

How To Revise More Effectively

Hints and tips on how you can
get the best out of exams



If you are not one of those lucky people who have a photographic memory and can remember everything you have read, you will need to revise for your exams. Each year you will have to revise for numerous tests. Ask yourself, how successful were you? Now multiply that work by 10 or 20 and do it all in a few months. It seems a huge task. And it is! You can do a lot to help yourself make it easier. The information in this booklet will help you get organised and stay in control.






Take More Breaks

Most people can only concentrate, understand and remember **for between 20 and 45 minutes at a time.**

DO NOT REVISE FOR LONGER WITHOUT A BREAK.

Most of what you learn you will not remember if you do not take a break. Once you have finished learning something, your brain actually increases its power and carries on remembering. It will be sorting out what it has been learning, creating a more complete picture of everything it has just learnt. Only then does the rapid decline in memory begin and as much as 80% of what you learn in a day can be forgotten almost immediately.

You need to review what you have learnt:

-  After 10 minutes
-  At the end of a day
-  At the end of a week
-  At the end of a month
-  The week before the exams

Good techniques for you to use

Visual Learners

Would rather be shown how to do something. Often likes art, fashion, visual media. Are good at spelling and reading body language

Writing down key facts

Using mind maps

Creating pictures and diagrams

Using timelines

Using pictures, diagrams and charts

Watching videos, films and TV programmes

Auditory Learners

Learn best by listening. May find foreign languages relatively easy. Often musically talented

Hearing a presentation

Reading aloud to yourself

Making a tape with key points

Verbally summarising

Explaining the subject to someone else

Use computer software

Physical Learners

Learn by doing, rather than listening or watching a demonstration. Often good dancers and have good hand-eye co-ordination

Using highlighters to select key words, main ideas

Make index cards

Sorting cards into an order

Making models

Recording information as you hear it – e.g. a mind map/spider diagram

Getting Started

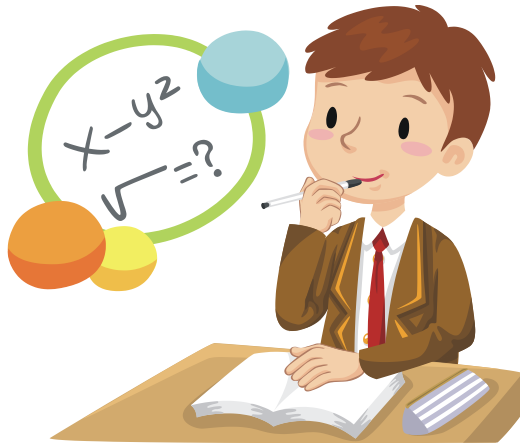
Before you start revising, it is worth making sure you have everything you need at your fingertips. This will stop you wasting valuable time trying to find things.

Equipment

- ❖ Highlighters
- ❖ Coloured pens
- ❖ Post-It notes for formula/key words
- ❖ Different coloured paper for different subjects (you will need lots of this)
- ❖ CD Player/Computer for revision CD's

Where to Revise

- ❖ Not in front of the T.V.
- ❖ At a table, preferably in a quiet place
- ❖ It's worth trying to sort the bedroom out. Get rid of clutter, so a desk is empty enough to have proper space to work
- ❖ Keep all the materials for each subject in one place to save time



Equipment

- ❖ Revision timetable
- ❖ An up to date set of class notes
- ❖ Any revision materials given out by departments
- ❖ Revision lists
- ❖ Lists of exactly what is in each exam
- ❖ Any Study Guides which have been bought (but check a guide is covering what is in your course)

Revision Timetables

Topics need to be revised more than once based on what we know about the brain.

Think about the following:

- ❖ Be realistic - remember sessions should only be for 30 – 40 minutes with 10 minute breaks
- ❖ Start **NOW**
- ❖ 1 session on a week night
- ❖ 3-4 sessions a day at the weekend
- ❖ During holidays/study leave, revision should be far more intensive
- ❖ Build in treats – time with friends, evenings out etc. Social time is vital in the overall scheme, as long as there is a balance between work and play
- ❖ Try to get a variety of subjects across each day
- ❖ Build in slots to review the learning of the day
- ❖ When you write next week's timetable, remember to include review slots for the work covered last week /this week
- ❖ Discuss with someone at home how you are going about your revision

Breaking it down

If you're thinking, "I'm doing Maths for 40 minutes and then half an hour of French", think again! It means you haven't **broken the subject down** into key areas to tackle your work in an organised manner; eg, "I'm doing algebra and irregular verbs."

- ❖ Identify those topics you feel weak in – the danger is you push these to the back of your mind
- ❖ Use each heading to break the topic down further.

At first, the big picture may look and feel totally overwhelming. You need to prioritise your workload. You need to be aware of the fact that revision takes time and for a few months, the social life has to give a bit. Why don't you arrange with friends to have a "time off" session together?

General Revision Strategies

- ❖ Brainstorm a topic using a spider diagram
- ❖ Make a chart to fit the information
- ❖ Put key words onto Post-It Notes, stick them around the house to learn them
- ❖ Make up tests to try later
- ❖ Put notes onto revision cards
- ❖ Make your own flash cards – questions one side/answers on the back
- ❖ Create a Mind Map
- ❖ Use different colours to represent different things
- ❖ Use Mnemonics for difficult spellings/sequences
(e.g. **R**ichard **O**f **Y**ork **G**ave **B**attle **I**n **V**ain – colours of the rainbow)
- ❖ Make a flow chart
- ❖ Make a timeline
- ❖ Use pictures to represent key ideas
- ❖ List two sides of an argument
- ❖ Identify similarities/differences
- ❖ Plan an exam answer and write the first paragraph
- ❖ Create a dictionary for each subject
- ❖ Turn headings into questions
- ❖ Fill the bedroom walls with posters for key ideas
- ❖ Make up cartoons related to, or based on, the topic
- ❖ Label pictures
- ❖ Record key quotations/foreign language vocabulary

Looking after yourself

If you want your brain to perform well on the day of exams, you must look after it! Your brain depends on your body for its health.

Eat properly

eat healthily in the run up to important exams – make sure you have proper meals and that includes breakfast – eat or drink something to give you energy before you start revision

Stay hydrated

drink plenty of water – your brain needs it to work properly – especially when you are revising

Attend school

don't make the mistake of taking time off lessons to revise – teachers will be covering more of the course, revising and answering questions and preparing you for the exam

Keep up activities

just because it is exam time, don't give up your extra-curricular activities – you may need to cut back a little and give priority to revision but don't stop doing things you enjoy – you need a balanced approach to life

Exercise

if your body is tired and sluggish, your mind won't work too well – make sure you get proper exercise – walk, run, swim, play football – do a little bit every day

Sleep

15 and 16 year olds need around 9 hours of sleep each night – that means if you are getting up for school at 7am, you need to be in bed by 10pm – and don't make the mistake of staying up revising the night before the exam – being fresh in the morning is far more likely to benefit you than a bit of rushed last minute revision!

Can't sleep?

It's quite common for people not to be able to sleep properly when exams are coming up – what to do?
Give yourself 30 minutes to 'wind down'. Have a hot bath/shower to relax you. Have a milky drink or caffeine free tea/herbal teas.
Make sure you go to bed at your regular time

Dealing with parents

Exams are a difficult time for parents too.

They want you to do well and sometimes aren't sure how best to help you.

The best way of handling parents is by showing them that you have got revision planned, that you are sticking to your revision timetable, and that you speak to them! Don't just clam up and go silent – they need to be reassured! Keep them posted on how things are going and chances are they will trust you to get on with it

Mock exams are important

Sometimes people make the mistake of thinking mock exams are not important. Wrong!

Mock exams are important for three reasons

- 1** If, by any chance, you are ill for the summer exams, or something happens which means you can't sit the exams, the exam board will ask for evidence of your work under exam conditions. The mock exams are about the only thing that will qualify. Every year, a handful of pupils rely on their mock exams to give them a grade at GCSE. Don't make the mistake of thinking it couldn't be you.
- 2** Doing proper revision for mocks means you are learning stuff for the summer exams. You may need to remind yourself of it again later but you will be amazed how much you will remember.
- 3** Taking mocks seriously is good practice for the real thing. It will give you confidence. If something is really important (like GCSEs), it has got to be good to have a dry run at it.