Instructor Guide – Memory Aid

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What is a Memory Aid Accommodation?

Harrison, A. G., Holmes, A., & Pollock, B. (2021). Memory aids as a disability-related accommodation? Let's remember to recommend them appropriately. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, *36*(3), 255-272.

A memory aid is an accommodation designed to support the **retrieval of information that has already been learned and stored in long-term memory.** It provides cues that trigger recall of existing knowledge; it is not intended to teach, explain, or provide information that the student does not already know. A memory aid is **not** a substitute for studying and cannot replace learning the course material. Its purpose is to support access to information that has already been learned but may be difficult to retrieve independently.

Memory aids may be approved for students with documented disability-related barriers to retrieving information from memory. This accommodation helps provide equitable access to demonstrate knowledge by reducing barriers to recall during assessments, while maintaining the integrity of the assessment and the learning outcome being evaluated.

Memory aids are not "cheat sheets" or reference sheets. Appropriate memory aids contain personalized cues, such as acronyms, mnemonics, symbols, brief phrases, diagrams, or other prompts that trigger recall. These cues should be meaningful primarily to the student who created it; another person should not be able to use the memory aid to learn or understand the course content. Memory aids do not contain definitions, detailed explanations, worked examples, lists of answers, formulas expected to be memorized, or step-by-step procedures.

It is important to note that the student must have already studied, learned, and understood the course content for a memory aid to be useful. The memory aid does not teach new material or provide information that has not already been learned. Instead, it serves as a reminder that helps the student access knowledge they already have. If a student could use the memory aid to learn the material for the first time during an assessment, then the aid contains too much information and is no longer functioning as a memory aid.

For What Reasons Would a Memory Aid be Provided as an Accommodation?

A memory aid may be considered when a documented disability creates a significant barrier to independently retrieving information from long-term memory that the student has already learned.

A memory aid may be appropriate when there is evidence that the student:

- Has learned and understands the material
- Can demonstrate their knowledge when provided with appropriate cues
- Experiences significant difficulty with independent retrieval due to a documented disability
- Can use the memory aid without changing what the assessment is intended to measure

A memory aid is not approved as an academic accommodation when difficulties are primarily related to:

- Poor study habits
- Incomplete learning of material
- Ineffective study strategies
- Lack of preparation

The purpose of a memory aid is to support access to already-learned information, not to compensate for difficulties with learning, studying, or preparation.

Suggested Memory Aid Parameters:

When discussing the use of a memory aid with a student, you will agree upon the parameters of the memory aid. Common suggested parameters include:

- 1 page (8.5 x 11)
- Single sided
- Handwritten
- If typed is allowed: size 12 font

*If an enlarged copy is needed, it must still fit within the agreed upon guidelines when at the standard size.

Roles and Responsibilities

Student Accessibility and Achievement (SAA)

- Reviews disability documentation and functional limitations
- Determines whether a memory aid is an appropriate accommodation
- Gathers evidence to support the accommodation
- Provides guidance on the development and use of a memory aid with a Learner Support Specialist
- Prints approved memory aid ahead of each assessment

Instructor

- Within two weeks of the Reasonable Consideration Request being sent, the student will contact their instructor to schedule a time to meet and discuss memory aid expectations and timeline. A template is provided here to guide the conversation: **Memory Aid - Reasonable Consideration Request Template**
- Identify the knowledge, skills, and learning outcomes being assessed
- Determine whether the memory aid can be used while preserving the intended learning outcomes, including any requirements related to independent recall.
    - If not, the use of a memory aid can be rejected for this assessment, or the revision or removal of specific content may be requested.
- When a memory request approval is received via Teams or email (from SAA Automation), the instructor will view the student's submitted memory aid to ensure it aligns with the agreed-upon parameters and does not compromise the integrity of the assessment (e.g. by including answers, solutions, procedures, formulas, etc.)
- Evaluate whether the submitted memory aid maintains the integrity and validity of the assessment, and supports, rather than alters, the learning outcomes being measured.
- Reply to the memory aid approval request:
    - Approve the memory aid as submitted
    - Reject and request revisions by providing clear feedback in the comments section
    - Reject the use of a memory aid for the assessment and explain in the comment section
    - Reassign the request to the appropriate reviewer.
- If revisions are required, the student will re-submit their memory aid for final review.
- Once a memory aid is approved, no further action is required by the instructor. Student Accessibility and Achievement will receive notification of the approval and will provide the approved memory aid to the student on the day of the assessment.

Student

- Review and confirm their accommodations at the start of each semester, selecting the RCR: Memory Aid accommodation in each class where a memory aid may be needed.
- Within two weeks of the Reasonable Consideration Request being sent contact instructor to discuss the potential use of a memory aid.

- Participate in discussions with the instructor regarding assessment-specific expectations for the memory aid, including permitted content, format, length, and submission timelines.
- Continue to learn and study course material and prepare for the assessments as expected.
- Can meet with a Learner Support Specialist who provides guidance on the development and use of a memory aid.
- Create a memory aid that complies with the approved parameters and memory aid guidelines.
- Submit the memory aid through Student Accessibility and Achievement Memory Aid Submission (Exams) form at least 7 days before the assessment.
- Once the instructor reviews the submission, the student will receive an email/Team notification from "SAA Automate" indicating that:
    - The memory aid has been approved as submitted
    - Rejected with revisions requested clearly in the comment section
    - Rejected: use of the memory aid is rejected with clear explanation in the comment section.
- If revisions are requested, the student will review and incorporate instructor feedback and resubmit the memory aid through the email link at least 3 days before the assessment.
    - Late submissions may not be reviewed in time for the assessment – students must make sure to follow the established deadlines.
- Once the instructor replies to the request, the student will receive an email indicating that the memory aid has been approved or rejected.
- Use only the final approved memory aid provided by Student Accessibility and Achievement on the day of the exam.

Difference Between Submitted and Approved Memory Aids

Submitted Memory Aid

A submitted memory aid is the draft provided by the student to the instructor for review before the assessment.

- It has not yet been reviewed or approved by the instructor, and as such cannot be used during your exam
- It will be evaluated by the instructor to determine whether it is appropriate for the assessment
- May require revisions before it can be used during an assessment

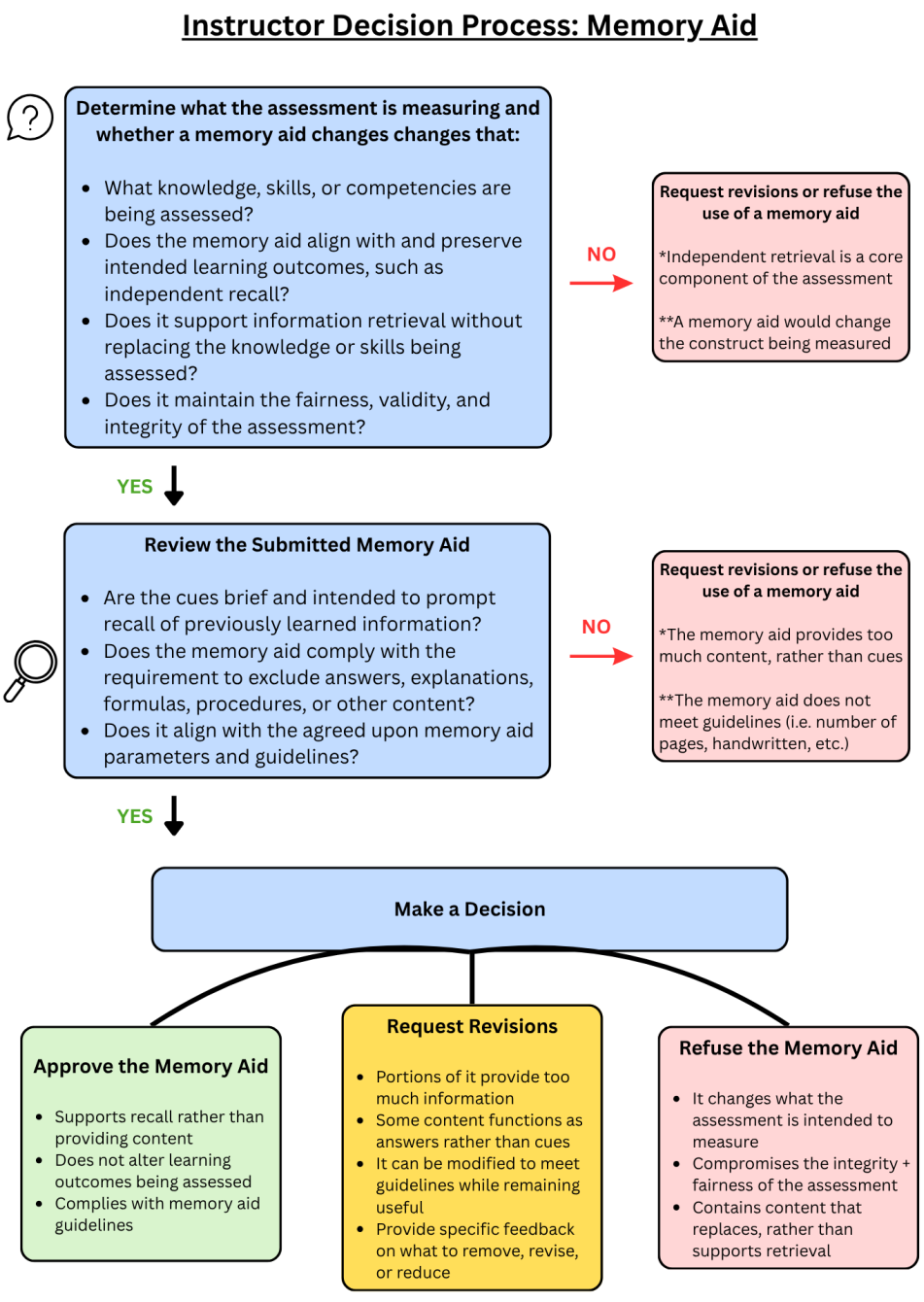
Approved Memory Aid

An approved memory aid is the version that has been reviewed and authorized by the instructor for use during the assessment.

- It meets memory aid guidelines and course requirements
- It supports access to retrieving learned material without changing the learning outcomes or instruction construct
- Includes any required revisions identified by the instructor during the review process
- It is the only version that can be used during the assessment

*Students are advised that: Submitting a memory aid does not mean it is automatically approved. Only the final approved version shared directly with the SAA Exam Team by your instructor can be used during the assessment.

Instructor Decision Process



Examples



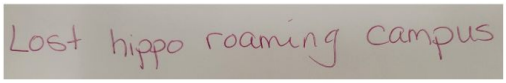
Mnemonic for the core symptoms of Generalize Anxiety Disorder

- **W**orry
- **A**nxiety
- **T**ension
- **C**oncentration
- **H**yperarousal
- **E**nergy loss
- **R**estlessness
- **S**leep disturbances



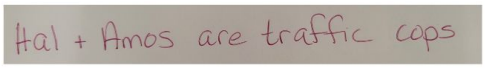
Mnemonic for the core symptoms of Antisocial Personality Disorder

- **C**annot conform to the law
- **O**bligations ignored
- **R**eckless disregard
- **R**emorseless
- **U**nderhanded
- **P**lanning insufficient
- **T**emper



Cue phrase for the role of the Hippocampus

- Responsible for navigation (lost)
- Converting short-term to long-term memory (roaming and can't remember where to go)



Cue phrase for role of the Thalamus

- Traffic cops directing cars to the correct route
- The thalamus directs incoming sensory messages (except smell)



Image representing the role of RODS in vision

- Fishing with a Rod at night
- Responsible for vision in low-light



Image representing the role of CONES in vision

- Colorful ice cream cone on a summer day
- Responsible for color vision/acuity in daylight