



Saint Joseph's

CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Exam Preparation

The aim of this booklet is to give you some useful information that will help you to become involved in the revision process over the coming months. It is worth remembering that an examination is a test of learning, not memory. It is important that the revision process starts early.

The next six months is one of the most important times in a student's life. It is the culmination of many years of school education. The grades achieved this summer remain with a student throughout their life no matter what else they go on to achieve.

More frequently we are seeing colleges, employers and Further Education institutions declining applications from people that do not have at least a C grade in English and Maths at GCSE, even if they are applying as a mature student.

Our young people can rarely achieve their best independently; the best results are always achieved when a partnership is formed between student, family and school, and your support as parents is fundamental to success.



Positive Home Environment

The inevitable pressures on the limited shared resources available in your home make it essential that you find ways of ensuring that the legitimate demands of other family members are balanced against the particular needs of your child in the run-up to GCSEs. It is especially important that GCSE students are provided with ample space and time to revise. Some related issues to bear in mind:

- At the very least, GCSE students deserve a quiet, private space (e.g. a desk in the bedroom) where they can study and revise undisturbed. You may therefore need to insist that at certain times of day the TV is turned down (or off) and noise levels are kept to an absolute minimum. It can also be helpful to designate this as a family 'quiet time' where everyone (parents included!) participates in 'studious' activities such as doing homework, catching up on email, reading the newspaper or surfing the web.
- We are all creatures of habit and tend to be enabled and constrained not only by our own daily routine but also by the daily routines of those closely connected to us such as siblings and friends. Have a think about ways that family members habits limit the extent to which your child can prepare for exams. For example, bringing forward meal times may release more time for study or leaving for school earlier may allow time to browse notes before the day starts.

Time Management

One of the main reasons why many young people fail to achieve a good set of GCSE grades relates less to their lack of ability or ambition and more to the fact that they seriously underestimate the amount of time that they need to set aside for revision. Many students now take 10 or more GCSEs and are therefore required to revise over 200 topics. On the basis of 1 hour revision per topic, this means that your child may need to complete a total of over 200 hours of revision. Assuming that your child revises for 1-2 hours a day, they will need to start revising at least 3-6 months before the first exam. For those taking exams in June, this means starting to revise in February at the very latest!!

If after reading this you have a need for more information then please get in touch with us. We would be more than happy to help and advise on any aspect of exam and coursework preparation.

DON'T PANIC



Last Minute Tips

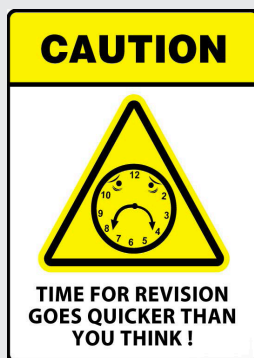
Try and prioritise; do what you can.

- Use your revision tools (prompts, diagrams etc.) to check final facts.
- Keep calm and consolidate your existing knowledge rather than trying to learn new topics.
- Don't stay up all night revising; being over tired will not help you do your best.
- Remember that it is never too late until you enter the exam room. Even a little revision can make the difference between a pass or fail.

Revision Planning

To help you avoid wasting precious revision time, take a look at our top tips for success:

- Start your focussed revision at least six weeks before your exams begin. It is helpful to look at your exam dates and work backwards from the first date.
- List all of your exam subjects and the amount of time you think you will need for each one. It is unlikely that the amounts will be equal.
- Draw up a revision plan for each week – think carefully about the times in the day when you concentrate best and put new or more difficult topics in these slots. You will get more done at weekends – plan to use these.
- Fill in any regular commitments you have first and the dates of your exams.
- Use revision checklists for each subject as a starting point. Look at what you need to know and try to identify any gaps in your knowledge.
- Divide your time for each subject into topics based on the units in the revision checklist and make sure you allow enough time for each one.
- Revise often; try and do a little every day.
- Plan time off, including time for activities which can be done out in the fresh air. Take a 10 minute break every 40 minutes, go for a short walk or make a drink.
- You may find it helpful to change from one subject to another at 'break time', for example doing one or two sessions of Maths and then changing to Geography, or alternating a favourite subject with a more difficult one. It helps to build in some variety.
- Write up your plan and display it somewhere obvious.
- Positive thinking is important! There will be times when you are not in the mood or that it is just not sticking – Don't Panic! Take a break and try to think just about the task you are on, not everything together. All the bits will come together in the end.



Unconditional Love

Some of the most fascinating research on successful parenting concludes that the most effective parents provide their children with both challenge and unconditional love.

Beyond recognising the need for your child to exhibit the vision, self-discipline and fortitude required to secure a good set of GCSE grades, remember that when preparing for exams students will inevitably be subjected to a variety of forces that are largely beyond their control.

Due to this, students are at times likely to experience a significant degree of uncertainty and insecurity. Providing your child with the reassurance that, whatever the mistakes they make and whatever misfortunes they encounter, you will always be there to love and support them will enable them to approach exams with greater confidence. Some antidotes to exam anxiety:

- Regularly invite your child to talk to you openly and confidently about how they are feeling and to let you know if there is anything at all that you can do to help. At these times, restrain yourself from trying to 'solve' the 'problems' by offering immediate 'solutions' and continue to affirm instead that you understand how they are feeling or just hear them out.
- Conclude these conversations by reminding them how much you love and care for them and remind them you are committed to supporting in any way you can.
- Create opportunities for your child to engage in activities that are completely removed from the world of school, homework, revision and exams.
- Keep things in perspective – your child may not be doing things in the way that you would do them, or as often as you would like, but they are doing the best they can in the way that works for them at the stage they are at.

Students – if you read nothing else, READ THIS BIT!!

What is Revision? – It literally means 're-looking' at information you have learned previously. The aim is to know the information you will be tested on. Knowing something depends on understanding it.

The Aim of Revision. – The aim is to reduce the amount of information to key points, any of which you can expand on in an exam.

The Structure of Revision Sessions. – Good revision always includes:

- An aim for the session e.g. 'By the end of this hour I will....'
- Thinking about what you know already and identifying the bits you need to spend more time on.
- Breaking down the topics into 'do-able' chunks and doing something active with the information you are reading.
- Producing notes highlighting key points, phrases or words.
- Testing yourself to see what you have learnt.
- Ticking off the subject \ topic on your overall list so you can see regular progress you have made.
- Revisiting your notes briefly after one day, one week and one month, as well as just before the exam – THIS REALLY WORKS!!!

The Key to Effective Revision. – Useful revision involves doing something with the information you are trying to remember. Try:

- Spider diagrams on large sheets of paper.
- Pictures, flip charts or posters hanging where you will see them.
- Putting revision aids around the house wherever you may sit down.
- Record yourself reading notes and play them back when you can.
- Read a page then shut the book – what can you remember?
- Get people in your family to test you – have a family quiz!!
- Try to teach other people what you have learnt



Section 1 – Improving Concentration

Are you having trouble concentrating? Your problem may be one or some or all of the following:

1. You're not organized
2. Your comprehension is poor
3. You're procrastinating
4. Your work environment is poor
5. You're neglecting your physiology
6. Your mind just keeps wandering



1.1 – You're not organized

It's easier to concentrate on the task at hand when you have set aside specific times for your other tasks. If you're not organized, then you always seem to have too many things to do and you can't get going on any of them.

- Write down all of the school tasks you have to do, breaking them into smaller parts wherever possible.
- Every weekend, make a realistic plan for the upcoming week.
- Every night, make a realistic plan for the next day. Don't make your plans too ambitious, or you will always be failing to get through your list. Success feels better than failure, so plan accordingly.

Example of a Revision Plan (plan time for REST, Hobbies/Sports/Time with Family & Friends)

Time (spend up to 50 minutes on each session)	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Session 1			
Session 2			
Session 3			

Example of a Subject Plan

Think Levels!

- Level 1 is **SUBJECT**
- Level 2 is **TOPIC**
- Level 3 is the **TOPIC** divided into **STUDY UNITS**

Time (spend up to 50 minutes on each session)	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Session 1			
Session 2			
Session 3			

1.2 – Your Comprehension is Poor

Your class work material should fall into a pattern that flows and makes sense. If it seems like thousands of disjointed bits of information, then it will be far more difficult to remember and you'll have far more difficulty concentrating.

Could you take a blank piece of paper, right now, and write down the structure of your subjects? If not, then you should spend some time getting the big picture, because you are like a traveller with no map.

- Take your course outline and make a conceptual "map" of the main units in the entire course.
- For each chapter or unit covered, make a smaller map of the topics it contains.
- As you follow the course, keep track of where you are on the map, and anticipate what is coming.
- When you see the pattern of the course, your comprehension and concentration will improve.

1.3 – You're Procrastinating

So you get organized and you set up a schedule, but you keep avoiding your work and finding other things to do. Now what?

- Re-visit your motivations. Remember, the current task is related to the course, which is related to the program which you chose, which is related to larger issues of what you want in life. You don't have to have everything figured out, but remembering the big picture can help you get going. "I want to do this" is a much healthier attitude than "I should do this".
- Develop a sense of progress. Break your study task down into chunks. Each time you sit down to work, set an objective for that study session, enjoy the feeling of getting it done, and do something fun to reward yourself for making progress.
- Don't get drawn into perfectionism or fear of failure. Just emphasize what you know, what you want to know, and what you want to express. Do your best, but don't waste energy on impossible ideals.
- Don't get too isolated in your studies. Talk about the material with teachers, family, friends, and other students.

1.4 – You're neglecting the way your body works

Remember, the mind and the body are not two separate things. To improve concentration, get to know your physiology better.

- Nutrition – It's harder to concentrate when you're operating on junk food.
- Sleep – It's said that most people in our society are sleep-deprived to some extent. If this includes you, then your concentration is worse than it could be. 8 hours sleep a night is advised.
- Time of day – People have differing patterns of high and low energy throughout the day. Know your own patterns and plan your work accordingly.
- Exercise – A good workout sharpens the mind. If you skip out on exercise because of time restraints, your concentration will probably suffer.

1.5 – Your work environment is poor

Take a survey of your work environment.

- Privacy – Find ways to eliminate unwanted interruptions.
- Noise – Too much or too little can both be problems.
- Air Quality – How's the ventilation?
- Temperature – Is it too high or low?
- Comfort – Watch your posture and support. Avoid drowse-inducing positions.
- Clutter – Get everything off your desk except the work that you're doing.



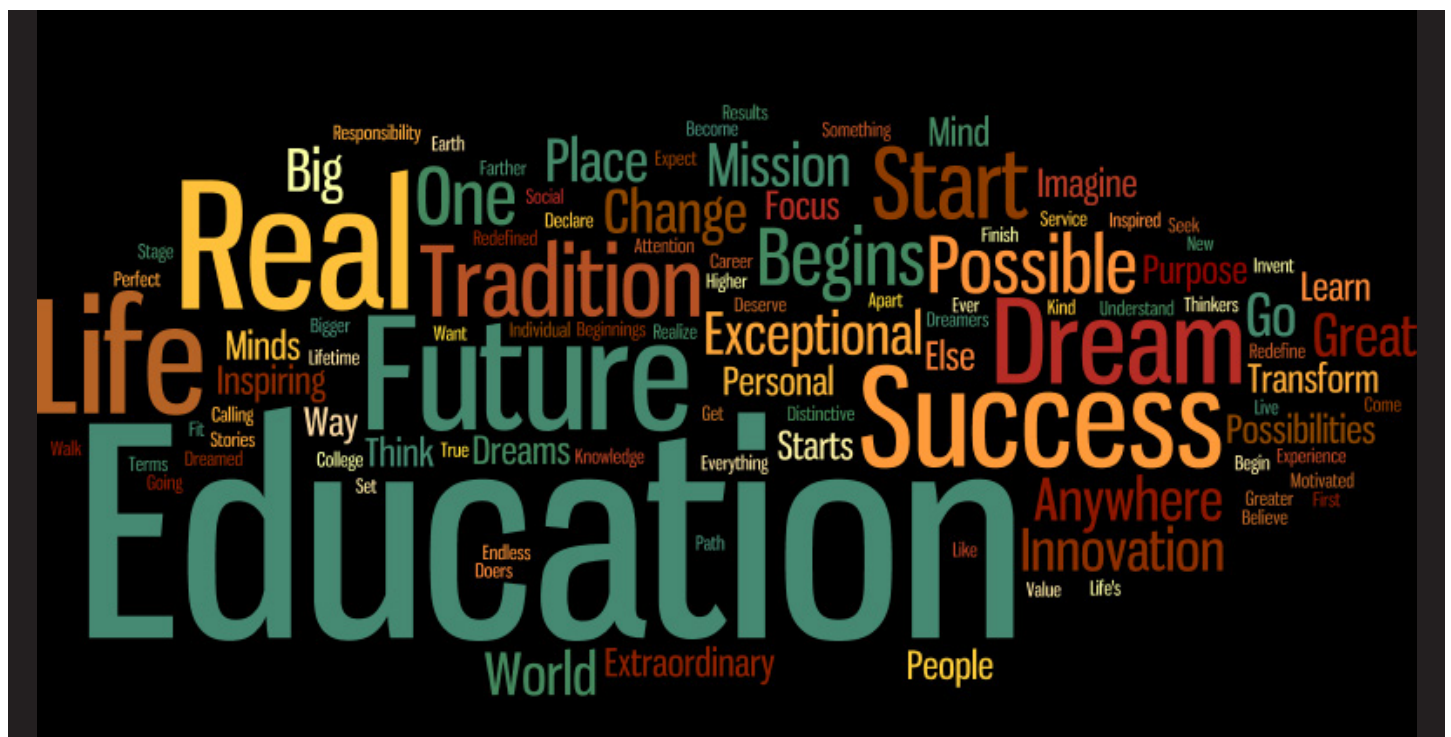
1.6 – Your mind just keeps wandering

Think of concentration as presence of mind. When your mind is jumping from one topic to another, it is typically a case of ideas and images from the past and the future impinging on the present. When these distracting extra thoughts come to you, what can you do? In some cases, personal issues need to be addressed before you can concentrate properly. If so, you should think them through, talk to a friend or family member. Many times, however, you can improve your concentration with a bit of practice. When distracting thoughts arise, you can follow them, but this can lead to aimless mental wandering. You can try to shut them out, but they'll probably just keep nagging you. Your best strategy may be to relax and let them fall away by themselves.

1. With practice, you can learn to drop extra ideas before they pull your attention away from the present activity.
2. To ground yourself and achieve presence of mind, it is also helpful to pay attention to your breathing. Regular, deep breathing helps to re-unite your mind and your body, and brings you back to the present.

Both of these tips address what you can do in the moment when concentration is eluding you, but you can also engage in practices which, over the longer term, develop your ability to concentrate. Here are some suggestions:

- Meditation helps bring about a calm but alert mind, which is the basis for concentration.
- Yoga, Tai Chi, and other such practices are, in a sense, meditation with movement.
- Arts, crafts and music are good practices for focusing the mind, and can be helpful in improving concentration.
- Exercise and sports can bring about that same alertness and presence of mind.



Section 2 – Top Tips

If you're looking for quick and easier wins, look no further than:

1. Organisation
2. Reading
3. Making Notes
4. Mind Mapping

2.1 – Organisation

Make sure you have a separate space at home for studying, ideally near a window at the side or behind you.

Make sure the work space is organised and comfortable

GET KITTED OUT! – suggested equipment and study advice below:

- A4 ring binder for each subject, with dividers
- Smaller file(s) with dividers for weekly notes
- File your notes in the subject ring binder weekly
- Put dates and titles on everything, use subheadings, highlight key words.
- Note where you got information from – what book? Page number?
- Diary/Planner – fill in all dates, deadlines, schedule etc.
- Always have your diary with you!
- Every week write a brief plan: write up notes, reading, coursework, homework, revision
- Write regular job/task lists and prioritise – use sub headings
- Get some coloured pens and highlighters!
- Break up larger tasks – set start and end times for tasks
- Write down and then look up words you don't understand
- Make good use of study periods



2.2 – Reading

- Read a few paragraphs, stop and without looking sum up what you have read – write down key words. Highlight key sections in the text.
- Ask questions about the topic before reading – what are you aiming to get out of the section you are reading – then when you are reading try and answer them.
- Give yourself a goal of how much you are going to read in one sitting, e.g. two chapters, or 30 minutes.
- Psychologically this is better than being filled with dread and just thinking about how many pages the whole book has.
- Before reading, do 5 minutes (max) of mind mapping – writing down everything you know about a topic. This will help focus you and increase your concentration, getting you mentally set. It also 'activates' your storage system and makes your brain more susceptible to information.
- If you know little about the topic, think about what questions you want answered about that topic before you start reading.
- Try sub-vocalisation! This means internally pronouncing words in your head – so imagine you can hear yourself saying it out loud. This will help your memory and your concentration.
- Write down and look up words you do not understand.

2.3 – Making Notes

Useful Strategies

- Note key words and main ideas
- Write phrases – not sentences
- Use abbreviations
- Use headings
- Number points
- Make the page memorable – with colour, illustrations, etc.
- Link up information – using arrows, dotted lines, numbers, same colours etc.
- Note sources of information
- Write quotes in a different colour

Unhelpful strategies

- Copying chunks and phrases
- Copying out notes over and over again to make them neater – this is not revising

How can you take even better notes?

- Note-taking is NOT about copying the words somebody

else has written on to a page you are writing.

- Note-taking is about reducing the material, so it can be understood and recalled more easily.
- Some students find it very difficult to reduce material to a series of key points e.g. bullet points.
- Bullet points are more easily recalled than entire paragraphs.
- Creating bullet points is an intellectual skill as the KEY POINT has to be identified, which is not always very easy. If the key point cannot be identified then it is unlikely the paragraph will be recalled, as it hasn't been clearly understood.



2.3 – Making Notes (cont)

Practice your note taking techniques by reading the familiar story below, then look at the examples underneath:

The Story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Goldilocks. She went for a walk in the forest. Pretty soon, she came upon a house. She knocked and, when no one answered, she walked right in. At the table in the kitchen, there were three bowls of porridge. Goldilocks was hungry. She tasted the porridge from the first bowl.

“This porridge is too hot!” she exclaimed.

So, she tasted the porridge from the second bowl.

“This porridge is too cold,” she said

So, she tasted the last bowl of porridge.

“Ahhh, this porridge is just right,” she said happily and she ate it all up.

After she’d eaten the three bears’ breakfasts she decided she was feeling a little tired. So, she walked into the living room where she saw three chairs. Goldilocks sat in the first chair to rest her feet.

“This chair is too big!” she exclaimed.

So she sat in the second chair.

“This chair is too big, too!” she whined.

So she tried the last and smallest chair.

“Ahhh, this chair is just right,” she sighed. But just as she settled down into the chair to rest, it broke into pieces!

Goldilocks was very tired by this time, so she went upstairs to the bedroom. She lay down in the first bed, but it was too hard. Then she lay in the second bed, but it was too soft. Then she lay down in the third bed and it was just right. Goldilocks fell asleep.

As she was sleeping, the three bears came home.

“Someone’s been eating my porridge,” growled the Papa bear.

“Someone’s been eating my porridge,” said the Mama bear.

“Someone’s been eating my porridge and they ate it all up!” cried the Baby bear.

“Someone’s been sitting in my chair,” growled the Papa bear.

“Someone’s been sitting in my chair,” said the Mama bear.

“Someone’s been sitting in my chair and they’ve broken it all to pieces,” cried the Baby bear.

They decided to look around some more and when they got upstairs to the bedroom, Papa bear growled,

“Someone’s been sleeping in my bed,”

“Someone’s been sleeping in my bed, too” said the Mama bear

“Someone’s been sleeping in my bed and she’s still there!” exclaimed Baby bear.

Just then, Goldilocks woke up and saw the three bears. She screamed, “Help!” And she jumped up and ran out of the room. Goldilocks ran down the stairs, opened the door, and ran away into the forest. And she never returned to the home of the three bears.

Top Tips for identifying bullet points using the story as an example!

1. Understand the **Big Picture** about the story / explanation / theory.

A girl called goldilocks enters the house of a family of bears without permission.

2. **Underline** or **highlight** the **key points** as you read – leave out detail, capture the key points only.

For example, Goldilocks enters the house, tests out three chairs for size taste three bowls of porridge, tries three beds for comfort falls asleep. The details about porridge being too hot and chairs breaking is extra detail which you would remember from the key point.

3. Follow a **logical order** to aid your understanding.

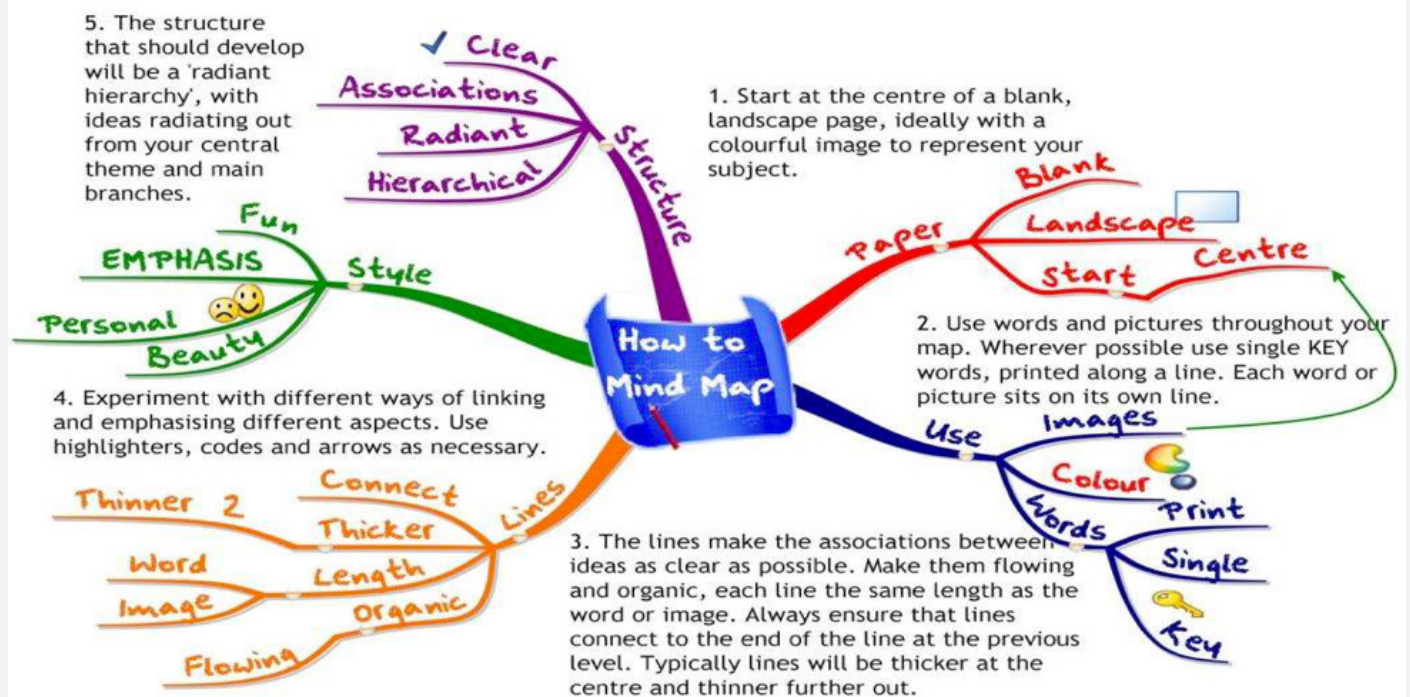
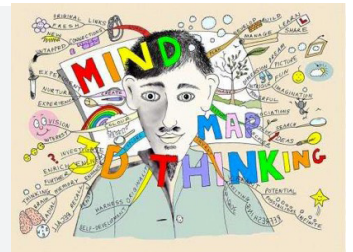
Place the following in order of sequence that they appear in the story by writing a number next to each point in the order it comes. So to get you started, place a one next to ‘Goldilocks enters the house’.

- Goldilocks runs out of the house.
- Goldilocks falls asleep on the bed
- Goldilocks is woken up by the three Bears daddy mummy and baby bear
- Goldilocks test out three chairs full-size
- Goldilocks tastes three bowls of porridge
- Goldilocks enters the house
- Goldilocks tries out three beds for comfort

4. Avoid highlighting **too much** – the idea is not to create a page of notes in luminous yellow so it can be read in the dark! Avoid underlining or highlighting words that simply connect ideas e.g. and, of, which, as, that, if, of, off, then, what. None of these words is crucial to understanding a key point.

2.4 – Mind Mapping

Mind Mapping is a graphic networked method of storing, organising, prioritizing information using key words and images to trigger recall of information. The idea is to engage both the left (logic/ words/numbers) and right (colour/picture/imagination) sides of the brain, which helps memory. The key is that you want images and words to create associations. Be imaginative.



8 Ways to Study Better

You can prevent yourself from forgetting up to 80% of the material by reviewing a lecture or study content within 24 hours.

When you study, focus on only studying. Multitasking can handicap learning as your attention is split between each task.

Instead of trying to memorize information, make connections between the material's ideas. This may help you remember more material in less time.

Instead of re-reading information again and again, close your eyes and recite as much as possible from memory. This can cement long-term memorization.

If available, take practice tests. One study showed that students retained 50% more of the material if they tested themselves after learning something.

Listening to classical music while studying may activate the parts of your brain that can help you pay attention and make predictions. It can also improve your mood.

Become more efficient when studying with flashcards by using the Leitner System. Repeat flashcards that you have difficulty with more often than those you have memorized.

Consider exercising before your next study session. It may help make your mind more alert, and give you the endurance you need to study for several hours.

Sources: uwaterloo.ca | chronicle.com | flashcarddb.com | sciencedaily.com | upi.com | sciencemag.org | nytimes.com | calnewport.com | helium.com

Section 3 – Revision Strategies

Getting down to the nitty gritty of revision support, looking at:

1. **Environment**
2. **Preparation**
3. **Long term memory**
4. **How to test yourself**



3.1 – Environment

What sort of environment do you create when you revise?

Do you?	Yes	No
Tidy your desk in a way it has never been tidied before?		
Place highlighter pens neatly side by side in order of the colour of the rainbow or involve yourself in a similar distracting task?		
Go online to research colours of the rainbow to check if pens are in the correct order or go online for other useless bits of information?		
Put revision off until later when you might feel a bit more motivated?		
Ponder which has more caffeine in it, Tea or Coffee?		
Spend too long choosing music to play during revision?		
Go on Snapchat / Facebook etc to keep informed about what everyone else is up to?		
Settle down to revision and then realise the key to revision is a snack?		
Check your mobile is on?		

What other things distract you? Try to identify 3...

Many students create a leisure environment for revision (distracting choice of music, phones, TV., internet) when they should be creating a learning environment (comfortable seating position, no distractions)

Three things I intend to do in future to make my revision environment more effective are:

3.2 – Preparation

Prepare the raw material

You cannot revise without having all the raw material in place first so...read below and tick what you have done for each subject and cross what you are still to do:

- **FIND THE SPECIFICATIONS/SYLLABUS** – Make sure you have a copy of the specification for each of your subjects so you know what you need to cover for the examination.
- **EXAMINERS' REPORTS AND MARK SCHEMES** – Gather examiners' reports and some examples of mark schemes for different types of question.
- **ORGANISE YOUR FILES** – Place your notes into sections that relate to the specification – then you know that you have covered all the key areas
- **FIND MISSING WORK** Check somebody else's file to see if you are missing work – choose that person wisely!
- **GATHER REVISION GUIDES AND OTHER TEXT BOOKS** Make sure they are for your syllabus. Ask your teacher what they recommend.
- **DON'T WASTE TOO MUCH TIME GATHERING TOO MANY RESOURCES!** – You could spend forever searching the internet etc. Find what is relevant and suggested and get revising!
- **PREPARE YOUR WORKING AREA** Make sure it is tidy, comfortable and well lit.

Streamline

Tips for streamlining – try the following as many students find these useful:

- **READ AND MAKE NOTES** – Make notes from any hand outs or resources that you have been given if you haven't already done so.
- **WRITE KEY POINTS** – Reduce your lengthy notes to bullet points, making specific note of key words and phrases. Use the 'CHUG' method to emphasise these:
 - Coloured pens, Highlighters, Underlining, Gaps (leave larger spaces between points)
- **PREPARE REVISION CARDS** – Use card or folded A4 paper to force you to reduce notes to a set of bullet points – make sure you include the key points
- **DIAGRAMS** that force you to organise material – you will probably remember a diagram more than a full page of notes

How to remember

Once you have reduced your notes to a set of revision points then it is time to commit them to memory. Psychologists have explored memory and suggest that in the examination you will only recall information from long term memory (LTM). Revision the night before is still part of LTM! Short term memory (STM) only lasts for about 1-30 seconds – enough to remember a phone number from the operator while you dial. So do not rely on STM!

3.3 – Long term memory

The good news – Not much information is lost from long term memory, once it has gone in!

The bad news – The problem is not whether the information is there (availability) but rather how the information that is in LTM can be located (accessibility). The following strategies help you get the information INTO long term memory and locate it afterwards.

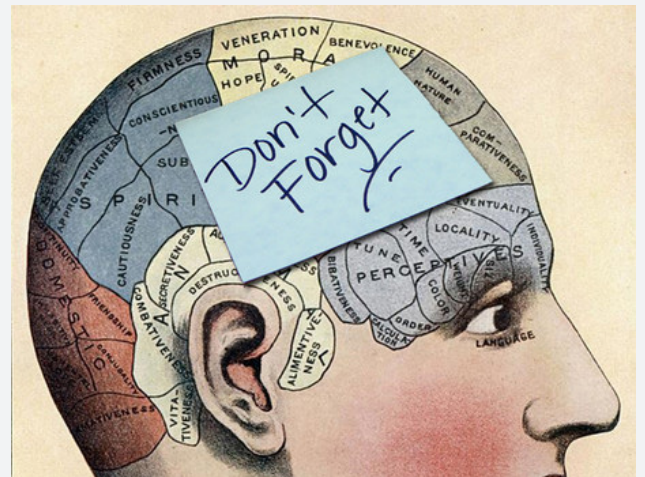
8 Core principles to remembering

Imagination and association help you to remember things. If you link a piece of information that is already known to you it is easier to remember.

1. **SENSES** – Visualise, hear, taste, smell, sense things
2. **EXAGGERATION** – think large, absurd images
3. **MOVEMENT** – Make images move
4. **COLOUR** – Brings memories alive! Visual senses are heightened
5. **NUMBERS** – List things using numbers – this adds order
6. **SYMBOLS** – Help prompt memory, for example a logo automatically makes you think of something.
7. **ORDER + PATTERNS** – Group and sequence information, sort by colour, size, weight, age, etc.
8. **LAUGHTER** – make things funny, rude etc. Anything to help you remember!

Strategies to get information into Long Term Memory

- **Rehearsal** – Re-reading your notes is a very basic way to improve recall, but be very careful, because if this is the only method that is used you will struggle to retain the information. This is really a starting point.
- **Playback** – You could record yourself reading through key notes, so that you can listen to them at various times throughout the day.
- **Understand your notes** – Information that you understand tends to be recalled easily – this is known as semantic processing. Write key definitions next to words and summarise key processes/theories etc.
- **Check your understanding** – Ask your teachers if you are unsure about certain areas. This will keep you engaged in lessons, help your concentration and therefore make your brain more susceptible to understanding and remembering.
- **Use Diagrams** – Visually represented information is a powerful tool. If you can draw a diagram to summarise a point, process, theory, then you clearly understand the information. Mind maps are one of the best ways. See student study skills booklet for further information about these. Even the use of tables to show advantages vs disadvantages etc. can be very useful.
- **Reduce your notes** – It is difficult to revise from large volumes of writing, therefore convert lots of paragraphs into succinct points and key facts. The process of doing this is part of getting the information into your long term memory – to summarise your notes shows that you have an understanding and in turn this will help recall at a later date.
- **Highlight Key Points** – Making key parts of your notes stand out immediately draws your attention to them. This will also help you link key information together and associate certain words with other key phrases and points that will gain you most marks in exam questions.
- **Organise your notes** – Keeping notes in order aids understanding. It is hard to revise atopic if it is incomplete. You may wish to bring notes from the previous lesson to the next lesson so you can use the same piece of paper to continue. If you miss a lesson – catch up with the notes. Make sure you put all notes into sections (relating to the syllabus). Then use lots of subheadings and dividers. Date your work!



Strategies for retrieving information from Long Term Memory

The trick is to develop retrieval cues – triggers that jog your memory for specific pieces of information. You can do this by using some of the following methods:

- **Method of Loci** – ‘Loci’ means places: Place key points you need to remember in an imaginary room (or place) and then try to remember the layout of the room. E.g To remember a shopping list – a picture of a carrot on a wall peas scattered on the floor, glass of milk on a table. The more obscure the better!
- **Associations** – Associate facts/ideas etc. with an odd or bizarre image to help trigger the correct recall. Again, make these bizarre.
- **Mnemonics** – Think of the first letter of a series of key points then make a word from them to help you remember all the points. E.g. SMART for Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time framed for target setting.
- **Organisation** – Sorting notes into categories can help provide retrieval cues – triggers that jog your memory. Mark schemes often reward a range of issues rather than lots of points from a similar point of view so thinking of different categories is useful. Organising notes into categories will help you recall the range of points.
- **Make your own Flash Cards** – Place a key theory/explanation/period in history on one side of the card and on the other write down the key points. Carry the card with you and test yourself.
- **Use friends to test you** – Small revision groups can make revision more varied and less of a lonely exercise.

3.4 – How to test yourself

The best students test themselves along the way so they know that they can recall the information – this tends to reduce nerves on the day of the exam as the students feel confident they know the information compared to someone that has no evidence that they can recall the information. To test yourself throughout your revision process consider the following strategies:

- **Look, cover, write, check** – Write out a number of key points from a page, cover the page and then write out the points again – then check whether you have remembered all of the points. Those points you forget, write down and then try the process again. If you cannot recall the information now, you will not be able to in an exam. Keep using this process along the way!
- **Recall a diagram** – If you have a chart or diagram, draw a blank version and try to complete it without looking at your notes. Use the method above until you get it right.
- **Ask yourself simple exam style questions** – Look up some past paper questions or create your own, using the correct terminology. E.g. Describe and explain... You should also write your own mini mark scheme.
- **Ask yourself the toughest of question** – Find some challenging past paper questions, using your notes and the mark scheme, write a model answer. Then try and answer the question again without the model. See how you got on and keep trying. This can give you confidence before the big day!
- **PQRST Method** –
 - **Preview** – get an overview (the big picture) by reading the outline at the beginning of the chapter. There may even be a summary section. Get an idea of the main topics
 - **Question** yourself – Make questions from each of the topics/subheadings etc. So for example one section might be 'The Big Bang Theory'. You would turn this into – Describe and explain the Big Bang Theory. So you should have a short list of questions that you want to find the answers to.
 - **Read** the chapter – look for the answers to the questions you have made e.g. search for the explanation of the Big Bang Theory.
 - **Self-recitation** – Try to remember the key/main points of each section – either say them out loud or write them down.
 - **Test** yourself – After you have finished the entire chapter – how many of the main ideas can you remember? Can you remember the answers to your questions? Timed answers – You must test yourself under timed conditions! Make it as realistic as possible to the exam.

Exam Keywords – Learn what the exam questions are looking for!!

Account for – Give reasons for; explain why something happens.

Analyse – Examine in very close detail; identify important points and chief features.

Comment on – Identify and write about the main issues, giving your reactions based upon what you have read, avoid purely personal opinion.

Compare – Show how two or more things are similar. Indicate relevance or consequences of similarities.

Contrast – Set two or more items or arguments in opposition so as to draw out differences. Indicate whether the differences are significant. If appropriate, give reasons why one argument may be preferable.

Critically evaluate – Weigh arguments for and against something, assessing the strength of the evidence on both sides. Use criteria to guide your assessment of which opinions, theories, models or items are preferable.

Define – Give the exact meaning of. Where relevant, show that you understand why the definition may be problematic.

Describe – Give the main characteristics of features of something, or outline the main events.

Discuss – Write about the most important aspects of (probably including criticism); give arguments for and against; consider the implications of.

Distinguish – Bring out the differences between two (possibly confusable) items.

Evaluate – Assess the worth, importance or usefulness of something, using evidence. There will probably be causes to make cases both for and against.

Examine – Put subject 'under the microscope' looking at it in detail. If appropriate, also 'critically evaluate' it.

Explain – Make clear why something happens, or why something is the way it is.

Illustrate – Make something clear and explicit, giving examples or evidence.

Interpret – Give the meaning and relevance of data or other material presented.

Justify – Give evidence which supports an argument or idea; show why decisions or conclusions were made, considering objections that others might make.

Narrate – Concentrate on saying what happened, telling it as a story.

Outline – Give only the main points, showing the main structure.

Relate – Show similarities and connections between two or more things.

State – Give the main features, written very clearly.

Summarise – Draw out the main points and key features.

To what extent – Consider how far something is true, or contributes to a final outcome. Consider also ways in which the proposition is not true.



Section 4 – Preparing for the Exams

4.1 – Equipment

You are responsible for bringing your own exam equipment which must be in a see-through pencil case or clear plastic bag. Make sure you have everything you need before you enter the exam room. You must bring: black pens, pencils, sharpener, eraser, ruler, protractor, pair of compasses and calculator. You must not use any kind of gel pen or correction fluid (bottle, pen or tape). You may use highlighters to highlight parts of the question but do not use it in the answers you write. Food is not allowed in the exam room. You may bring only water to drink in a small, see-through bottle with a sports cap and all labels removed.

4.2 – Arrival and entry to an exam

It is your responsibility to arrive for exams on the right date at the right time. You must come in full school uniform, and be here at least fifteen minutes before the start times shown on the whole school timetable overleaf. There will be an exam seat allocation list posted outside each room. Look at this to see which exam desk number you have been allocated for the exam and then line up quietly outside until you are called in by the invigilators to take your seat. **It is essential that you sit at the correct exam desk. Speak to an invigilator if someone else is sitting in your seat.**

4.3 – Lateness and absence

If you arrive after 10am in the morning and 2.30pm in the afternoon you will not be allowed to take the exam. **Allow enough time for transport delays when planning your journey.** If you are allowed in before these cut-off times, we will do our best to ensure that you get the full exam time allowed but we **cannot guarantee** this.

If you are too unwell to take an exam please contact the school as early as possible on the day. You should bring a letter from your GP or hospital confirming your illness to the Exam Office to support our correspondence with the Exam Board concerning your absence. Please note that oversleeping or misreading the timetable are never accepted by the Exam Board as a satisfactory explanation for absence.

4.4 – During the exam

You are under exam conditions as soon as you enter the exam room. Follow all instructions issued by the invigilators on duty. They may move quietly around the room during the exam and will be vigilant to what is going on. Raise your hand if you need their attention but be aware that they are not allowed to explain or offer guidance on any aspect of the exam paper. In the event of a fire alarm or other emergency, do not panic. Listen carefully to what the invigilator tells you to do. Invigilators will give you five minutes' notice before the end of an exam. Stop writing when you are told and remain seated in silence until all exam papers in the room have been collected and invigilators have dismissed you. Leave the room in silence because other candidates doing longer exams may still be working.

4.5 – Mobile phones/iPods etc.

The biggest single cause of exam disqualification is the presence of mobile phones and other electronic devices in the exam room so it is best not to bring your phone with you on exam days. If you bring your phone by mistake, switch it off or take out the battery and put it in your bag. Under no circumstances keep any electronic device in your pocket during an exam.

A Prayer before the Test

My God, enable me to trust in the good outcome of the test I am about to take;
help me to contribute my own share of optimism and confidence.

With your grace, my God, I hope to crown my efforts with success.

Keep far from me at this moment any presumption that it all depends exclusively on me.

You are next to me, my God, the necessary and welcome presence in all the moments of my life.

I will take this test, my God, because it is important for my personal development.

My God, be the source of my inspiration in my doubts and uncertainties, supporting me with your blessing.

Amen.

9 Ways to Beat Revision Stress



Do the actual work – revise!



When really stressed, talk to someone about it



Get some fresh air each day



Stick to regular meal times



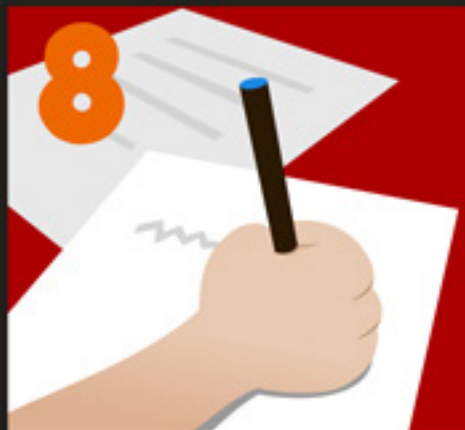
Do something to switch off an hour before bed



Don't dwell on worst case scenarios



A good sleep the night before is better than last minute cramming



Once you've done the exam, move on to the next one



Don't aim for perfection – it's a myth and doesn't exist