

**SECTION MENU**

Posted by [Melanie Hinton](#) on May 7, 2017

By Brent Sverdloff

A tourist once stopped me on the streets of Greenwich Village. "Excuse me," he asked. "Do you know where Bleecker Street is?" I'd been waiting a long time for this question.

Why? Because years earlier, my prankster friend Tim had fed me the funniest answer: "It's between Bleeck and Bleeckest."

The lost traveler turned out to be French and didn't know much English, so the pun was lost on him. I gave him proper directions and sent him on his way.

If New York City did have a succession of roads named Bleeck, Bleecker, and Bleeckest, it would be a snap to remember their order as easily as the numbered avenues and streets.

But what if you're taking a group tour into a new city—or there is a particular city in which you struggle to remember street names—and want to master the order of streets that don't fit a predictable pattern?

Many people know that New York City's north/south-running avenues are named for ordinal numbers: First Avenue, Second Avenue, etc. Between Third and Fifth, however, there are three nonconforming ones: Madison, Park, and Lexington.

To remember them, visualize the word "maple"; it stands for the initial letters of **M**adison, **P**ark, and **L**exington, which is their order from west to east. To put it in context, conjure up an image



(and aroma) of a river of maple syrup running down the middle of Manhattan.

Boston is a city that builds a memory device into its Back Bay grid. The streets are named alphabetically from east to west: Arlington, Berkeley, Clarendon, Dartmouth, etc. Granted, you have to learn them, but knowing the first letter invariably triggers the rest of the word.

A century ago, school children in Southern California learned the order of downtown Los Angeles street names with this ditty:

Los Angeles' Main Spring crop is Broad Hills of Olives with the Grand Hope of Flowers and Figs.
(Los Angeles-Main-Spring-Broad-Hill-Olive-Grand-Hope-Flower-Figueroa)

So, when street names are consecutively numbered, conform to an alphabetical pattern, or lend themselves to a memorable phrase, you've got it made. But how can you tackle other randomly named streets?

Take a look at these San Francisco street names that run east from the city's Presidio:

Lyon
Baker
Broderick
Divisadero
Scott
Pierce
Steiner

First, make these abstract words concrete. If the name corresponds to something literal, regardless of spelling, you are in good shape: a lion, a baker, the actor (Matthew) Broderick, etc. Otherwise, hone in on part of the word—Steiner could be a (beer) stein. Then, crank up your imagination to link them together.

Imagine a **lion**. Make him extreme in some way—cartoonish, aggressive, funny—so that you involve more senses, like sight, sound, touch, and smell. Now, have the lion don a chef's hat and become a **baker**. Make the image as vivid as possible. Next, see him joined in the kitchen by Matthew **Broderick**. Together they **divide** (for Divisadero) all the laid-out dough into hundreds of pieces. The pieces coalesce into tartan-clad **Scottish** bagpipers (for Scott) who pop to life and begin playing very loudly. See them hoist their bagpipes and **pierce** a charging brigade of beer **steins** (Steiner) that come at them furiously.

Silly? No question. Memorable? Absolutely! Try it with streets on your tours or in your own hometown. Connect each name in a visual sequence, one at a time. Review it a few times and

discover how effective this system can be ... because you won't find Steiner between Stein and Steinest.



Brent Sverdloff is an author, memorization coach, and 2017 Marketplace speaker. Learn more about his work at www.flexyourmemory.com.

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