

Eighty-six bits of memory magic

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How many random bits do you think you can learn in 5 minutes? How many could your grandmother learn? How about an eight year old? Whatever your answers, I'll wager that they were way too pessimistic. I will devote my allotted time to demonstrating that most literate people of sound mind can learn and remember a random 26 digit function in less than five minutes. That works out to 86 bits, or 1 bit every 3-1/2 seconds. In particular, the entire audience of the talk should have learned and be able to recall a random mapping from the 26 letters of the alphabet to the digits 0...9, with time to spare. If you're skeptical, come and see. Remembering is believing!