

Unit 5 Video: House of Cards

Nelson Dellis:

My name is Nelson Dellis, and I'm the 2011 USA Memory Champion.

To sum up, basically what I do to memorize a deck of cards in simple steps, the first is I code each card in a deck to someone familiar, with an associated action, and an associated object.

The next step is I group three cards at a time. The first card is always a person, the second card is an action, and the third card is an object. So I basically make this little story of a person doing something with an object. So it's kind of like the game Clue, almost. I'm making this, you know, who did what with what.

The next step is I place that image around [a] familiar mental map in my mind.

So at the 2011 USA Memory Championship, the particular deck of cards that I memorized, I could still remember. I decided to choose my girlfriend's apartment. So if you walk to the first room, you can see the first three cards grouped together, which is a horse running around with Harry Potter's wand. To me, that translates to five of diamonds, that's the horse; running around is eight of spades; and then the four of clubs is Harry Potter, but his object is a wand.

OK, so if we walk around the corner from the bathroom, we're in kind of this hallway area, and there's my ex-girlfriend swallowing a sword. Ace of clubs is my ex-girlfriend; queen of spades is the action of swallowing something; and seven of diamonds is a sword.

Through the balcony, through the bedroom, and then to the bathroom, we have Arnold Schwarzenegger dancing with a car. So Arnold Schwarzenegger is ace of spades; dancing, the action of dancing, is queen of clubs; and the car is nine of spades.

And then, if we go down outside into the lobby, you'll see my former boss dropping a Rubik's Cube. The seven of hearts is, is her. Two of spades is Britney Spears, and her action is always saying "Oops, I did it again," like in her song—to me that's dropping something. Ace of diamonds is me, and I'm a big fan of doing the Rubik's Cube, so my object is the Rubik's Cube.