



# A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE REVISION



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# CONTENTS

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- 03** Choosing a setting
- 04** Revision techniques
- 10** Pitfalls to avoid
- 12** Well- being
- 16** Exam advice
- 17** Study timetable



With all you have going on in your life, revision time is very limited. This is why it is really **IMPORTANT** that you take full advantage of it and do the most effective and efficient revision.

**THE POWER IS IN YOUR HANDS  
AND  
YOU ARE THE KEY TO YOUR SUCCESS!**

## **THERE IS A REASON BEHIND EXAMS...**

The learning opportunities that schools offer you will last a lifetime. The amazing skills you are learning now will have a lasting impact on your life, leading you to a bright future ahead.

Your exams are your opportunity to demonstrate your true ability and your full potential. To achieve your very best, you must prepare. This leaflet will guide you on the journey to mastery of these exams.

*“An environment fostering learning is the core of effective revision.”*



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT SETTING

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It is worth making sure that your study environment is comfortable and focused. Make sure you have space to work, that you are organised and that you have all of your equipment within reach. Spend some time early in the school year to tidy your revision area and prepare yourself for the academic year ahead.

### WHEN IT IS TIME TO REVISE...

Sit down and get into the right mindset. Have a bottle of water nearby to stay hydrated and attentive. Put your mobile phone in another room on silent and only use a device if you absolutely need it to revise, otherwise it will distract you during your focused revision. Any other sources of distraction or procrastination are bad, they will lower your grades; cut them out of your calm and relaxed study sanctuary.





This section will explain some of the most powerful revision strategies available. These are proven by educational psychologists to work for all students after extensive scientific research.



# STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES



## METACOGNITION

Metacognition refers to the ability to think about and understand your own thinking processes. It involves being aware of your thoughts, emotions, and knowledge, and having the ability to reflect on and control your cognitive activities. In simple terms, metacognition is thinking about how you think. It includes being aware of your strengths and weaknesses, setting goals, monitoring your progress, and adjusting your strategies to improve your learning and problem-solving abilities. Metacognition helps you become a more *effective learner and problem-solver* by enabling you to actively manage and regulate your own thinking processes. On the right are some ideas to get you started with metacognition.

1  
**AFTER COMPLETING A PROBLEM, THINK ABOUT THE THOUGHT PROCESS THAT HELPED YOU SUCCESSFULLY SOLVE THE PROBLEM.**

2  
**WHEN YOU HAVE A CREATIVE IDEA, CONSIDER WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO COME UP WITH IT.**

3  
**WHEN YOU HAVE MADE A BREAKTHROUGH IN UNDERSTANDING A CONCEPT, REFLECT ON WHAT YOU DID DIFFERENTLY.**



# RETRIEVAL PRACTICE



Retrieval practice is a learning technique that involves actively recalling information from memory. It focuses on retrieving information rather than simply reviewing or re-reading it. Practicing retrieval means that your memories are stronger, longer lasting and also easy to access under the pressure of exams.

**INSTEAD OF PASSIVELY ABSORBING CONTENT, RETRIEVAL PRACTICE INVOLVES ACTIVELY ATTEMPTING TO RECALL INFORMATION WITHOUT RELYING ON EXTERNAL CUES OR PROMPTS.**

This technique has been shown to enhance long-term retention and promote deeper learning by strengthening memory retrieval pathways and identifying gaps in knowledge.

**EXAMPLES OF RETRIEVAL PRACTICE INCLUDE SELF-QUIZZING, FLASHCARDS, AND ANSWERING QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE MATERIAL BEING STUDIED.**

## FLASHCARDS

Write key questions on the front of a flash card and put the perfect answer on the back. Answer without looking then check the back. How accurately did you do?



*The best way to practice for an exam, is to do a practice exam.* Timer on. Pen at the ready. Ready? Go for it, complete as much as you can and check your answers thoroughly. Then once finished, self-mark and self-reflect. Try to match the experience as closely as possible to the real exam. If you're not ready for this, there are plenty of smaller scale self-testing exercises you can do. Online quizzes or practice questions are a great way to build up confidence for actual exams.

Lots and lots of exam practice will lead to you getting better at exams!



## I-N-T-E-R-L-E-A-V-I-N-G

This is the process of mixing the order of revision so that different subjects and topics are dispersed throughout your revision schedule. Educational psychologists have demonstrated that an interwoven approach to learning can be very effective at improving long term memory and preparing for exams.

Day	Blocked	Interleaved ✓
1	Maths	Maths
2	Maths	Science
3	Maths	History
4	Science	English
5	Science	Science

It can be tempting to focus on one topic for several days however this doesn't pay off in the long term. Even worse is to cram the day before a test because this is far less effective than spaced out and interleaved practice over time. For this reason, it's vital that you start preparing early!



# SELF- REFLECTION

*"Self-Reflection gives you the power to learn from your mistakes as well as your successes"*

This is the process of considering carefully your learning experiences.

Take a moment to reflect and consider what you have just learned. Digest it.

For example, maybe you just answered an exam question, how well did you score? It's important to self-mark using an official mark scheme, and then self-reflect.

**DID IT GO WELL? GREAT! WHAT MADE YOUR ANSWER SO STRONG? CAN YOU USE THIS SUCCESS ELSEWHERE? WHAT STRATEGIES DID YOU USE? HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE?**

**DID YOU MISS SOME MARKS? NO WORRIES, THIS IS PART OF THE LEARNING PROCESS. HOW COULD YOU AVOID IT NEXT TIME? COULD YOU ADD MORE DETAIL? DID YOU READ THE QUESTION INCORRECTLY? IS THIS A TOPIC YOU NEED TO PRIORITISE FOR TOMORROW'S REVISION?**

Make a habit of routinely reflecting on your progress. Have you finished revising a chapter in History? Reflect on how it relates to the rest of the course. Have you finally understood each step of a method in Maths? Reflect on the logic behind each step. Have you written a very high-level analysis in English? Reflect on why it was so effective.

**REFLECTION IS SIMILAR TO METACOGNITION, AND THE TWO STRATEGIES OVERLAP AND COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER.**



When you are revising a topic, you need to think about it. Explain it to yourself.

## ELABORATING

The best way to do this is to try to rewrite it in your own words, focussing on the key pieces of information. You can *elaborate* on this by adding more ideas, thinking about it more deeply or comparing it to another idea or topic.

Elaboration forces you to think about the content properly. Thinking leads to remembering. Thinking also leads to improved understanding, and more detailed exam answers.

What are the common themes?

Can you give examples of you using them?

What simple steps could you take to improve the effectiveness of your revision?

**Practice:** Try *elaborating* on all the revision strategies mentioned above. Use the questions on the left to get you started.

## REVISION TECHNIQUES

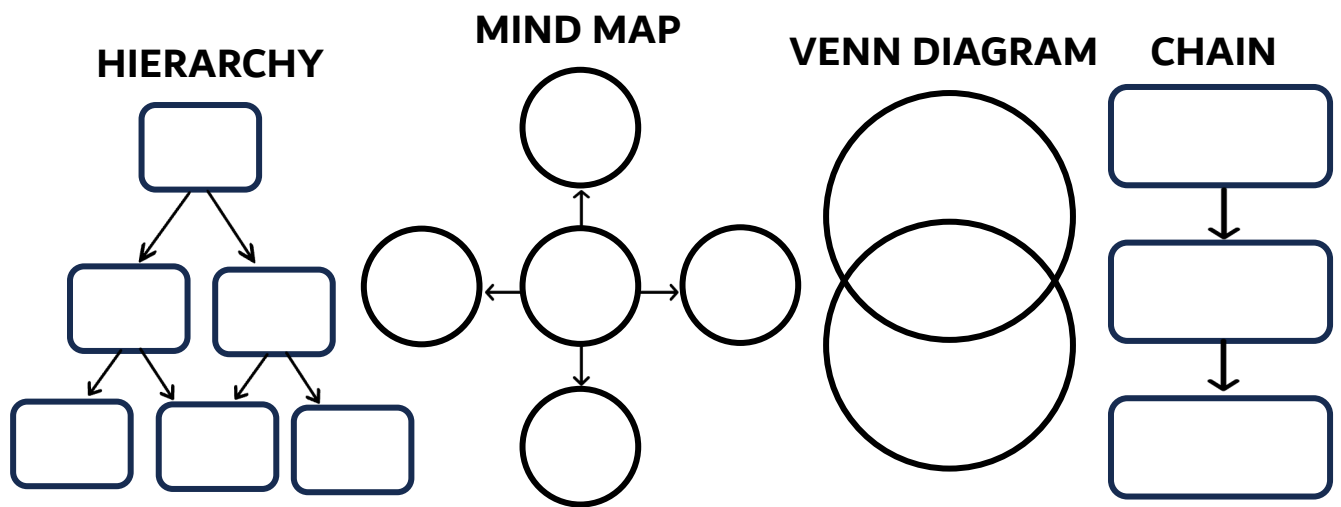
THE HIGHLIGHTER IS JUST THE START!

Truly effective revision comes from engaging with the content you're learning in a deeper way than just highlighting words on a page. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that highlighting is learning.

# TRANSFORM IT!

Graphic organizers are a great way of transforming your notes into visually clear ideas. They can be used to create links, show a narrative, identify the causes, compare ideas, or show hierarchy.

Use color and take pride in these notes. If you care about your notes, you will look after them and use them for a long time. This will help your memory!



## DUAL CODING

Dual coding is a method of putting your knowledge into visual form alongside words. It increases the chances of your remembering it. A good example of this is making a comic strip showing the timeline of events in a topic in history. Dual coding means that your brain will process both the images and the words together, leading to stronger memories and better understanding.

# COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

1

**CRAMMING:** It doesn't work. You need to revise for months before the test to achieve your full potential. Last minute revision has far less impact on your memory than spaced, and regular revision.

2

**READING, READING AND READING:** Any revision is better than no revision, however just reading a textbook isn't going to help you remember and master the knowledge and skills. Use the techniques and strategies discussed earlier to support deeper learning.

3

**WRITING THE SAME NOTES OVER AND OVER AGAIN:** If you've learnt it, it's now time to do practice questions or practice tests. Re-writing the same thing isn't going to help much.

4

**WRITING OUT ESSAYS AND MEMORISING THEM BY HEART:** This is time consuming and counter-productive. It is unlikely exact same question will come up on the test, and it is even less likely that you will remember hundreds of words in the right order.



5

**PROCRASTINATION:** This means putting off work. Face up to reality and just sit down to focus and study. Wasting time is unhelpful.

6

**“I CAN’T FORCE MYSELF TO STUDY”:** Rather than forcing yourself to study, encourage yourself. Set short term achievable goals to work towards. Find the motivation of achievement early on.

7

**PANICKING:** Don’t panic. Just relax, take a breath and do what you can.

8

**MAKING EXCUSES:** Anyone can make excuses to avoid doing something. This is negative thinking. Try to move to positive mindset which focuses happy thoughts.

**PREPARATION AND READINESS ARE  
THE KEYS TO ACING YOUR EXAMS**

# MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

TECHNOLOGY

SLEEP

DIET

WATER

EXERCISE

As you grow, your mind undergoes a fundamental shift that drives you to seek social rewards, including attention and approval from your peers, which can interfere with your independent revision. In this section, we will discuss how to improve your wellbeing and avoid letting exam season become too stressful.

## TECHNOLOGY

*"Social media fosters a constant state of distraction, compromising on effective and meaningful revision."*

Recent research sheds light on the increasing impact of digital media on various aspects of our lives, including brain function, structure, physical and mental health, education, social interaction, and even politics. WHO published strict guidelines about our screen time in 2019 as research concluded that digital technology use has a significant impact on brain function and behaviour. Some of the potential harmful effects of extensive screen time and technology use include heightened attention-deficit symptoms, impaired emotional and social intelligence, technology addiction, social isolation, adverse impact on cognitive and brain development, and sleep deprivation. None of this is good for helping you achieve your potential!

# SLEEP



*"Adequate sleep enhances exam performance and cognitive function for peak results."*

Sleep plays a vital role in good health and well-being throughout your life. The way you feel while you are awake depends in part on what happens while you are sleeping. During sleep, your body is working to support healthy brain function and maintain your physical health. Sleep also serves as an opportunity for the mind to process all the stimuli that we have taken in while we are awake; and triggers changes in the brain that strengthen neural connections helping us to form memories. It is important that, not only during exam season, but you also always aim to have positive sleep hygiene, and this can be achieved by completing the following:

- Limit caffeine and sugary foods/drinks near bedtime.
- Avoid electronic screens (phone, laptop, tablet, desktop) within an hour of bedtime.
- Maintain a regular sleep schedule. Aim for consistency when you go to bed and get up, even during the weekend.

## USEFUL ARTICLES/ WEBSITES

[Why You Should Make a Good Night's Sleep a Priority - Harvard Summer School](#)



[20 Sleep Hygiene Tips and Worksheets for Kids & Teenagers \(positivepsychology.com\)](#)





*"Balanced diets optimize cognition, crucial for successful exams."*



A good diet helps students to beat stress. The kind of food a student eats helps the student prepare effectively and manage the anxiety of the period. During these exams, eating regular and healthy meals and snacks will help you stay nourished. Eating the right foods during the exam helps increase memory and helps maintain calm in difficult situations. Here are some suggestions for exam seasons snacks:

**NUTS**

**FRUITS**

**YOGHURT**

**CRUNCHY VEGETABLES AND DIP**

**WHOLE GRAIN BREAD/ TOAST**

**CEREAL OR ENERGY BARS**

*Exam day  
breakfast  
suggestions:*



**BALANCED DIET  
PYRAMID**

**FATS**

**DAIRY**

**PROTEINS**

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES**

**CARBOHYDRATES AND FIBERS**



**ACCORDING TO MANY STUDIES, AN AVERAGE OF OVER 58% OF STUDENTS ENGAGE IN UNHEALTHY EATING HABITS DURING EXAM PERIODS. MAKE SURE YOU DON'T START OVEREATING OR STARVING BECAUSE OF STRESS.**

*"Hydration helps boost concentration and focus during exams"*



Drinking water is important during exam season because it can have a physiological effect on thinking functions that lead to improved exam performance. Water consumption may also alleviate anxiety, which is known to have a negative effect on exam performance.

So, make sure you always have water on your table and drink at least three litres of water minimum every day. It will also help you cut down the number of Teas or Coffees during the day.



## EXERCISE

Combined with a healthy diet, exercise also helps you keep a healthy body and healthy mind. It helps boost your energy and concentration, and improves blood flow to the brain, leading to a calmer feeling, and being able to think more clearly. Try to go for a run, a swim or anything else active at least once a day while revising. It's also a great opportunity to get some fresh air and digest everything you've learned during the day.

### KEEP IN MIND...

Failing or doing badly in an exam can be really demotivating, but always remember that you still have many chances. Focus on understanding your mistakes and find ways by which you can improve in your next exam. Never compare your scores with others, because everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses- no two students are the same. Find your strengths and focus on those and praise yourself when you do well.



**Suggest:** Offer a reasonable option; apply your knowledge and understanding to a new situation.

**Explain:** Write a detailed answer about how and why something happens. Focus on reasons and examples.

**Predict:** Use known trends and patterns to make a reasonable prediction.

## COMMAND WORDS

**Describe:** Write an answer that covers the facts and characteristics: what happens; what it looks like; where it is found; and when does it happen.

**Outline:** Give only the most important facts and characteristics; if it is a process, only write the most important steps.

Underline the command word, so you know how to answer.



## EXAM ADVICE

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## IF YOU ARE PANICKED...

Take a deep breath and close your eyes for a moment

Try to approach the question from a different angle

Move on to another question- don't waste time on questions that you are stuck on

## AFTER YOU FINISH...

**CHECK!** It can never be overstated- you have to keep checking your answers. Look for silly mistakes, look for details that you may have missed. And check if you have made enough points of developed your answer well enough to get full marks on each question.



Revision Timetable							
Fill this in to plan your weekly revision schedule. Stay organised, stay on track.							
Monday	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	
Tuesday	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	
Wednesday	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	
Thursday	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	
Friday	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	
Saturday	9am	11am	1pm	3pm	5pm	7pm	
Sunday	9am	11am	1pm	3pm	5pm	7pm	

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