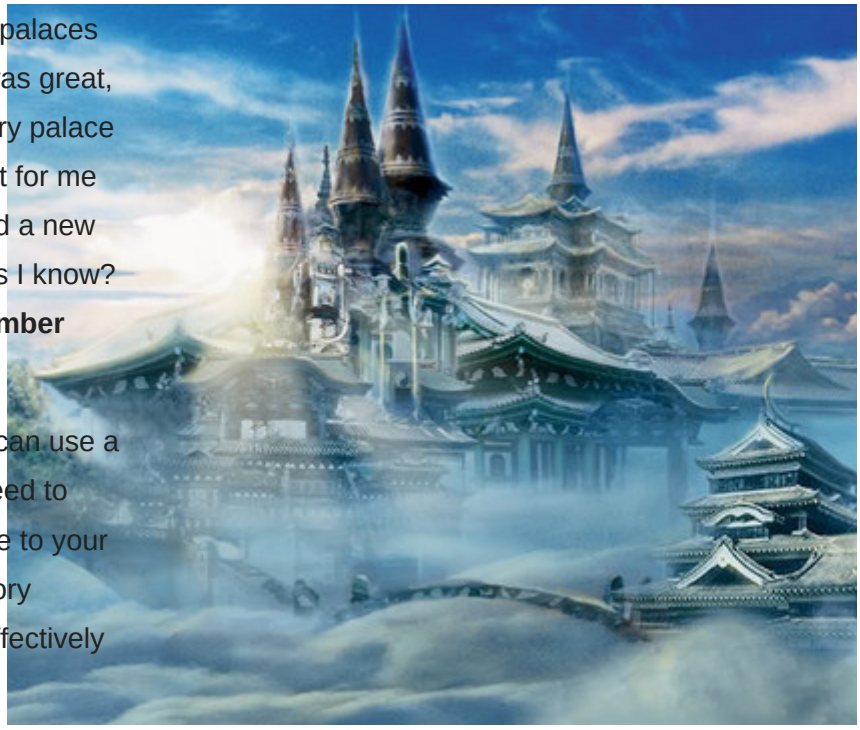
How To Build an Infinite Memory Palace

By Roger Keays, 18 January 2015



I started some time ago using memory palaces to remember the music that I learn. It was great, I could think of a song, go to the memory palace for that song and have it all mapped out for me ready to perform. But soon I found I had a new problem - how to remember what songs I know? Or more generally - **how do you remember what you can remember?**

Well, as you might have guessed, you can use a memory palace for that too. You just need to connect each location in the new palace to your other ones. You can embed your memory palaces in this way ad finitum so you effectively have one **infinite memory palace**.

To embed a memory palace I found the easiest way was to add a '**descent**' option at each location so that when I visit a location I can choose to pass over to the next location or descend into the embedded memory palace. Other people using similar techniques have used portals or doorways for the same thing, however I found that associating a definite direction (down) made it easier to remember and also easier to go backwards (up).

The descent path needs to be **mnemonically linked to the destination** memory palace or you will forget where it goes. For example, my memory palace for 'Comptine de un Autre Ete' from Amelie is along the Siene river in Paris. To get there I descend through a letterbox full of letters from Paris. Sounds ridiculous, but it works. Plus I just need to look at that letterbox and I feel like I'm in France.

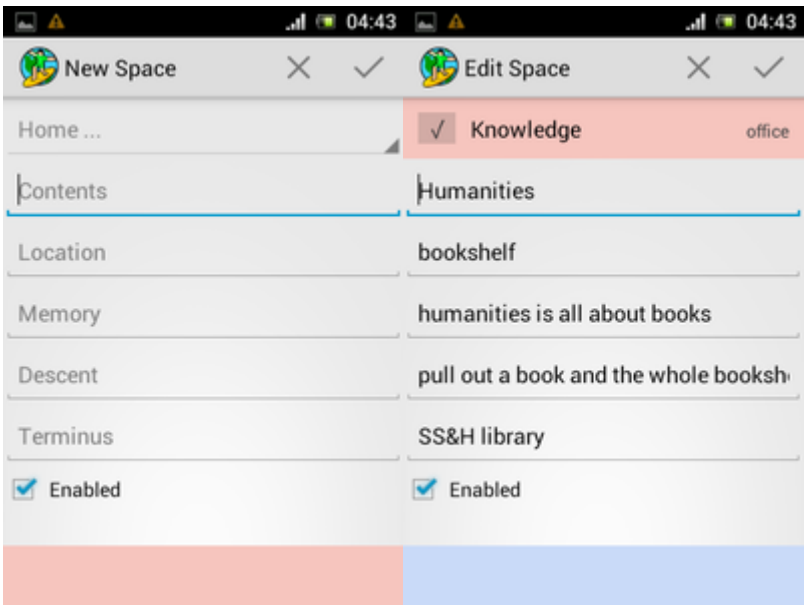
It's also kind of fun traversing your memory palace like this.

Here's a more complete example from my Psychology study which also shows how you can memorize your mindmap using an infinite memory palace.

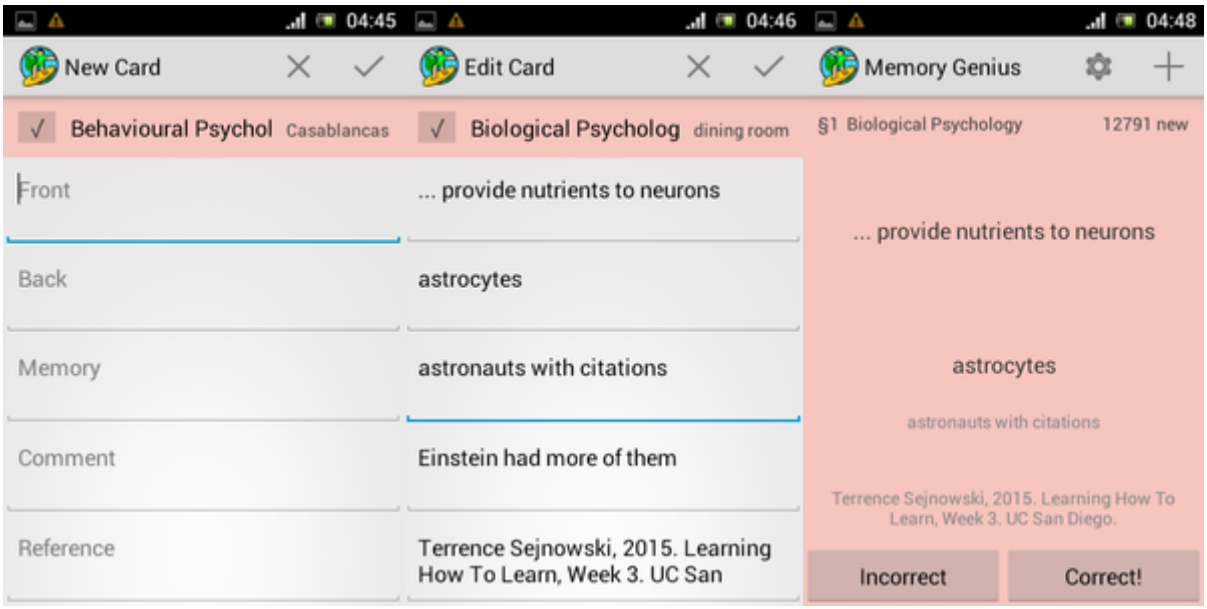
I have a memory palace for the 16 Basic Human Motives from the Reiss profile. In my mind map this information goes under Home > Humanities > Psychology > Behavioural Psychology > Motivation. Here is how I use my memory palace to get there.

I start at my office, walk past my art desk (People), past the window (Processes), past my desktop PC running Google Earth (World) and up to my bookshelf (Humanities). When I take a book from the bookshelf the floor and bookshelf and floor descends into the elevator in the SS&H library at UQ (Psychology). If I continued in this memory palace I would get to the journals (History), but I want to descend again so I take the elevator down one floor. It arrives in the kitchen of my ex-girlfriend's house (History of Psychology). I walk through the dining room (Biological Psychology) and across the hall to the laundry (Cognitive Psychology) then hop down then stairs on one foot (Behavioural Psychology). Now I want to descend and I see the letter 'W' is scrawled in white chalk on the wall. I smash through the wall and it leads down to the basement of Casablanca's salsa club where there is a girl crying because she broke a heel (Emotions). I ignore her and walk up to the pool table (Motivation). The surface of the pool table is covered with a picture of a Sri Lankan guy surfing, which reminds me that if I descend down the ladder under the pool table I will get to my hotel in Weligama which is the memory palace for the Reiss Profile.

Of course, I already knew the memory palace I wanted was in Weligama. The traversal is just a way to explore my memory.



The screenshots are from an app that I built to keep track of all this and test my memory. It also does spaced-repetition flashcards. You basically deposit your flashcards in your memory palace / mind-map and can review them as you navigate your memory.



I haven't released this app on the market yet but if there is demand for it I might be motivated to release it sooner.

About Roger Keays

Roger Keays is an artist, an engineer, and a student of life. He has no fixed addressand has leftfootprints on 40-something different countries around the world. Roger is addicted to surfing. His other interests are music, psychology, languages, the proper use of semicolons, and finding good food.

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