

*Classical  
Conversations*  
FOUNDATIONS

*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily,  
as to the Lord, and not unto men;  
knowing that of the Lord ye shall  
receive the reward of the inheritance: for  
ye serve the Lord Christ.*

—Colossians 3:23–24



MEMORY MASTER GUIDE



# MEMORY MASTER OVERVIEW

## *Who is a Classical Conversations Memory Master?*

A Classical Conversations Memory Master is a child registered in a Classical Conversations Foundations community who has memorized 100% of the current year's memory work as found in the Classical Conversations *Foundations Guide*; recited 100% of that information to one of his or her parents, another adult, and a tutor; and completed a spot check by his or her Foundations director.

## *What is the purpose of Memory Master?*

The purpose of Memory Master is to encourage and reward demonstrations of excellence in subject memorization and recitation, which are two skills that will serve students well along their educational journey.

## *Who is a good candidate for Memory Master?*

Any student who can show ownership of the memory work, practice it regularly at home, and participate well in class is a good candidate. These are typically the Journeymen or Master students, although younger students may also test and have done so successfully. Parents who choose to attempt Memory Master with younger children (under 4th grade) may want to consider that their child would have the opportunity to be a Memory Master of the same cycle more than once. Repetition is certainly part of a classical education, and being Memory Master of the same cycle twice is great; however, you should also consider that when students come around to a cycle they have already “mastered,” they might feel bored or uninterested. Not every family will be interested in Memory Master testing, and that is fine. It is a big undertaking for anyone!

## *When and how does the Memory Master process start?*

Directors should educate their communities about the Memory Master process from the beginning of the year so that proper planning and study can take place and so that parents and tutors can begin to prepare themselves for this responsibility and time commitment. Often a director will have a meeting to discuss the commitment and the process that Memory Master requires. Once the parents and the student have made a firm decision to work toward the goal of Memory Master, they should inform the director, usually early in the second semester.

## *What is the “commitment” to Memory Master?*

The commitment to Memory Master is a little different for each child. It is a time-consuming process, and it is recommended that families do not enter into this process half-heartedly. Parents should encourage older Foundations students to “own” their memory work and to practice it daily. Students cannot “cram” in the memory work two weeks before proofing and expect to gain true mastery of the material. If a student masters each week's memory work along the way, then the Memory Master process is much easier. The younger the child, the more time and energy mom or dad will need to invest. The proofing process is intense, with the child usually repeating the entire body of information in one sitting. This can be stressful for many children and needs to be considered when you are making the decision to begin the Memory Master process. A student who begins the Memory Master process can decide at any time to stop, and this is fine. He or she should just let the director know. The child's age and his or her level of comfort with this kind of testing should be seriously considered. Memory Master is not for everyone, and parents of children who do not participate in the Memory Master process can still expect mastery of some subjects and reward their children at home.



# THE PROOFING PROCESS

The proofing process provides your student with a great opportunity to practice the skills of reciting information within a safe, Christ-honoring environment. As parents, be careful not to become too focused on the title of “Memory Master.” The title should be secondary to recognizing the student’s discipline and hard work as he or she participates in the overall proofing process.

## *What is the proofing process like?*

Having multiple proofs enables a student candidate to become comfortable reciting information to a variety of people and gives the student and parent good feedback on the student’s strengths and weaknesses. During the proofing process, the student recites 100% of the memory work to his or her teacher (mom or dad) and to a second adult, who can be the student’s other parent or another Classical Conversations parent who knows the material. The third proof is with the child’s tutor. The last proof of the Memory Master process is the final proof with the Foundations director. The final proof will cover about 25% of the memory work and will be randomly chosen by the director.

## *How do I start the proofing process?*

First, make sure that your director knows that your child is going to attempt the Memory Master process. Second, copy the correct cycle’s Memory Master Proof Sheets from the appendix of the *Foundations Guide*. Children attempting the Memory Master process should fill these pages out as they move from proof to proof, and they should bring the pages to their director for the final proof.

## *What and when is the first proof?*

After much study and practice, the first proof is between the student and his or her teacher (a parent). The parent will use the prompts from the proof sheets and will ask every piece of information for each subject. Record the student’s results on the proof sheets. Students should begin proofing in earnest with a parent sometime around Week 21 or 22. This means that a student will need to work ahead and study the memory work for Weeks 23 and 24. In the first proof, the student should have no more than three mistakes per subject. (This gives some room for those last two weeks of new material.) This first proof will reveal if the student is a good candidate for the Memory Master process. Don’t rush through this process. The student should be fluent and able to recite the memory work with confidence.

## *What and when is the second proof?*

The second proof is administered by a second adult near Week 22 or 23. The adult can be the other parent, a family member, or another Classical Conversations parent. It is much easier for another Classical Conversations parent to proof a Memory Master candidate because he or she will be familiar with the memory work, especially the geography! Also consider asking an adult with whom your child will feel comfortable and who will be honest with you about whether or not your child should continue this process. Have the second adult proof every piece of information, paying particular attention to those areas of weakness in the first proof. Record the student’s proof results on the same proof sheets used by the parent for the first proof. In the second proof, the student should have no more than one mistake per subject, and he or she should be able to confidently and successfully recite his or her memory work to the second adult. At this point the student should be able to recite the entire body of memory work in less than three hours, usually about two hours or less. If the student is struggling or is stressed during this process, consider having some kind of special recognition for that student’s hard work and achievement at home.



### ***What is the tutor proof?***

The third and last time the student will recite 100% of the memory work is the tutor proof. The student's tutor will proof the student on all facts in all subjects, across all twenty-four weeks. The tutor and the student should be able to move through the proof sheets easily. If that is not the case, the tutor will recommend that the student try again next year and will not advance the student to the director. It is very important for parents and tutors to recognize the importance of the tutor proof. It is the tutor's primary responsibility during the Memory Master process to be confident that the student has mastered 100% of the information. A tutor must be confident in the student's accurate and fluid recitation of the memory work before passing the student to the director. At the same time the tutor also must be full of grace: if a student stumbles, gets upset, or gets mixed up, give them a little break to regroup, or even start again in a little while. Once their nerves are calm, a student who knows the memory work will be able to recite it with ease. The goal of Memory Master is mastery, not perfection. Mastery is not always flawless!

### ***Who should proof with the tutor?***

A student who has two proofs completed on his or her proof sheets—one with a parent and one with a second adult, who can be the other parent—is ready for the tutor proof.

If the first qualification has been met, the student's tutor should review the student's proof sheets to get a feel for how the student has proofed thus far:

First Proof: Student has no more than three X's (missed facts per subject)

Second Proof: Student has no more than one X per subject

### ***Why is the tutor performing the third proof?***

The tutor has established a relationship with the student and has a good feel for that student's true ability. Therefore, it is important that the tutors are part of the Memory Master testing process. Because of that unique relationship, shy or less confident students may feel more at ease in testing with their own tutor. If there is a time conflict or other extenuating circumstances, a student can perform the tutor proof with another designated community member approved by the director.

### ***When is the tutor proof?***

The tutor proof takes place on or between Week 23 and Week 24. The student is expected to have mastered all of the memory work material, including Week 24's memory work. It is the parent's responsibility to make an appointment with the child's tutor for the third proof. The tutor can proof a student on a community day before class starts, at lunchtime, or in the afternoon. A parent can also make an appointment with the tutor and meet at the tutor's convenience.

### ***How long does it take to proof?***

The first proof will take the longest, and as the student becomes more confident and concise with the memory work, the recitation will go somewhat quicker. Expect about two to two and a half hours in the beginning. By the tutor proof, a child should be able to recite the entire body of material in about an hour and a half. If a child is taking much longer than this, you may need to reconsider the Memory Master process.

### ***How many X's can a student get with the tutor?***

None. The student must recite 100% of the Foundations memory work for the current year's

cycle with 100% accuracy. At this point the student should be comfortable with the proofing process; therefore, the confidence to recite the information to another adult should not be an issue. Since mastery is not always flawless, a student may occasionally have a little hiccup in the memory work recitation. He or she may get something mixed up, or accidentally leave out a term. The tutor can ask for the student to recite the answer again or can come back to the stumbling block later during the proof time. However, a student who has mastered the material will rarely stumble and should be able to get the answer correct. If the student has multiple “hiccups,” then the tutor should talk with the parent and suggest waiting another year for Memory Master. It is vital for the tutor to be confident that the student is ready to be passed to the director round. At this point, if the student is not quite ready, it is better to be candid and encourage them to wait until the next year for Memory Master than for the student to be turned down at the director level.

### ***What does the director proof consist of?***

The director proof is the final step in the Memory Master process. The student, having passed the complete tutor proofing, should be comfortable with the proofing process and should be able to recall any piece of information he or she is asked, effortlessly. The director should have a predetermined sampling of questions from all subjects (approximately 25% of the memory work), on which he or she will spot test the Memory Master candidate. The director should cover the same amount of material with each student, but the content should not be exactly the same for each student. In general, material presented later in a semester is more difficult for students to remember because it tends to be reviewed less. Directors should select content that is a good combination of older and newer memory work and remember that the goal of the final proofing is not to trip students up, but to celebrate their efforts and demonstration of mastery. This part of the test should take no more than about twenty minutes per student and should be a time of affirmation and celebration of the hard work the student has put forth, confirmed and recognized by the director’s quick test.

### ***When does the director proof take place?***

The director proof can take place once the student has completed the tutor proof successfully. Usually, this is on Week 24, or a director can choose to offer the final proof on Week 25, which is one week after Foundations program classes end. Final proofs should not be done any later than Week 25.

### ***Can the student miss any questions in the director proof?***

The student must exhibit mastery of the information. Directors should administer this final proof with grace and common sense, taking the student’s nervous tension and excitement into consideration. Yes, a student may say something wrong, realize their mistake (on their own), and quickly correct it. They don’t have to say every word correct the very first time, but they must be able to answer every question correctly. For more insight, see the document titled “Mastery or Perfection” on the LP Director’s Portal or CC Connected.)



# HOW TO PROOF SUBJECT BY SUBJECT

## *Timeline*

The *Classical Acts & Facts History Cards* timeline should be memorized. The title of each timeline card should be recited in the correct order. The student can sing, chant, or speak the timeline, with or without hand motions. If the student chooses to sing, they may not use any music in the background. The dates, which are on the “Timeline Song” published by Classical Conversations, are not required. Memory Masters should be able to start with the title of the first card and recite every title of every card in order. When the director proofs the student, he or she will ask for a segment of the timeline and the student should be able to pick up from there and continue until asked to stop. The director will only proof a portion of the timeline.

## *History*

The history memory work should be proofed using the prompts that are on the proof sheets, which are the same prompts that are in the weekly memory work in the *Foundations Guide*. The proofer should say, “Tell me about...” and the student should say, sing, or chant the entire history sentence correctly. (Note that the words “Tell me about...” should simply be a prompt to get the student started reciting a certain history sentence, not a request for an overview of the entire history sentence.)

## *Geography*

The blackline master maps (located in the back of *Foundations Guide*, 4th edition; on cycle-specific *Trivium Tables: Geography*; and on the Classical Portal) are required for Memory Master testing. The student will use the “Show and Tell” methods to demonstrate mastery of the geography memory work. All proofers should use a combination of these methods:

- Show Me: The tester will ask the student to “Show me...” and name a location.
- Tell Me: The tester will point to a location on the map and ask the student to tell the name of that location.
- For Cycle 3, state capitals must also be named as each state is located or named.

Students do not need to memorize the list of locations under the geography heading.

The headings are simply a general overview of most (possibly not all) of the geographical locations for a week’s memory work.

## *Latin*

### **Cycle 1: Noun Declension Endings**

The student can recite, sing, spell, or write the noun endings. He or she must be able to list each declension’s correct endings and identify them as singular or plural. For example, the proofer would ask, “What are the first declension noun endings?” and the student would reply “a, ae, ae, am, a; singular first declension” and continue with the plural for each declension. If the student writes the endings, the macrons are not required for Memory Master.

### **Cycle 2: Verb Conjugation Endings**

The student can recite, sing, spell, or write the verb endings. They will learn the name of each tense and recite the correct endings. They are not responsible for the pronouns or the number (singular/plural). For example, the proofer would ask, “What are the 1st conjugation endings, present tense?” and the student would answer “present tense, o, s, t, mus, tis, nt.” If the student writes the endings, the macrons are not required for Memory Master.

### Cycle 3: John 1: 1–7 and Vocabulary

For Weeks 1–11, the student should be able to translate the vocabulary words from Latin to English and vice versa. The student does not need to know how to spell or write the words. For example, the proofer might ask, “What is Latin for *without*?” and “What is English for *et*?”

For Weeks 11–24, the student will memorize and be able to recite John 1:1–7 in Latin and English.

### *English Grammar*

Students will give various definitions and will recite words on a list. For example, prepositions are learned bit by bit but may be recited (sung or chanted) as one list.

### *Science Facts*

The student will answer each question from the proof sheets with a complete sentence. For example, the tester would ask, “What are some types of clouds?” and the student would answer, “Some types of clouds are...” The science lists do not have to be in the same order as in the *Foundations Guide*, as long as all of the parts of the list are recited.

### *Math Facts*

For Weeks 1–11, students memorize either skipcounting or multiplication facts through  $15 \times 15$ .

Students aged nine and under may sing the skip-counting songs for these facts.

Students aged ten and older (by January 1 of that year) must chant or say the multiplication facts, and there are three acceptable ways to do this. The parent can choose the method of proofing for their child. Tutors can use a combination of these methods in class:

- Chant the math facts:  $6 \times 1 = 6$ ,  $6 \times 2 = 12$ , etc. The student can use blank charts to chant the facts. An excellent source is the *Tables, Squares & Cubes* booklet, which is sold for only \$5.00 in the Classical Conversations Bookstore.
- Simultaneously write out the math facts and chant them; the student cannot write the facts and then skip count the answers but must write and answer the facts as he or she goes. (Note that this is very time-consuming and should be carefully considered when choosing a proofing method.)
- Flashcards: Students can answer the flashcards if they are out of order, or they can chant the flashcards if they are in order, as they would chant from the *Tables, Squares & Cubes* charts.

All students can sing the squares and cubes.

The headings for the measurements do not need to be memorized. The measurements can be asked, “How many teaspoons equals a tablespoon?” and “How many millimeters equals a centimeter?”

The geometry and the laws must be memorized. For example, the proofer would ask, “What is the circumference of a circle?” and “State the commutative law of multiplication.”

NOTE: The proofer should prompt the student in the same method he or she is tested at home. Parents should have the flashcards or *Tables, Squares & Cubes* available for the proofer, depending on which method is used at home.



### *Scripture*

The Scripture portion of each cycle's memory work is important and valuable; however, the Scripture verses are not required for Memory Master. Scripture in Cycle 3 memory work is the exception since it is a part of the weekly memory work in Latin. Classical Conversations recognizes the parent's authority in this matter. Since many students are involved in Scripture memory programs with their families, at church, and possibly in other activities, the parents should decide if the student will memorize the Scripture for Memory Master or not.





# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## ***Is a student allowed to miss a question on the first try during the proofing process?***

By the time the student gets to the tutor proof or the director proof, this should be the exception and not the rule. Tutors or directors may say something like, “Try that again” or “Start from the beginning and see if that helps.” The presence of many mistakes and/or deletions will let the adult know quickly that a student is not prepared and should be relieved from the proofing process. If a student exhibits true mastery but gets stuck on one question, the proofer can come back to that subject at the end of the proofing session.

## ***Is the student allowed to miss one question or one piece of information and still be considered a Memory Master?***

The reciting of all of the information should be effortless and quickly forthcoming. If a student transposes a date or one other such minor piece of information, yet obviously knows the material, the director can use his or her discretion to handle this while still maintaining consistency in testing.

A word of caution: The next question becomes, “Are they allowed two mistakes, or three?” We cannot let the standard slide, even out of compassion. The Memory Master process is optional! It is for those who want to put in the necessary time and dedication to achieve this personal reward. It is not for everyone—and that’s OK.

## ***What if my child doesn’t proof well for others but knows the material?***

This can happen, especially with younger students. In these cases, we recommend recognizing your student’s efforts within your own home school and postponing Memory Master proofing until he or she is more comfortable with the process. Being able to recite information to other people is a confidence and maturity issue. Parents should encourage their children to work on these skills as opportunities present themselves.

## ***What if a student knows all of a certain subject but not all of every subject?***

We will celebrate and congratulate the student on his or her achievement and diligence. Mastering one or a few subjects is a vital part of the Memory Master process. We tend to master the subjects we gravitate toward first, so these students are well on their way. However, advancing to the final round with the director and receiving the title of Memory Master is reserved exclusively for a student who has mastered every subject’s content for a given cycle.

## ***Can my director recognize those students who have memorized part of the memory work, for example a “History Master” who would be a student who masters the history sentences?***

The memorization of any of the subjects to the point of mastery is excellent. Celebrating this achievement is a wonderful idea for moms and dads, who can choose how to reward their children’s hard work. Directors should not reward partial mastery.

## ***How are Memory Master students rewarded?***

The greatest reward lies in the students’ own recognition of the hard work they have exhibited and the goals they have achieved. Memory Masters are recognized at the program’s end-of-year gathering. The director may also choose to give the student a small monetary gift or a Memory Master T-shirt (parents may be asked to purchase these T-shirts, but only the director can order

them), or they may give a special gift to the church where the community meets in honor of the Memory Masters. Directors will usually give the student a special Memory Master certificate as well.

### ***How do I set up my student's Memory Master notebook?***

If you are going to require your child to memorize the Scripture, have that printed in a notebook. You should also include:

- Cumulative review pages from the end of each cycle in the *Foundations Guide*
- Your chosen method for studying the math facts (either *Tables, Squares & Cubes*, the Classical Conversations Math Flashcards, or homemade math facts)
- Maps (either *Trivium Tables: Geography*, a copy of the blackline master in the back of the *Foundations Guide*, or maps your director gives to you)
- A copy of the proof sheets for the appropriate cycle

The student can take this notebook through the Memory Master proofing process.

### ***Should parents or another adult observe the proofing process with the tutor and director?***

Parents are always welcome to observe any part of the Memory Master proofing process. The director or the tutor should not perform the proof in a room alone with a student behind a closed door. If the parent is concerned that the student will be more nervous with another adult present, or even with parents watching, the door to the room should be left open so that an adult can be within earshot. This gives an extra measure of accountability and protection to all involved.

### ***Can directors change the requirements for Memory Masters for students with special needs, especially those who have dyslexia, dysgraphia, or are on the autism spectrum?***

Classical Conversations is honored that families who have children with different kinds of special needs like dyslexia, dysgraphia, or autism participate in the Foundations program. Students with many different abilities and capabilities enjoy, benefit from, and are valuable members of our local CC communities. We celebrate each achievement. The Memory Master title is set aside for those who are able to meet the required objectives. The director should be aware of physical limitations and may extend time and offer a break during proofing. The Memory Master requirements should remain the same for all subjects. Memory Master is not for every child, and that is really OK! If your child cannot meet the requirements for mastery, we recommend that you create your own special "Memory Master" rules and reward system for your home school.

Please visit CC Connected (parents) or Learning Pathways (CC directors) for these helpful articles about the Memory Master process:

"The Spirit of Memory Master"

"Mastery or Perfection"