
Ercall Wood Academy

Help with revision



**KEEP
CALM
AND
DO
REVISION**

1. Getting motivated for revision

Doing well in exams can bring a sense of satisfaction and reward and wanting to understand something is a good enough reason for revising a topic.

From a more practical point of view, a good reason for wanting to do well in exams is because the better qualifications you have the more money you are likely to earn.

Think of yourself as an athlete preparing for a big race: preparation and the right frame of mind are essential to success. You can get into the 'zone' for revision and exams, just like athletes get into the 'zone' for a competition. How much success do you think an athlete would have if they thought negatively about their likely performance? It doesn't have to be that way...

Thinking positively about your revision and exams will improve your motivation and likely success.



2. Getting organised for revision

Planning revision is important if you want it to be effective. Planning helps you make the most of the time you have and makes sure you have the resources you need.



You may well have built up a huge amount of material, some are likely to be more useful than others when it comes to revision: materials may be incomplete or misleading or not entirely relevant to the topic being assessed. It is important to sort these out before you start revising, so that you use the resources that are going to help most.

Everyone has different preferences on revision but the basic pattern of successful revision activity is likely to be very similar.

The actual amount of time which needs to be devoted to each stage depends on how much work has already been completed. If you regularly make summary cards as part of your everyday learning, you are likely to spend less time creating revision materials than someone who must start from materials is part of the learning process itself.

3. Understanding exams



You can't do very well in an exam if you don't understand what the question is asking for. This is why it's important to have a good understanding of the words used by examiners.

It's well worth spending time looking at exam questions and working out exactly what they mean.

COMMAND WORDS are the instruction words that tell you what to do such as **outline, describe, discuss, identify, assess**.

Key words are words in a question that tell you what your answer should be about. They are often technical words used in the subject and often require a definition before the question can be answered effectively. If your answer is not focused on these key words, you may well be drifting from the point.

Many exams ask you to write quite long answers. These can be scary but become easier if you know how to approach them.

There are many ways to break up the process of writing an essay or longer piece of text. Many teachers have their own method and you should certainly listen to your own teachers' advice first.

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS AS A STARTING POINT

Try tackling the essay in five steps.

- 1 Decoding the question
- 2 Brainstorming ideas
- 3 Sorting ideas into a plan
- 4 Writing the essay
- 5 Reviewing and amending

1. **Decoding the question.** Decoding the question means understanding the command words and key words.

2. Brainstorming ideas

WARNING! Many students only do numbers 2 and 4. This leads to a muddled answer. It's worth taking the time to go through all the stages.

Once you know what a question is asking for, spend a little time brainstorming ideas to go into the answer. This means writing down in no particular order all the things that come to mind as relevant.

It may be helpful to use a tick list of some kind to prompt ideas. For example, **TICKS DO** is a mnemonic (a memory prompt) used by Geography students to brainstorm ideas for essays:

T Theory – is there any relevant to the question?

I Ideas – what are the key ideas/concepts?

C Case Studies – are there any to include?

K Killer facts – key statistics to include

S Synoptic links – what are the important links with other topic areas?

D Diagrams—are there any which are relevant?

O Other side—is there more than one side to this question? You may be able to use **TICKS DO** in your essay planning – if not, try to come up with your own mnemonic for the things you should think about when brainstorming

3. Sorting ideas into a plan

Once you have written down your ideas, you need to decide which of them (if any) should be rejected. Cross out anything which you don't intend to use. Those that remain need to be sorted into a plan. You can do this by just numbering them, but it is better to rewrite your ideas as a list in the order in which you intend to put them in your answer. This means you need to work out which things go together and which things are separate.

4. Writing the essay

Now you should be in a position to write the essay.

5. Reviewing and amending

Check the essay after you've finished. Correct any mistakes and improve what you can. Examiners don't mind you crossing out a section and rewriting it at the end of the essay – but don't forget to mark the deleted section and the new section so the examiner knows what you're doing.

It's impossible to prepare effectively for an exam if you don't know what you're being assessed on and how that assessment is organised.

Before the exam

- Put enough time aside for revision
- Plan a good revision timetable and review it regularly
- Revise in ways that you know suit the way you learn
- Know the format of the paper^[1]_{SEP}
- Know how questions will be worded
- Know how long should be spent on each question
- Make sure you know the meaning of key examiners' instructions such as 'Discuss' and 'Evaluate'
- Check the regulations about what you can and cannot bring to the exam
- Take some water with you to drink during the exam
- Arrive in good time for the exam

In the exam

- Carefully read the instructions on the paper before starting
- Carefully read each question before starting your answer
- Answer the questions set, not the ones you want
- Allocate time to each question according to the marks available
- Don't write the question out, just its number
- Plan longer answers on the answer paper – cross your rough plan out at the end
- Use technical terms from the subject wherever appropriate
- Try to write as accurately as possible – use sentences, paragraphs and punctuation
- Don't panic – if you get stuck, take some deep breaths and go back to the question
- Keep an eye on the time
- Read through answers for mistakes

After the exam

- Avoid too much discussion about the exam – there's nothing you can do!

4. Understanding memory

Remembering information is pretty important in exams. But how much do you actually know about how your memory works?

What you call something makes a difference to how easy it is to remember. Sorting information into categories or groups makes you think about it more and helps you remember better by creating smaller chunks.

For example, if you're trying to make revision materials from a set of notes, you can use subheadings from the notes as labels for the various chunks of information.

Breaking down information into bite-size chunks helps you learn and remember. The brain seems to work best if the chunks have five or fewer bits.

Five seems to be the magic number

If you can make links between different pieces of information, remembering one piece will help you remember the next and so on.

You can make use of this to aid your memory in different ways. Here are two examples.

1. Mnemonics
2. Word journeys

1 Mnemonics

A mnemonic is a method of recalling a sequence of key words by associating the first letters of the sequence with the first letters of each word of a memorable phrase or sentence.

WARNING!

Memorising these kinds of lists has its uses for remembering information, but it shouldn't take up all that precious revision time.

1 Word journeys

These are more complicated forms of mnemonic.

They must work because they are used by mentathletes. These are people who enter competitions to remember huge amounts of information, such as the exact sequence of 54 packs of playing cards – shuffled of course!

Mentathletes invent an imaginary journey for each pack and every one of the cards becomes a character in the story of the journey.

They are useful for revision if you need to learn a sequence of words. The idea is that you attach these words to the memory of a familiar journey.

Don't get carried away though – unless your exam depends on being able to remember long lists of information. Use other forms of revision too as memorising lists of words is only part of what you need to do in most exams.

Unfortunately our brains don't always co-operate with revision. Just when we want them to store lots of useful information they decide to switch off and watch TV.

Fortunately, it is possible to overcome the brain's reluctance – but it takes time. The brain needs to be reminded!

Memories can be trained to work better. In order to remember things in exams we need to be good at storing them in our memories in the first place. We remember more if we use more than one method to remember things. We remember more if we revise over a longer period and if we think of the big picture as well as the details. Information is easier to learn if we can make it shocking or eye-catching, and if we make links between things.

It's hard to remember things if we don't understand them first and looking at the same things from different angles helps us to understand them better. If something uses a mixture of our senses (hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, moving) we are much more likely to remember it.

We need a balanced diet for our brains to work best. If we don't get enough sleep our memories don't work properly. Practice makes perfect but working for too long without a break slows down our memory.

There is a danger that spending revision time learning facts and figures means that you forget to think about the underlying themes and big ideas which are really important in understanding a subject. You need to know the big picture as well as the detail.

When it comes to the exam you may be so desperate to use the detail that you forget to show your understanding of the big picture.

5. Doing revision



Revision cards are among the most popular revision resources. The idea is that you summarise some information on a single blank postcard or note card. Mind maps are a way of organising ideas about a topic. A mind map usually starts with a central idea with a series of branches, each relating to one aspect of the main idea. These lead to other branches and so it goes on.

A mind map allows you to see the whole topic on one sheet of paper. And making the mind map helps you learn both the detail and the big picture of a topic.

There are some excellent software packages for creating mind maps – many of them free – but creating your own by hand is just as good.

Get together with a friend and make mind maps together using lots of colour and pictures.

Illustrate some of the points on your mind map with some silly pictures – they will help you remember the point.

Using different colours can make them easier to remember.

Stick them up somewhere in your house where you sit and dream – maybe your bedroom walls or ceiling – even the toilet!

Use mind maps to plan essays – put the title in the centre, then have one branch for each key point and use further branches to develop those points.

A great way to revise is to turn information into diagrams such as flow charts, spider diagrams, timelines, Venn diagrams and systems diagrams.

Diagrams help learning because they make you transform information rather than simply copying it. This process involves thinking! It makes your brain look at the information from a different angle which helps you remember it better, and because they are visual in nature, you may well find them easier to remember than plain

text.

Revising with other people can work really well – for example it may be less boring than revising alone, you may feel more motivated as part of a group, you can benefit from each other's ideas, and you can test each other.

Look, cover, test, check

If you've made resources such as revision cards, you can study them, cover them, and try to reproduce what was there (either in your mind, speaking it, or writing it down again).

Do some exam questions

This can be very effective, especially if you have access to someone who can mark them or if you are good at using a mark scheme. If you have planned your revision effectively you should have time to set yourself a mock exam.

Everyone knows the internet is a fantastic source of information and there is no doubt that it can be really useful at revision time.

But learning is about making sense of a course for yourself. That means taking an active role in revision – making up questions, being tested, making revision cards or mind maps for example.

Reading through endless sets of notes presented in slightly different (and possibly contradictory or out dated) ways is not that helpful.

Exam board websites are the places to go for information about the types of exams, specifications (syllabuses), past exam papers, mark schemes and examiners' reports. Here are some:

AQA: www.aqa.org.uk

Edexcel: www.edexcel.com

OCR: www.ocr.org.uk

Welsh Board: www.wjec.co.uk

Go into any large bookshop in the spring and you will find shelves and shelves of revision guides. Some small, some large, some with notes, others with model answers, some with both.

Are they worth buying? An essential tool or a safety net that will just make you feel better? And if you do buy one, which should you buy and for which subject?

Have I?

Asked my teacher for advice. Thought about what I want from a revision guide Browsed through a range of alternatives.

And once I have a guide in mind, have I checked that?

It covers exactly the course that I'm doing I can understand it.

It contains the features I want (e.g. bite-size notes, sample answers, coursework guidance).

It contains the right level of detail for me I like the style and presentation. It is better than I could do myself.

If you do buy a revision guide, don't be too precious about it - treat it rough! Make it your own by writing on it, adding colour to it, or even chopping it up to make your own resources.

And finally, don't assume that it contains everything you need to know.

Even in our favourite subjects there may be bits we find less interesting.

To make the boring bits more interesting I can

Revise with someone else.

Find a new angle on the topic (such as finding someone famous this topic applies to and how it has affected them).

Find a way in which this topic relates to you personally.

Find out how it can be linked to the topics you are interested in.

Find a new source of information – such as a different textbook, website,

Go somewhere else to revise the topic (for a change of scenery).

Break the revision into chunks of time and stick to the schedule.

Revise in an unusual way – why not make a podcast, cut and paste from magazines or create a poster?

Give yourself a big reward when you've learnt it.

6. The last minute

The bad news is that trying to revise at the last minute is not advisable. Revision works best when it's well planned and given enough time. There are no short cuts to be recommended.

However if you're short of time, read through the following suggestions.

Work out how much you know already. Test your knowledge using past exam papers and mark schemes or self-testing. Then focus your attention on the parts of the course where you are weakest, not the bits you know already.

Talk to someone who understands the course (ideally a teacher) – find out what is really important and what is additional detail. Then focus on those key points. This is likely to be more efficient than trying to sort it all out yourself from scratch.

Try to achieve a balance of understanding of the material – get the big picture first and avoid concentrating too much on the detail, learning the detail for one part of the course will use up all your time.

Reduce the time spent preparing your own revision materials – beg (or pay!) to borrow someone else's, go online to find some or buy a good revision guide. Do something with the material so that you engage with it in an active way to make it stick in your mind – maybe highlighting.

Focus on the decoding of exam questions so that you're clear about the key words and command words. This may be effective if you have good background knowledge already, as you may be able to answer some questions reasonably well without needing to learn lots of detail.

A couple for the truly desperate (and not really recommended!):

1. Make use of creative thinking in the exam: you may just strike it lucky if you're able to interpret exam questions well and write sensible sounding answers.
2. When it comes to the exam, if in doubt – guess! In most (but not all) exams – you are not penalised for



getting the answer wrong.

The good news is that there are a few tips which just might help if you have only a short time to prepare. They are more likely to pay off if you already have a reasonable background knowledge of the course. Some of this advice is more drastic than the rest – it depends how desperate you are!

Here are some suggestions for things you might do on the day of the exam to fine tune all that you've revised. But remember – not everyone takes the same approach so you need to think about which strategy will work for you

Get a good night's sleep

Check the date, time and location of the exam

Move or minimise any commitments which might delay you or add stress on the day of the exam

Make sure you can get to the exam on time without any hassle (for example, get money for the bus/taxi)

Eat enough (but not too much) of the right food

Take a bottle of water

Take a watch or small clock

Wear suitable clothes (and be prepared in case the room is hotter or colder than you like)

Prepare all the equipment and stationery you need

Prepare all the books or materials you need

Prepare the revision materials you want to have with you for checking before the exam

Take your candidate entry sheet or ID with you

Take something to do and food/drink if you have a waiting period between exams

Make sure you know where you can store your stuff during the exam

Make sure you understand the exam rules (such as whether or not you can take a bag in with you, where to leave your phone)

Think positively about yourself and the exam

In the world of sport it's quite common for people to talk about how they 'see' their performance – they visualise what is going to happen, how they are going to deal with it, and how they are going to succeed.

But it's not very often that you hear students talking in the same way about their exams. However, there is evidence that positive thinking of this kind can help you feel more confident and prepared for exams. This can reduce stress and lead to better performance.

The Ercall Wood 4 Step revision plan

Step 1 - Plan

Make sure you know what you need to do and plan enough time to get everything done.

Step 2 - Process and Condense

Process the information you want to learn. E.g. turn it into a mind map or revision cards or notes. (We'll show you some techniques for this).

Step 3 - Revise

Use the memory techniques and revision activities to learn your notes.

Step 4 - Review

Return to your notes after 10 minutes, then 1 day, then 1 week. Check you can remember them at each stage – the more often you use the information the easier it is to recall it.

Imagine your brain is like blue cheese. Each memory makes a dent. The more often you use the memory the deeper the dent gets. You can find deep dents really quickly. This is why it takes you no time to remember your name, this is information that you have used so often the dent is MASSIVE!



I : Plan.

It will really help you with your revision if you start off in the right frame of mind.

Revision space: Find a good place to work. It should be quiet and uncluttered.

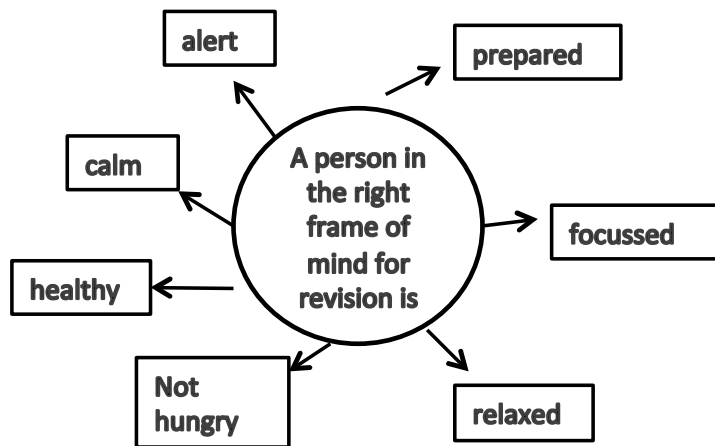
Revision timetable: Draw up a revision timetable - it's crucial. It should be realistic, cover all subjects and allow you time off to relax.

Revision calm:

You need to be cool calm and collected in order to concentrate and learn effectively.

Try these techniques to help you relax

1. Breathe in to the count of 3, hold your breath to the count of 3, release it to the count of 5. Repeat once.
2. technique is to hold arms to the side of the body the clench fists for count of 5. Then relax and stretch out fingers.



Avoiding stress.

Manage your studying:

Don't go mad and lock yourself in your room with your books 24 hours a day. Two or three hours is the maximum amount of time you can study before you stop taking in what you read. So remember to give yourself regular breaks. A few treats now and again will do wonders for your motivation.

Get enough sleep.

Exam stress sometimes makes it difficult to get a good night's sleep So set a definite time for going to bed and stick to it. Relaxing before you go to sleep by reading a book or having a bubble bath or a milky drink can help you sleep. Don't worry if you can't sleep the night before an important exam, one lost night of sleep will not really hurt you!

Keep busy

Keeping busy when you're not studying will help stop you worrying about your exams. Try a sport , take up painting or do anything you enjoy.

Be nice to yourself.

Self-affirmation works wonders! It might sound silly but tell yourself that you are great, you can do it and really psych yourself up to a feeling that you will come top. Why do you think sports people do this before a match?

Time management.

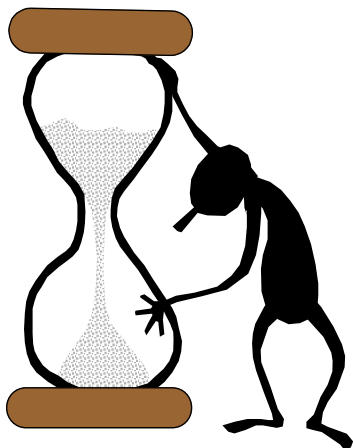
Having enough time is key to doing well in your exams.

Here are 4 handy tips.

1. **Plan** your time so that you don't waste any. Don't forget to plan in time for relaxation, food and sleep too!
2. **Allocate** count up how many exams you have and then allow 2 weeks worth of revision for each exam.
3. **Do** beware of spending so much time planning that you have no time left to do the work.
4. **Prioritise** what needs to be done first using the grid below.

Time Management Grid

Importance		Urgency	
		Quadrant 1 Urgent and Important "Firefighting"	Quadrant 2 Important but Not Urgent "Quality Time"
		Quadrant 3 Urgent but Not Important "Distraction"	Quadrant 4 Neither Urgent nor Important. "Time wasting"



Prioritising

As a student, especially if you are approaching exams it is sometimes difficult to decide what coursework, homework or revision to do first. Here are some tips to help.

Firstly, make a list of the work you have to do – next, decide how important a task is:

- | | | |
|---|---|----------------------|
| 1 | = | Vital -GCSE revision |
| 2 | = | Important |
| 3 | = | Not very important |

Next, decide how urgent the task is:

- | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | = | Deadline within days |
| 2 | = | Deadline a week away or more |
| 3 | = | Deadline a month away |

Advice/Rules:

You must then set aside time for vital work – even non urgent ones!

Work which is vital and urgent should be done first.

Work which is less important should take a lower priority. However, you should try to leave space in any study timetable to complete urgent tasks.

Healthy Body Healthy mind.

It helps your brain if you are healthy.

1. **Five a day:** eat your five portions of fruit and veg every day, it will keep you healthy and give you lots of energy.
2. **Three a day:** Always have 3 proper meals a day. It is a bit of a cliché but breakfast is really important to kick start your metabolism and you need a proper lunch and dinner to keep you going. NEVER skip a meal to save time!
3. **One a day:** Get some exercise at least once a day it will burn off your stress and help you to sleep properly.



Revision timetable.

Your revision timetable should divide the available time up into 30 minute blocks.

You can then allocate the blocks to :

- a. Process
- b. Revision
- c. Review (1 Day)
- d. Review (1week)
- e. Eating
- f. Relaxation



2: Process and Condense

Example 1 - Mind Maps

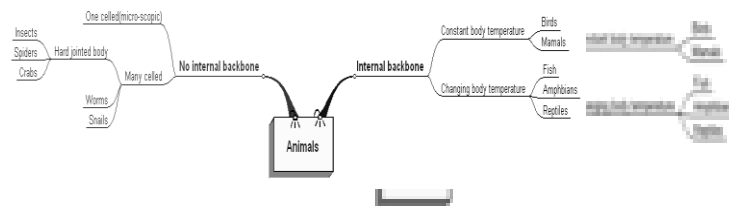
Animals

All animals can be divided into two types, those with an internal backbone, and those which do not have an internal backbone. Animals that have an internal backbone can further be divided into those which have a constant body temperature, and those with a body temperature which keeps changing. Some types of animals which have a constant body temperature are birds and mammals. Animals such as fish, amphibians and reptiles have a changing body temperature.

Those animals with no internal backbone can also be divided into two types; animals with only one cell and animals with many cells. Animals with only one cell are called microscopic animals. Some animals which have no backbone have a jointed hard covering over their body. Animals such as insects, spiders and crabs are of this type. There are also some animals with no backbone and no jointed covering. Examples of this type are worms and snails.

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This can
be
condensed
to this:



Example 2 Bullet Points

Visual Learners:

Learn through seeing...

These learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions (e.g. people's heads). They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated text books, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts and hand-outs. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information.

This can be condensed to this:

Visual Learners:

Learn through seeing

Watch body language/facial expressions

Like to have a clear view

Think in pictures

Like diagrams/charts/graphs etc

Sometimes like to take notes

Tips for making revision notes more memorable:

Use colour

Use pictures and symbols

Use different fonts

Draw boxes or shapes around key words

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Example 3-Flow diagrams

The digestion System

Putting food in your mouth is called feeding or ingestion. Teeth grind the food into smaller pieces. The main grinding teeth (molars) are at the back of the mouth. The salivary glands produce liquid called saliva. Saliva helps make the food moist so that it is easy to swallow.

When you swallow, the windpipe is shut off and food goes into the gullet (or food pipe). Muscles in the wall of the gullet make the tube above the food narrower. They contract. Food is moved through the rest of the digestive system in the same way.

In the stomach the food is churned up with strong acid (PH 1-2).

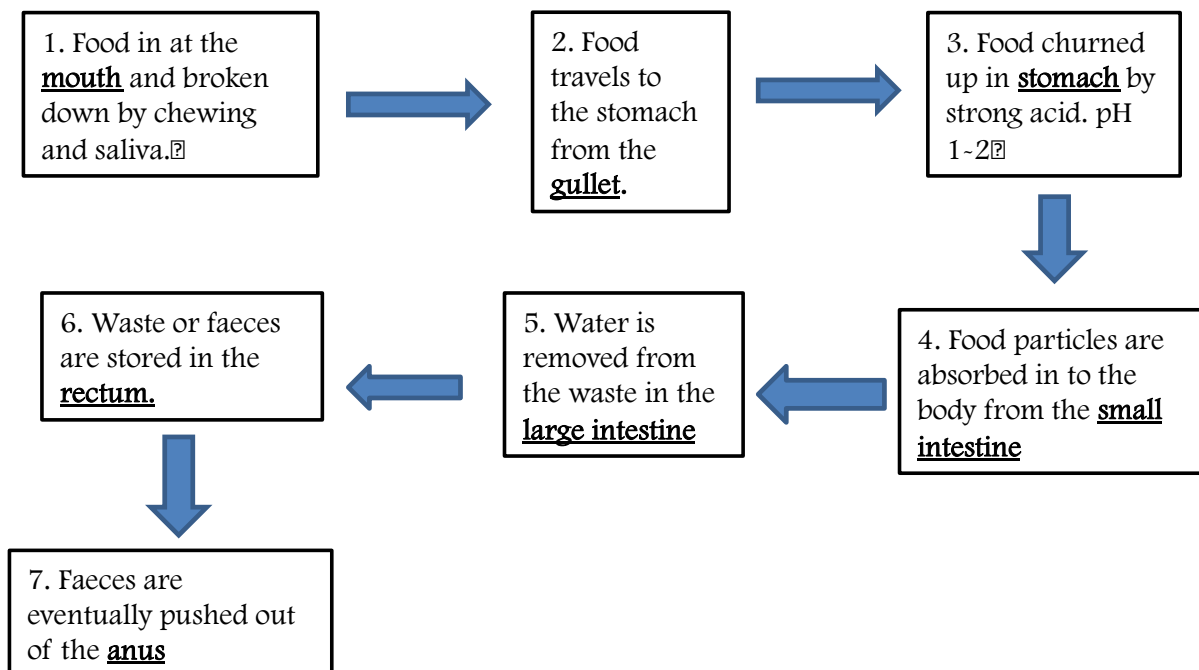
The particles that make up food are called molecules. Small molecules are taken into the body (absorbed) through the wall of the small intestine.

Food that we cannot digest (fibre) goes into the large intestine, where water is removed. This forms a more solid material called faeces (pronounced 'fee-sees').

Faeces are stored in the rectum. They are eventually pushed out of the anus. They are eliminated or egested.

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This can be condensed into this:?



3: Revise

Revision sessions should use a variety of techniques.

Re-write mind map from memory

Get a friend/parent to test you

Explain a topic/concept to a friend

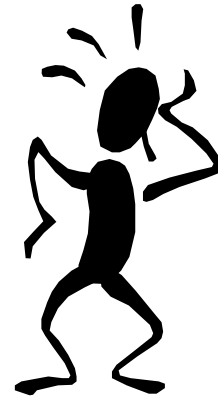
Talk to a tape then listen

Use memory techniques like Loci, Image chains, Mnemonics

Make flash cards – then use them to test yourself

Explain a topic/piece of work to a friend using gestures to help

Use samlearning- www.samlearning.co.uk



Remember : Revision Sessions should include regular attempts to recall information from memory, without notes.

Instructions:

Try to practice learning the information in each of the examples of condensed notes. Use one or more of the following techniques.



Look at the notes then cover them and try to recall them from memory. You can try to re draw/write the notes or explain them to a friend.

Explain the notes to a friend, then give them to your partner who could test you or listen, as you try to again explain the notes but, this time from memory.

When you revise at home you could even explain your notes to a tape recorder, then listen to recording and then try to recall from memory.

Memory techniques

Mnemonics are a good way to remember lists of facts. Here are two examples of mnemonics:

Mnemonics

Colours of the spectrum

Richard	Red	R
Of	Orange	O
York	Yellow	Y
Gave	Green	G
Battle	Blue	B
In	Indigo	I
Vain	Violet	V

Mnemonics

Planets in the Solar System

Many	Mercury
Vile	Venus
Earthlings	Earth
Munch	Mars
Jam	Jupiter
Sandwiches	Saturn
Under	Uranus
Newspaper	Neptune
Piles	Pluto

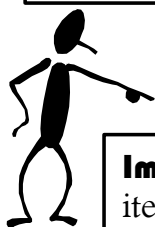


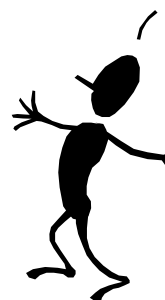
Image chains are a simple way to remember a list of words. You take each item in the list and link them together using a story or images – making a film in your head e.g if you had to remember a ball and a window imagine the ball going through the window.

When you play “I went to the shop and bought” you are able to remember so much because you linked the items to the people who said them and their position in the room.

Create an image chain in your head for the following words. *Banana, Chain, Roof, Bird, Printer, Book, Box, Grass, Lion, Motorway, Gas, Nurse, Coat, Pink, Watch.*

Cover the words and then write them down or say them and see how many you can remember.

loci This technique involves associating the information you want to remember with a place or location. If you were to read a list of 10 mathematical symbols you would struggle to remember them all. If you were to read out the list again, but this time go to a different place in the room for each word and associate the word with a location e.g. “I have placed the “equals symbol” by the door.” You would remember far more you would look at the locations to trigger your memory.



Exam technique

8 steps to surviving exams

Timing: Make sure you know how much time you will have in the exam, what kind of questions you will be asked, and how many there will be. That way you can split your time between the questions to make sure they all get answered.

End of exam: When you're doing an exam that involves long answers - for example English, it's a good idea to leave some space at the end of the answer so you can add any additional comments or arguments that might come to mind when you reread your paper at the end of the exam.

"Don't spend all your time on questions you know the answer to"

Move on: Don't spend all your time on questions you know the answer to. Remember that you have to answer all the questions, and you will get a worse mark for answering some questions supremely well and some not at all.

Handwriting: Make sure you're writing is legible, it's worth taking a little extra time making sure your work is neat enough for the examiner to be able to read it. Try to avoid spelling mistakes too!

Be prepared: The more prepared you are the more likely you are to succeed.

Keep calm: Most importantly, DON'T PANIC! If you feel yourself getting stressed take a deep breath.

Exam post-mortem: Don't try to dissect the exam once you've finished it. There's no point going through what answers you put down compared to your friend. If you've put down different answers it's not going to help you in your next exam by worrying about it.

Move on: Once an exam is over forget about it. There is nothing more you can do about it. The best thing you can do is go home and revise for the next one.

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How much time do I have?

Your revision timetable must be realistic and flexible.

Use your revision planner to organise your time until each subject exam.

Allow more time for your weaker topics and less for your stronger ones.

Set a date for each subject by which you will have reduced all your revision to summary sheets.

Every week check if you are on task and then revise your plan as necessary.

Getting organised can make all the difference!

What's the right space for you?

Get the basics right:

1. Comfortable chair and desk
2. Good light, comfortable temperature
3. Complete revision kit of: pens, coloured pencils and highlighter pens, paper, dividers and folders, post-its dictionary, thesaurus, text books and revision guides
4. Revision timetable planner
5. Storage to keep your space tidy



Let your family know your study timetable so you're not distracted.

Remember, useful concentration lasts only 30 – 40 minutes.

Then take a break of 5 – 10 minutes – drink water, text a friend, get some fresh air. Like anything else, concentration improves with practice.

Have you got a Study Buddy?

Working with a Study Buddy means questions and answers. This helps you (and your Study Buddy) interact with the information and work out what you know and what you don't. Your Buddy also motivates you to study. It's easier to stay in and study if someone else is doing it with you.

Pick someone reliable, someone you like and trust.

Plan in advance what you're going to discuss.

Share your summary sheets, mnemonics and other methods of remembering subject.

Structure your meetings: study, discuss, study, discuss.

Teach your Study Buddy a subject, have them teach it back to you.

Stay in touch by phone and e-mail, support each other.

Check your revision planner for areas to focus on and plan for.

Don't get sidetracked, stay on task.

Know how to study

Do you read to succeed? The reading style you need depends on what you want to do.

Get an overview of a subject.

Look for specific facts.

Clarify something you don't understand.

Collect information for an essay answer.

Skim reading: If you want to know if a particular text is useful to you, get an overview of the subject or look for specific facts, don't waste time reading every word; skim read instead:

- First, check headings, subheads, graphs, captions, bullet points – make sure the text's useful to you
- Read first and last paragraphs, they usually introduce and summarise the text
- Skim the whole text, highlighting key words, making brief margin notes and symbols (but only if it's in your book)
- Summarise the whole text in no more than two paragraphs

Make a note of anything you don't understand and ask your Study Buddy or Teacher.

Review your work: If you don't review your work, studies show you'll lose 80% of what you've learned in 24 hours and 98% in seven days. So take 20 minutes each day to review everything you've learned.

How to do effective revision for visual learners

Revision strategies for the visual learner.

Make use of colour coding when studying new information in your notes.

Use highlighter pens and highlight different kinds of information in contrasting colours.

Trace each word in the air.

Write out key information obtained from your notes.

Draw a mind map.

Make flash cards (3 by 5 inches) of words and ideas that need to be learned.



Use highlighter pens to emphasise the key points.

Limit the information per card so that your mind can take a mental 'picture' of the information.

Write out explanations for diagrams or draw illustrations (in diagram form) from facts.

When learning technical or mathematical information, write out in sentences and key phrases your understanding of the material. When learning sequences, write out in detail how to do each step.

Experiment with diagrams.

A funny or a rude mental picture will certainly help you to remember facts and patterns.

Use chronological lists of events.

Flow charts use the consequences of each action to jog your memory about the next stage.

Use split lists to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between things.

Copy key information from your notes and textbooks on to a computer.

Use the print outs to re-read your notes.

Make visual reminders of information that must be learned. Use post-it notes in highly visible places – on your mirror, notebook, bedroom door etc.

How to do effective revision for auditory learners

Revision strategies for the auditory learner.

Reading aloud.

Underlining interesting points and quotations.

Make up word games and mnemonics to help you. Persuading someone to test and re-test you on what you have learned.

Work with others to revise, but you have to be very disciplined about this (Don't just chat! Do revision!). This works best with other auditory learners. Talk your way through a learned topic or ask each other to explain difficult areas.

Read texts aloud, paying close attention to the way it sounds. Now try reading it under your breath.

Make up questions to ask about the text and then question someone about it.



Talk aloud to recall what you have just learned.

Go somewhere where you won't bother anyone and read your notes and text book out loud.

Impersonate someone while learning different subjects, for example Peter Kay does

Science or Victor Meldrew does History. Decide on keywords/concepts you will need to learn.

Experiment with different ways of saying the keywords out loud (emphasise different parts of the word, use different voices).

Record your revision on a phone or iPod, pause and re-record when you have made a mistake.

Listen to your notes through an iPod when exercising, doing the washing up, on the way to school, and so on.

When learning technical or mathematical information, talk your way through it. State what you have learned to yourself or a study partner.

Reason through solutions/thoughts by talking out loud or to a study partner.

When learning sequences, write out in sentence form and then read them aloud.

Make up a funny rhyme to remember important facts/concepts.

How to do effective revision for kinaesthetic learners

Revision strategies for the practical learner.

Walk backwards and forwards with your textbook, notes or flash cards and read the information out loud.

Learn different subjects by walking and reading in different places.

Jot down keywords, draw pictures or make charts to help you remember your notes.

Make flash cards (3 by 5 inches) for every step of a sequence you have to learn.

Put words, symbols or pictures on your flash cards – anything that helps you remember.

Use highlighter pens in contrasting colours to emphasise the important points but limit the amount of detail so you do not have too much to remember.

Practise putting out the cards in the right order until it becomes automatic.



Copy key points on to a chalkboard, whiteboard or large piece of paper. Make up actions to go with the keywords.

Write down the main points on post-it notes. Assemble the post-its on the wall to see how the different areas relate to one another.

Use the computer to reinforce learning by touch. Copy out information that must be learned on the computer.

Use graphics, clip art, and tables to organise material that must be learned.

Listen to your notes of topics when exercising, doing the washing up, walking to school, and so on

Exam Day

Get a good night's sleep.

Have a nourishing breakfast and drink water – dehydration and lack of food to start the day damages concentration.

Get to school early. You'll be in a state if you arrive late. Remember panic is pointless.

Make sure you have a watch so that you can time your writing, and all the equipment you will need for each exam, such as colouring pencils, calculator, anthology, texts etc.

While you are waiting for everyone to settle, read the front of the exam booklet and check how many questions you have to answer. How many from each section?

How long does this allow for each question?

Underline important information.

Read the question paper carefully all the way through at least twice.

Choose carefully which questions to answer. If you haven't studied it, don't attempt to write about it!

Underline keywords in the questions, this tells you which points the examiner wants you to write about.

Don't panic if your mind goes blank. Once you start jotting down ideas, it will all come back to you.

Decide which question you can do best and do it first; this will boost your confidence.

Start first with the questions that carry the most marks.

Jot relevant ideas in the answer book – you can cross these notes out later. Examiners like planning!

Sort these ideas into a logical order. Put a number by each point to indicate the order.

State the obvious! The examiner won't assume you know something that is not written down.

If there are four lines in the answer book, try to fill the space with your answer.

Try to write legibly – if the examiners can't read it they can't give you marks!

Make sure you leave at least five minutes at the end of the exam to go over what you have written. You can save marks by correcting mistakes.

Don't bother with post mortems outside the exam hall. You've done your best. Physically and mentally, pack up your revision notes for that subject and move on to the next subject.

Using past papers

How do past papers improve your exam technique?

Exams are like anything else – the more you do, the better you get. That's why past papers are so important to your exam preparation. Get to know:

- Their layout, names/numbers of questions?
- The format of instructions?

- The range of questions: multiple choice, short answers, essays, etc?
- The marking scheme?
- The pace of the paper, how should you allocate time?
- Which type of question turns up most often?

Diet and Food Supplements

Strawberries / Blueberries / Mashed Potatoes (though not necessarily together) are good 'brain' food.

Breakfast on the morning of an exam is important – porridge, oats or muesli topped with strawberries would be ideal.

Lots of studies now show that Omega 3, Fish or Flax oil supplements definitely improve cognitive (brainpower) performance.

And finally “Good Luck”.

Although if you follow this advice you won't need it!