note that direct address nouns don't need to be proper nouns, like *Sarah*; if you're using a common noun to directly address someone or something, treat it like the direct address examples above.

*Example D: I'm telling you, ma'am, I wasn't involved.*

*Example E: Students, please open your textbooks to chapter 12.*

And noun phrases—a noun with modifiers like adjectives—are also set off by commas, if they're used in direct address.

*Example F: Damn you, you worthless, overpriced printer!* Here the sentence—noun and verb—is "Damn you"; "you worthless, overpriced printer" is set off with commas because you're directly addressing the overpriced printer that has broken yet again.

That's it for the general rule, and it's easy to remember if you think about saving Grandma. Next week we'll cover the general rule in a little more depth, including things you may need to watch out for. Then we'll move on to capitalization in direct address. We'll end here with a final example:

*Example G: If you still have questions about direct address, dear reader, then come back and visit next week.*

*Christina M. Frey is a book editor, literary coach, and lover of great writing. For more tips and techniques for your toolbox, follow her on Twitter (@turntopage2) or visit her [blog](#).*

### Click of the Wrist

### Taking It Back

**Great thinkers and writers have been known for the disaster zones in which they worked—or at least, that's what we like to tell ourselves. But if your desk is such a mess that you don't have any room to work, it's time to tackle it before it destroys your productivity. Designate a few hours to ransack your workspace and pare down the clutter before the semester really gets into full swing.**

#### Ask Tough Questions

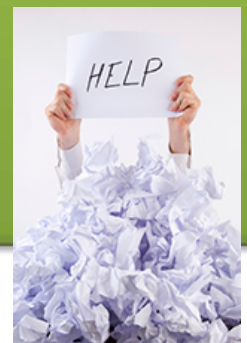
Do you really need this? Is it useful? Will you use it in the next week? Asking questions—and making yourself answer them truthfully—is the first step in reclaiming your work area.

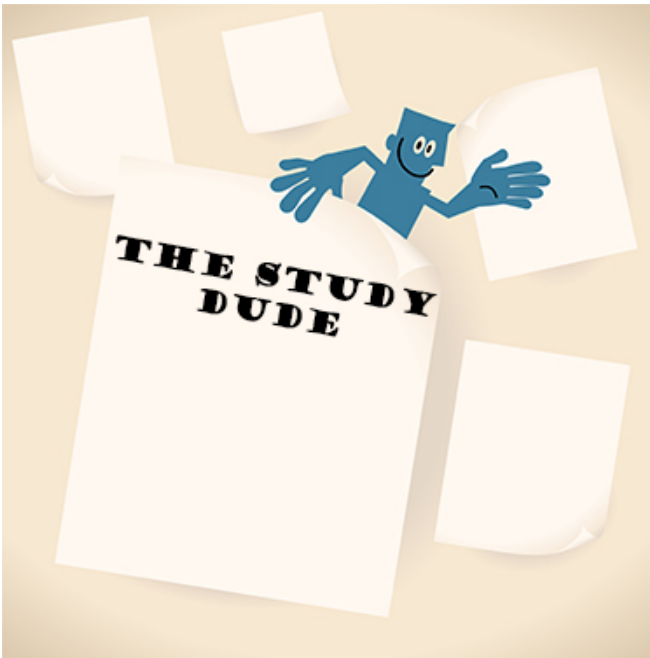
#### Change Your Point of View

If you know things are a mess but can't quite determine the source of the problem, these tips may inspire you to look at your workspace through a different lens—literally. According to the article, videotaping your workspace and watching the result can be a true eye-opener.

#### Paper Problems

If paper is your main issue, these strategies will help you determine what you need to keep, what you can scan and toss, and what you should shred. For tips on organizing your paper files, be sure to read the rest of this four-part series (the links are at the end of the article).





## Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

*There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants than for you to be able to name every bone in your body, master the rules of mnemonics in medicine, and consider becoming a nurse or doctor.*

*Well, in these articles, as The Study Dude, I'll try to give you the study tips you need to help make your learning easier. I'll also give you straight and honest opinions and personal anecdotes—even the embarrassing ones that you wouldn't ever dare read about from any other study tip guru.*

Today's study tips are based a reading of the book *Mnemonics and Study Tips for Medical Students: Two Zebras Borrowed My Car!* by Khalid Khan.

### General Guidelines and Example for Making Mnemonics

In the August 15, 2014th edition of The Voice Magazine, The Study Dude revealed a brand new world of mnemonics for upping your grades the fun way. This article builds on it with a new mnemonic number system and some interesting strategies for making mnemonics fun.

Khalid Khan's book is filled with memorable, but, at many times, rather vulgar mnemonics for medicine. While wild and positive mnemonics are most preferable, here is an example for remembering the causes of gum hypertrophy. Khan (2008) uses the following mnemonic: "Look! Funny Crowns!" where "look" stands for Leukaemia, "funny" stands for phenytoin, and crowns stands for Crohn's or Ciclosporin.

While the application of this particular example may have no bearing in your life whatsoever, it is true that such a system for approaching mnemonics can make your academic life easier.

Here are some of Khalid's (2008) tips for creating mnemonics:

- Involve as many as your senses as possible.
- Make the images bizarre. Make them so bizarre and so far-fetched that if they happened in real life, there is no way you would ever forget them.
- Keep your mnemonics short and simple.
- To avoid making mnemonics that just take the first letter of each word in the list, why not take the first syllable or first few letters of each word and make mnemonics with them, as in the gum hypertrophy example above?
- Implement patterns wherever possible such as "one heart; two lungs" to remember that the beta-2 receptors are on the lungs (two lungs; beta 2 receptors) and the beta-1 receptor is on the heart (one heart; beta 1 receptors).

### Loci: Studying Hard with Mnemonics By Having Fun at Events

In the August 15, 2014th edition of The Voice, The Study Dude's [article](#) on mnemonics talked about the loci of houses or dwellings that could be used for creating memory palaces. In these memory palaces, objects to be remembered would be linked with different objects or fixtures in the various rooms or parts of the home.

The Study Dude wondered if there could be more than just houses to associate concepts with, and Khalid Khan (2008) shows that everything from a fun-sporting event to a favourite movie can be potential loci onto which you can attach your mnemonics. So, you'll never again have to feel guilty for going to the show or that Lady Gaga concert on a Friday school night.

Here are some tips from Khalid Khan (2008) for using events and movies for memorizing your homework:

- Take the various pivotal scenes in your favourite movie and start creating wild and memorable mnemonics at those particular points in the film. For instance, in the film, "The Wizard of Oz," Khalid Khan (2008) makes a table (and advises on making either a table of a mind map) of the major events. In one column he has a listing of a one to three word summary of the event in the movie; in the next column he has the fact you need to learn for your studies; and in the final column, he has the mnemonic that links the scene to what you need to remember. For example, when Dorothy and her dog crash land into Oz, Khan (2008) has "Crash Land" in the first column, the term he needs to remember "Dorsal root ganglion" in the next column, and in the final column, the mnemonic: "Crash on back of (dorsum) of a GANG [ganglion] of munchkins" (p. 167).
- Choose a movie or event that you know really well (that you know almost as well as you know the interior of the house you grew up in, for instance, assuming you want to use the movie or event as an effective loci).
- List all of the most memorable events you know of and remember well, such as your wedding or Lady Gaga's last performance at the awards (we are all closet Lady Gaga fans, aren't we?) These, too, are potential loci.
- Make your chart in chronological or some other memorable order and, most importantly, have fun!

### **Another Mnemonic Number System: Numbers 1 to 12**

In that edition, we covered a number system that had a unique phonetic sound (consonant or consonant combination) associated with each number. You could then link together the consonant sounds, forming words, by adding vowels in between each consonant. So, to make a difficult explanation easy, the number one was associated with the consonant "T" and the number six was associated with the consonant combination "SH" or "CH." The number 16, therefore, could be remembered by linking T with CH by creating the word "TeaCH." This particular number system is best for memorizing strings of numbers, such as the date 1939-09-01 (the presumed start of World War II).

However, in medicine, often times the number system from one to twelve has much significance, as in the case of memorizing what appears to be twelve cranial nerves. Now, The Study Dude isn't an insider to medicine lingo, but the author of the book *Mnemonics and Study Tips for Medical Students*, Khalid Khan, certainly is the medical lingo mastermind.



Khan presents a system where numbers from one to twelve are closely associated with similar sounding objects or actions. Here are the numbers and their associations as taken from Khan's (2008, p. 157) book:

- 1 = run
- 2 = shoe
- 3 = tree
- 4 = door
- 5 = hive
- 6 = stick
- 7 = heaven
- 8 = gate
- 9 = dine (or line)
- 10 = hen
- 11 = level crossing (or leaven)
- 12 = elves

For remembering that the cranial nerve I is associated with olfactory, Khalid Khan (2008) associates the word "olfactory" with an "oil factory" and then imagine an entire oil factory turning into a part human/monster and running through the streets, thereby associating "olfactory" ("oil factory") with cranial nerve one (where one equals to "run").

You can continue to do this system for the entire number of cranial nerves, up to twelve.

You can be sure that mnemonic masters are on the constant lookout for systems to aid in recall of information, and even you (the awesome person you are!) can readily begin creating your own systems. Just make them as bizarre as you possibly can--events that, if they happened in real life, you would never forget in a million years.

So, there's nothing to fear. The Study Dude is determined to make right for you all the wrongs I made in grad school—one A+ at a time.

#### References

Khan, Khalid. (2008). *Mnemonics and study tips for medical students: Two zebras borrowed my car!* Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

### DID YOU KNOW?

### Your 15 Minutes Awaits!



Every AU student has a story, and we want to hear yours! *The Voice Magazine* will be publishing profiles of AU students from across Canada and around the globe. Being at a distance doesn't mean we can't help other students be inspired, and maybe your story is the one that will give somebody else the motivation they need.

If you can spare 15 minutes for a telephone or e-mail interview, contact *The Voice* at [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org). Also, we'll make sure to get you some nifty *Voice* swag just for participating!

## The Mindful Bard

### Money for Nothing

Wanda Waterman

### The Music Video From Birth to Flatlining to Resurrection



**Film:** *Money for Nothing: A History of the Music Video*

**Director:** Jamin Bricker

**Writer:** Saul Austerlitz

**Narrator:** Michael Charles Roman

"I wanted to write my book before the video vanished for good. As it turned out, that ended up not being a concern, because just as the music video appeared to be on the brink of extinction, the Internet took the video under its wing, and rescued it."

- Saul Austerlitz

Those who view this film can't help but lay their own personal timelines over it and judge its veracity according to the point in time at which they themselves came of age during the music video era, which, according to music critic Austerlitz, began as early as the rise of talkies (notably with the screening of *The Jazz Singer*), took off during the late seventies, and continued to be a going concern in pop culture right up until the form devolved into little more than a fixture of the

commercial music industry.

My generation grew up with musicals, the Beatles, the Monkees, and rock operas, all of which formed highlights of our rather dull late-baby-boomer lives, and so we were really excited when the first underground music videos began appearing in artsy cafes. We were soon delighted to see this amazing new art hybrid, so clearly an authentic voice for the post-hippy generation, actually showcased on its own channels—MTV and Muchmusic, its Canadian equivalent. As we watched hundreds of videos during the 80's we slowly went from ecstatic to disappointed, until eventually we hardly watched music videos at all. Some of us eagerly lapped up the reality television shows that replaced the videos on the music channels, but the rest of us figured out it was time to abdicate youth culture.

You may find yourself wishing this documentary followed a more chronological progression; all the jumping back and forth in time is rather dizzying. But the time travel is necessary to explain the development of the music video (or any art form, for that matter), which often takes the form of a vortex—repeating cycles while moving forward—as opposed to a straight line. The documentary is laid out in short modules with titles that introduce new developments in historical sequence and then leap back in time to look at where this new idea first emerged.

Watching the development of the music video is a little like watching the series of technological innovations that went into the development of, say, the computer mouse, except that this is art; even if it's a technology-dependent pop culture art hybrid, a certain amount of artistic inspiration is a prerequisite. This means that even when the technology grows by leaps and bounds (as it did steadily in the videography world for the duration of the music video's history) real artistic achievement depends on bursts of genius that just can't last. These bursts of genius can inspire other artists, but not forever. As Saul Bellow pointed out, today's inspiration eventually becomes tomorrow's intellectual canned goods.

It's really depressing to see how quickly and shamelessly the commercial music world exploited the medium from the get-go. Perhaps, for this reason, one feels uplifted when learning about the few creative geniuses who grabbed the bull by the horns and steered it in a whole new direction. Who used the music video format to create clever clips that were, at the same time, sage critiques of the star-maker machinery to which human creativity was no more than mill grist.

Although the videos promoted artists, the artists they promoted weren't the geniuses who produced the videos. These geniuses were largely unknown except, perhaps, for Spike Jonze and Godley and Crème. And one could argue that these were only famous because they themselves had musical careers and appeared in videos.

The video as a creative medium lost steam in the nineties but was then revived in its commercial aspect around 2004, ripe with sex appeal and mindless hedonism. It sure did look like video was dead, especially when MTV replaced its central position in programming with reality TV. Another nail in the coffin was Red Hot Chili Peppers' "Danny California" a video retrospective of the music video itself, showcasing the form's "stylistic voraciousness" as the narrator puts it. Such retrospectives are signals of demise.

The weakness of the music video was that it was limited by its context— everything that happened in these videos was strictly within the context of pop culture, with only occasional references to the greater world of art, politics, and universal human experience. Its attempt to grant dignity and universality to youthful angst ended up sabotaging itself, thus making it perfect fodder for business interests that wished to exploit it, turning it into nothing more than a piece of advertising for music that some suit wanted to sell you. The history of the video was thus a kind of tug-of-war between independent music producers and the recording industry. When the artists won, videos were low budget, clever, delightful, and significant. When the corporations won, music videos were all about sex, mindless hedonism, and consumer gluttony. The film's title is gloriously apt, based on the famous Dire Straits song that all but bites the hand that feeds the stars of the commercial music industry.

So it's refreshing that when, toward the end of the music video's golden age, Mark Romanek did a video of an aging Johnny Cash singing "hurt", the video rose above youth culture and referred to the human condition. The music video also influenced how films were made, the rapid sequences and innovative techniques winding their way into Hollywood blockbusters, and the animated shorts influencing Disney's animated features. And then, of course, the internet made music videos indispensable, whether they're any good or not; we see videos still around because it seems like you can't play music on TV anymore without having a video with it—that's how visually dependent we've become in the digital age.

*Money for Nothing* manifests six of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing.

- It poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence.
- It stimulates my mind.
- It provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor.
- It's about attainment of the true self.
- It makes me want to be a better artist.
- It makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, making living a unique opportunity.

*Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.*



*Dear Barb*

*Barbara Godin*

## Heavy Studies

**Dear Barb:**

*I read your columns every week, but I haven't read anything about weight issues. I am a female in my early thirties and after having two children, I have gained a lot of weight. I am okay with my weight gain, but I think it is a problem for some of my family members. I have a yearly physical and my blood pressure and test results are in the normal category. At family gatherings some of my cousins tell me about diets and exercise programs that I should look into. How do I get them to stop discussing my weight? I'm sure I'm not the only person in the world that is happy with whom they are, big or small! Looking forward to reading your response.*

**Erica**

Hi Erica:

You are a rare breed, it seems most of the world is dieting and trying to lose weight and it's great that you are happy with who you are. I don't know how overweight you are, but there are health risks associated with too much weight. Perhaps your family members are concerned about your health, however as long as you monitor your health and weight with your doctor, it is no one else's business how much you weigh. The next time someone tries to discuss your weight, thank them for the information, but tell them that you are happy with your weight as it is.

Great question Erica.

**Dear Barb:**

*My twin sister is attending her first year university and is moving into residence. I will be staying at home with my parents and little brother. My parents are spending a fortune on my sister's education, while they do nothing for me. I wasn't ready to go to university and wanted to stay home this year. Now they expect me to get a job and pay for my own clothes and spending money. Why should I have to get a job just because I wanted to take a year off school to hang out with my friends? I don't think this is fair, what do you think?*

**Troubled in Trenton.**

Dear Troubled:

I agree with your parents! You need to get a job! Why would you expect your parents to take care of all your needs while you just lie around the house or hang out with your friends? They are providing food and accommodations for you, so I wouldn't agree with you that your parents do nothing for you. You are old enough to contribute to your care. Welcome to the real world, it's time to grow up and take responsibility for yourself. Perhaps you may want to rethink whether you really need to take a year off school!

Email your questions to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org). Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.



## Comic

Wanda Waterman

# The Nonpartisan in: Negotiating Peace

Negotiating with Hamas is like negotiating with a school of piranhas!

I certainly hope Israel can negotiate some kind of peace with Hamas!



Egad! So you think Israel should just put its foot down?



Are you kidding me? Why don't we just tell the sky to fall on us?!

I suppose you think we should just watch the two sides wipe each other out!



Heck no! If both sides would just listen to the Raëlians, we could all live in peace and experience unbounded progress! AND do mind transfers!

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN





This space is provided free to AUSU: The Voice does not create this content. Contact [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org) with questions or comments about this page.

## Great AU Finds Online

**Counselling Assessments – Am I Ready for studies in ...?**  
Counselling Assessments – A series of review modules to test your skill in a variety of subjects (currently there are assessments for English, math, chemistry, Microsoft Access, and computing science). Use these to determine if you need to brush up on a subject before diving in to a course, or just for fun. Also, Mapping Your Future helps you choose an occupation.

For links, see:

[http://counselling.athabascau.ca/assess\\_yourself.php](http://counselling.athabascau.ca/assess_yourself.php)



### This Week at lynda.com

*lynda.com experts have curated playlists to get you started. With hundreds of lists on a variety of subjects, there is something for everyone. Visit the playlist center for more information and enter the playlist title. This week's featured list:*

### Explore Web Content Writing

As distance and online students here at AU, you are likely doing some web writing on the side. If you are operating a blog, business website, or creating recreational web content then this playlist may be for you. Learn how to maximize your rhetoric to be compatible with search engine algorithms and to be an effective communicator via online and digital platforms. Lynda.com has all sorts of resources for eager learners! What you will learn from this list:

- Business storytelling and article writing
- Writing Fundamentals: The craft of story
- Leading with stories
- SEO fundamentals
- HTML essentials training
- Web semantics

## IMPORTANT DATES

- Sept 10: registration deadline for an Oct 1 start date
- Sept 10: ausu council meeting
- Sept 30: extension deadline for Oct 31 contract dates.
- Oct 10: registration deadline for an Nov 1 start date
- Oct 13: Thanksgiving: AU closed
- Oct 31: extension deadline for Nov 30 contract dates.

Courses: 7  
Duration: 14h 25m  
Skill Level: Beginner

***Have you signed up for lynda? It's free for AUSU members. To learn more, check out [ausu.org/services/lynda.php](http://ausu.org/services/lynda.php)***

## Featured AUSU Member Service

### Smart Draw

AUSU has partnered with Smart Draw to provide members with their award winning business graphics software. This is a \$297 package is free for one year, only for AUSU members.

Smart draw allows users to create a wide range of charts, diagrams and other business graphics that can be dropped in to Microsoft Word or Excel files. This makes it easy for students to include professional diagrams in their assignments for AU classes.

To get more info on how to get this software for free, visit AUSU's website at [ausu.org/services/smartdraw.php](http://ausu.org/services/smartdraw.php)

Note: SmartDraw CI is the latest version. If you are upgrading an earlier version, email us for instructions.

## AUSU Featured Groups & Clubs

Group Name: **Athabasca University**

Where: **Facebook**

Members: 1211

About: Members are all types of students taking all types of AU courses. The members of the group seem to support, encourage, and give advice to each other on course content, study tips, and other AU topics.

Activity: multiple posts daily with lots of replies and discussion

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# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) for more information.

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## THE VOICE

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