



# MAKE IT



Parent Guide to Revision,  
Exams and Success

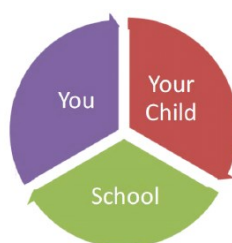
Supporting your child through  
their exams

At Netherthorpe School, we recognise the importance of working in partnership with students and parents to secure the best possible outcomes for our students. The next few months represent a crucial stage of your child's education. GCSE and A Level exams are imminent and it is imperative that all parties work together to maximise attainment.

You are the expert on your own son or daughter and always have been his or her most important teacher. Your support, encouragement and interest can make a spectacular difference to your son or daughter's motivation and ability to cope with demands of their GCSE and A Level exams.

This booklet outlines some useful revision strategies, together with an explanation of the science behind how our memory retrieval works. It offers advice on how you can help your child to plan their revision and manage their time in the exam period, including wellbeing support.

### **A Partnership**



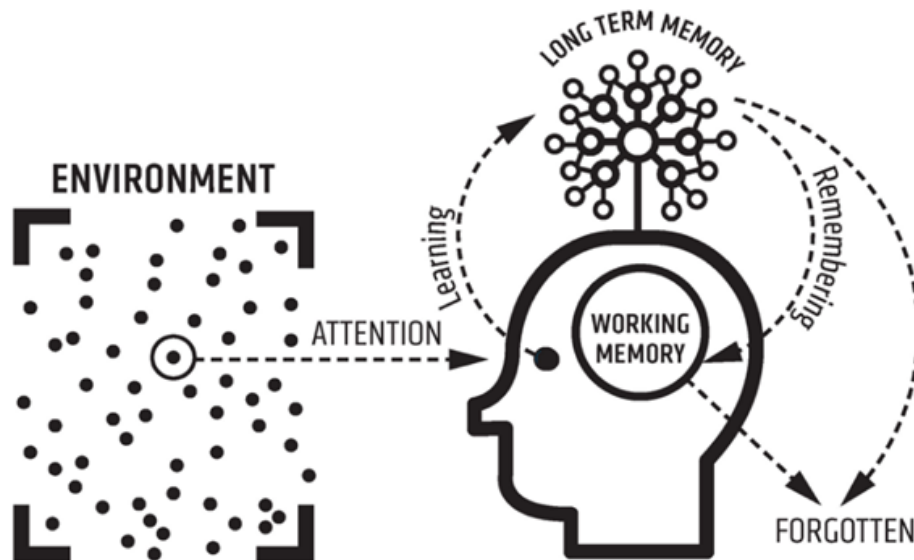
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# THE SCIENCE OF LEARNING

In recent years, there has been lots of research around the science of learning and how we learn and retain information.



1. We have a certain amount of attention to pay and this can be limited/vary depending on the individual or the environment. In the diagram above, 'attention' means we acknowledge new information and this is then transferred into our working memory.

2. Our working memory is where you do your thinking and where you take in new information. We can only absorb a limited amount of information at a given time otherwise it gets crowded. As an example, if you write down a 'long number' and try and remember it every 30 seconds, you will be surprised how difficult this is to do!

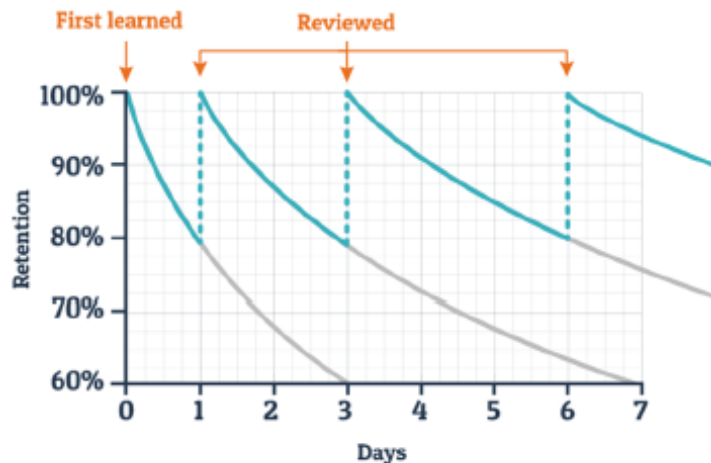
3. Information is processed into our long-term memory through 'learning'. This long-term memory is effectively unlimited, and we can retrieve information from here back into our working memory as needed in a given moment. When we remember something, it comes from here. As an example, this might be your phone number or address. We don't walk around thinking about those two things every second of the day but it is in our long-term memory ready to be used and retrieved when needed. However, if we don't use the information it fades (is forgotten). Learning is therefore a change in your long-term memory. Therefore, revision activities must require you to think hard.

4. Information in our long-term memory is interconnected and linked with prior knowledge. Anything that is not connected or not successfully stored well enough in our long-term memory is forgotten.

5. If students undertake enough retrieval practice, generating the information in their long-term memory, it increases a level of fluency within the subject. Practice makes perfect!

Forgetting is completely natural. Research has shown that over time you forget a majority of what you've learnt, and it happens immediately. The following diagram outlines this process and is called the **Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve** (1885).

**Typical Forgetting Curve for Newly Learned Information**



Ebbinghaus proposed that humans start losing 'memory of knowledge' over time unless the knowledge is consciously reviewed time and time again. He conducted a series of tests on himself which included the memorisation of a meaningless set of words. He tested himself consistently across a period of time to see if he could retain the information. He found that:

- Memory retention is 100% at the time of learning any particular piece of information (in the moment). However, this drops to 60% after three days.
- A range of factors affect the rate of forgetting including motivation, the meaningful nature of the information, the strategies for revision and also psychological factors (sleep for example).
- If each day, repetition of learning occurs and students take time to repeat information, then the effects of forgetting are decreased. According to research, information should be repeated within the first 24 hours of learning to reduce the rate of memory loss. This is why post-lesson consolidation is really important when linked to the revision of new information!

**Practice and retrieval ( through revision) helps to break this 'forgetting curve' as it strengthens the long-term memory and stops information from fading.**

# SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S REVISION

Removing a phone or just a Wi-Fi code may be the most powerful thing we have in our parental tool bag. Most teens have phones and are on social media - but they can affect their concentration levels, studies and revision

Find a quiet, tidy room with minimal distractions – your bedroom, library or classroom.

Put your revision timetable, exam timetable and other documents visible on your wall

Make sure you have a drink and snack with you, staying hydrated and full is important



## 1

### Setting an environment for Learning

We know that working memory can only hold a small amount of information at once therefore, in order to revise and learn effectively, you should use techniques which free up your working memory and stop it from being overwhelmed. One way is working in an environment which is free from distractions.

Whilst phones are a brilliant intervention, research has found that they have a negative impact on revision and learning.

Help your child to create a focused working environment by following the advice on this page.

Ensure pens, paper and other necessities are available to your child.

**I THINK THE BEST WAY IS TO  
MAKE SOME GOOD FAMILY  
RULES, SLOWLY AND  
STEADILY.**



Maybe decide to all leave your phones downstairs at night for example.



Put your phone in another room, it is too much of a distraction -

Loud music is a distraction, if you must listen, it needs to be low tempo, without lyrics

Have all your revision materials and stationary on your desk ready to go - make it obvious

# SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S REVISION

## 2

### **Help your child to develop a positive mindset**

Help your child understand the big reason for doing their studies. If they know the BIG reason it can be very motivating and can help to create good habits. e.g. "You are doing exams to help you get to the career you want or the University or College course that you want to do." "You are doing maths to help you in later life when you need to use it in everyday tasks like business accounts or online banking". "These are all things I've had to do at work."

Remind your child that intelligence is not fixed and that, through effective revision and hard work, they can improve and achieve.

Give your child process praise e.g. "you did really well; you must have tried really hard" rather than person praise such as "you are so clever". By praising the process, it reinforces to your child that it was the effort put in (e.g. revision) that led to the success.

Create a [supportive environment](#) in which your child is taught that failure is a necessary part of the learning process. This can help to [develop a growth mindset](#) by reducing pessimism, increasing self-esteem and preventing them from avoiding challenging tasks e.g. practice exam questions.

Encourage your child to revise through self-testing (see later pages in this book!). Pupils shy away from testing themselves for fear of getting it wrong but reassure your child that this is all part of the learning process and self-testing will eventually make knowledge stick!

## 3

### **Be their 'study buddy' and coach**

Showing an interest in the subjects, helping with the homework (but not doing it for them), testing them when they ask you will really support your child. You may need to take lots of different roles:

#### **Adviser**

Helping your child to break tasks down so that they are manageable, keeping a subtle eye on progress and celebrating achievements. Seeing a positive way forward when things go wrong.

#### **Project manager**

Agreeing the rules for homework or revision, helping them to make a realistic timetable, balancing work time against recreation time and reviewing the plans as necessary.

Check that they are keeping up with homework and attending the after-school revision sessions on offer.

Ensure that your child attends school and is always on time. Every day lost in attendance reduces their chance of achieving their best at GCSE.

#### **Information provider**

Finding copies of old exam papers, searching out websites, finding out about the subject, exam structures and content.

#### **Motivator**

Encourage your son or daughter to persevere and to begin working hard now in preparation for the exams. Revision should then continue right through to the summer examinations.

#### **Study buddy**

Check how they are doing by asking them to explain something that they have just revised, test them using flashcards.



## Develop revision routines and habits

Tonight, you will be receiving advice on how to break down revision running up to the exams.

It is crucial that students start early and draw up a revision plan and time-table to make sure they cover all topics in plenty of time, avoiding any last-minute panic.

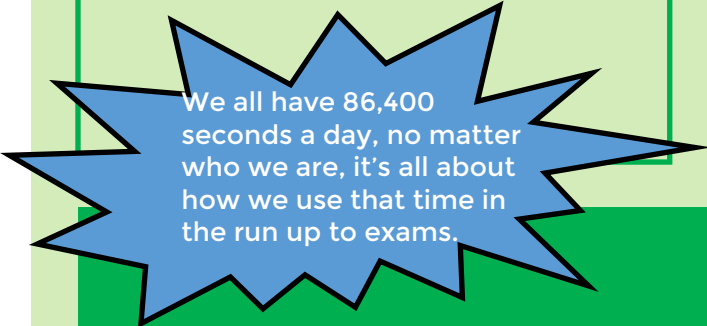
Example revision timetables and blank templates will be given to your child on SMHW and a link can be found later in the booklet.

### **Know how and where to revise**

All students are individuals, and many often find their own preferred style of revision. However, as you will have picked up from the science behind memory retrieval, just reading through notes has been shown to be highly ineffective.

Students need to process and interact with the information in order to maximise retention. Within this booklet are details of just a few along with an explanation of how to complete the tasks.

Having consistent revision techniques will encourage routines and focus your child.



We all have 86,400 seconds a day, no matter who we are, it's all about how we use that time in the run up to exams.

### **During the exam Period:**

Before exams, try to ensure that:

- Your son/daughter gets enough sleep, especially the night before exams
- He/she is eating sensibly - especially breakfast on exam days
- Reduce the number of chores that they have to do when exams start
- Make sure that the whole family respects the importance of keeping disturbances to a minimum
- Be sensitive to the pressure and stress that your teenager may be experiencing
- Encourage them to speak to you about it
- Respect their growing independence. Ask them how you can best support them
- Help them to keep things in perspective

### **Rewards and incentives:**

Find out the 'little trophies' and the 'big trophies' that work for your child. It's more about rewarding effort – if your child is putting in the effort then reward them daily with comments and agreed 'treats'! Make it attractive – collaborative focused revision (with friends) is beneficial (alongside attending interventions or revision sessions) but you could also ensure there is a 'reward' at the end of a revision session. If I complete this, I can do this.

### **Help to regulate your child's emotions**

The prospect of GCSE exams is very stressful for students. This tends to spark a natural 'fight, flight or freeze' response. When presented with the prospect of revision for exams, students may respond with...

1. Students may become argumentative or aggressive.
2. Students may try to put off revision or run away from the problem.
3. Students may panic & be unable to think straight or concentrate.

If any of these instincts are triggered it becomes very difficult for the students to revise.

### **To counteract this, try the following:**

- Be unerringly positive: repeatedly focussing on the positive, emphasising belief that the student will be successful. Do not join in the anxiety – even if you feel it! Try to remain calm and positive.

Author of how to Enjoy and Succeed at School and College, Lee Jackson, shares his insights into how you can best support your child throughout their exams by being a coach not just a 'manager'.



## BE A 'COACH' NOT JUST A 'MANAGER'

.....

I really believe in changing our view of parenting into becoming our child's 'coach' not just their 'manager'. People who manage tend to manage 'stuff' not people, like me you've probably been on the wrong end of a bad manager at some point in your working life. They can be negative, jobsworth and not much fun to be around but a coach is a different thing altogether.

**COACHING OUR TEENS  
GETS THE BEST OUT OF  
THEM. WE BECOME AN  
ENCOURAGER NOT JUST  
A NAGGING VOICE.**

In the sports world coaches are everywhere, they help the teams and athletes be the best they're capable of being. A good coach will of course have to tell you off when you are not doing so well but really their job is to encourage and to keep you on track so you can do more than you think you are capable of doing.

My friend Matt is a top-flight basketball coach, I've seen him win games and lose games, but what I see most in him is the ability to steer, adjust and encourage his players to get through, overcome, and to even enjoy the tough games that they have to play. Even when players are taken off the court they're not shouted at but given a reassuring high five. They don't get a lecture because in 10 minutes time they may have to go on again. I think that parenting is always about choosing the right battle at the right time, because there are many battles and we can't fight them all. Exam time particularly is the key time to let some things slide to focus on what's important – getting them through their exams in the right frame of mind with full support from us and our families. Exams are just a season, they don't last forever (thankfully!) and they just require focus from us and them.



## **COACHING PHRASES TO USE WHEN TALKING TO YOUR TEEN:**

**"HOW DO YOU FEEL TODAY?"**

**"HOW DO YOU FEEL YOUR  
REVISION IS GOING?"**

**"WHAT DO YOU NEED FROM  
ME AT THE MOMENT?"**

**"YOU'LL BE FINE, YOU'LL  
MAKE IT, WE'VE JUST GOT  
TO GET THROUGH THIS TIME  
TOGETHER."**

**"IT WON'T BE LONG NOW,  
JUST GET YOUR HEAD DOWN  
FOR A BIT AND KEEP ON  
GOING, YOU'LL MAKE IT."**

**"AND THEN AFTERWARDS  
YOU'LL ENJOY MAYBE ONE OF  
THE LONGEST HOLIDAYS IN  
YOUR LIFE!"**

## **BE POSITIVE WITH OUR CHILDREN**

I don't like to tell people to 'be positive' as it almost seems aggressive to me. But the fact remains that a positive attitude from us as parents makes a real difference to our children's success in school. I like to think of being 'realistically positive'.

Things to do:

- Find out where they are with their estimated grades (teachers/reports can tell you this).
- Help them to believe the positive truth about themselves (i.e. that they can do well, and certainly better than they probably believe).
- Encourage them to be positive towards their exams and their future.
- Encourage them to be positive towards learning and the school.

Often in my talks in schools I tell the students "do you realise that you are here for a reason? You're here because you can make it, you can do it, otherwise, to be frank, you wouldn't be in this school, and you'd be somewhere else". Sometimes I can see the light go on in their heads at this point, and I often see a "Yeah, he's right" smile start to develop as their confidence grows. It's great to see that. It's one of the reasons I do what I do. The occasional 'lightbulb' moment keeps me going.

# What are the top effective revision strategies?

Most subjects will have certain facts that students simply must know. Rather than just re-reading or copying notes, actively processing the information is more effective.

Evidence shows that by retrieving learnt information from memory is more effective in making knowledge 'stick'.

Encourage your child to revise using the following methods:

**TRY:**



- Read the information, say it out loud
- Cover it with your hand
- Write it out from memory

Repeat until you are able to reproduce the information perfectly.

## MNEMONICS

Mnemonics can really help. We probably all recall learning the rainbow colours as Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain.

Many subjects will have similar mnemonics, or a student can easily make up their own personal mnemonic.

Camels	Cambrian
Often	Ordovician
Sit	Silurian
Down	Devonian
Carefully,	Carboniferous
Perhaps	Permian
Their	Triassic
Joints	Jurassic
Creak,	Cretaceous

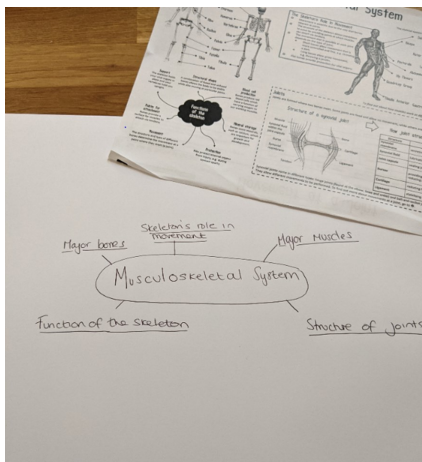


## BRAIN DUMPS:

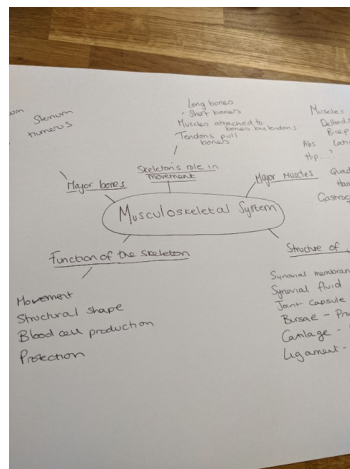
This is so simple and effective and requires very little resources!

Spend, 5 minutes with a blank piece of paper and write down everything you know about a topic. Once finished, look at your class notes, textbook and/or revision guide and check that what you wrote is correct. Then look at what you forgot and focus on this. Date the sheet and store it away. At a later date, do the exercise again and compare the sheets - hopefully, you remember more the second (third, fourth etc.) time and will be able to see the improvement you've made visibly.

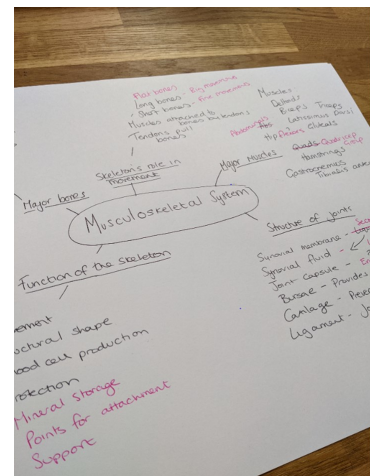
To make this exercise easier, add key headings from the topic on your blank piece of paper first. These key words will act as cues to help you remember more.



1

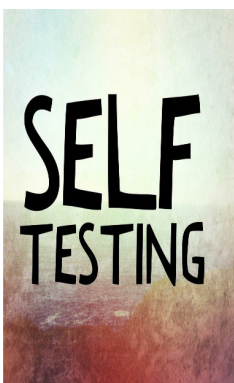


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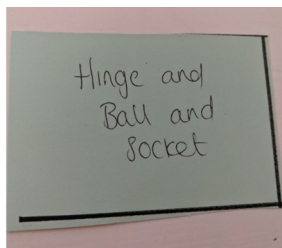
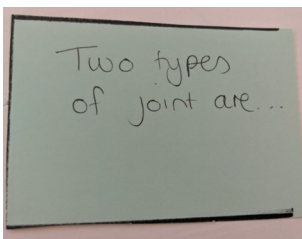
3

Once completed we can use the mind map to see where our gaps in knowledge were and it helps to see what we need to revise further.



Flashcards are a great way to self test if they are used effectively:

- Don't check the answers until you have spoken /written the answer
- Mix up your cards so you cover different topics & prioritise your cards
- Keep repeating until you can correctly answer the question on 3 separate occasions



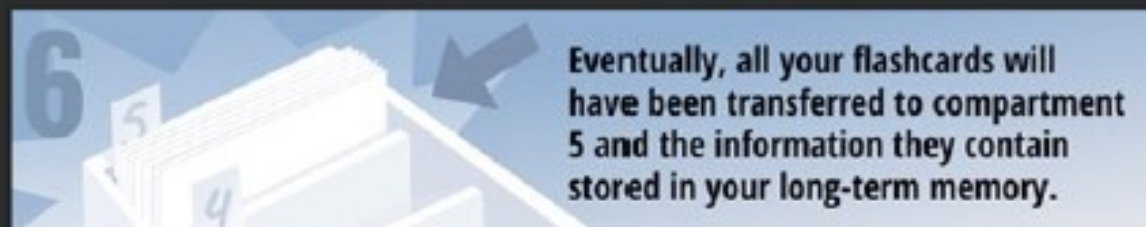
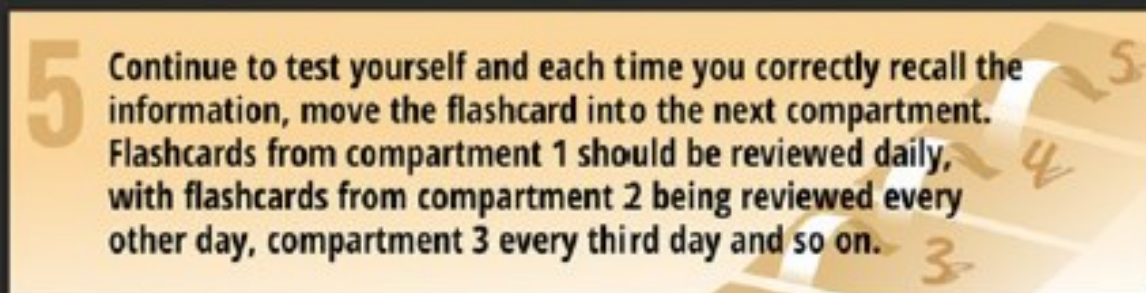
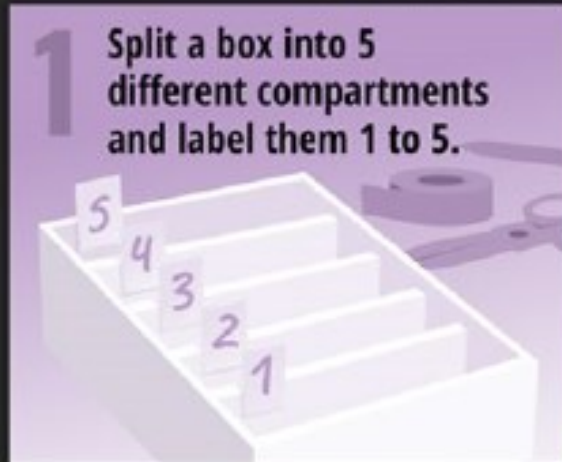
- Keep your flashcards handy so you can self test yourself when you have a spare 5 minutes e.g. waiting for a bus / whilst waiting for the dinner to be ready!
- Ask your parent / carer / friend to test you
- Build this strategy into your daily routine

Flash cards don't need to be 'flashy'



# USING FLASHCARDS TO REVISE

by @inner\_drive | [www.innerdrive.co.uk](http://www.innerdrive.co.uk)



This video will help support you in using this system to revise:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C20EvKtdJwQ>



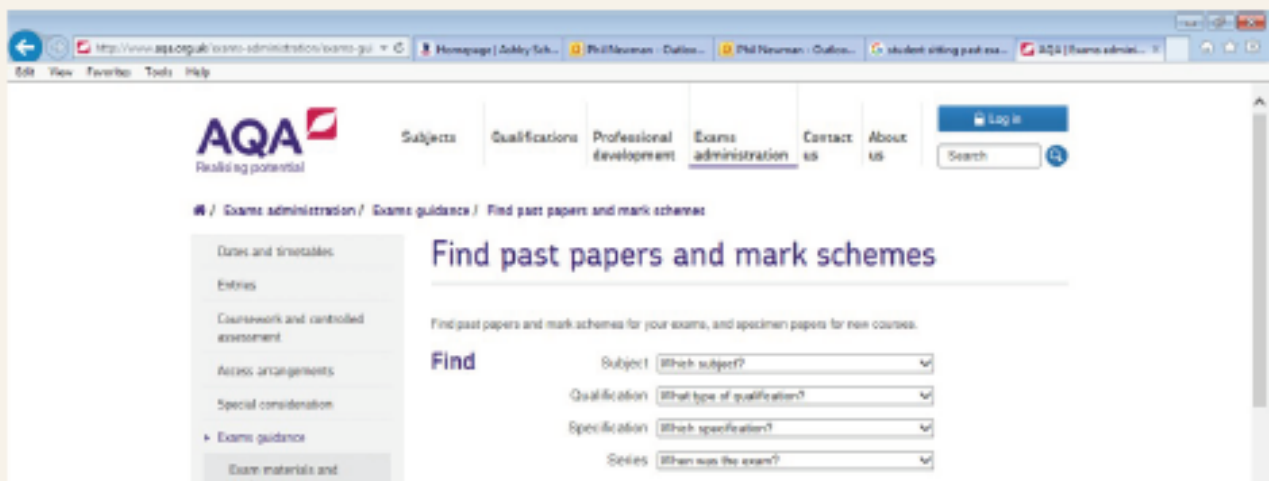
# USING REVISION RESOURCES

Research has shown this to be the most effective form of revision in terms of boosting grades.

Past papers will be available through school departments and are free to download online from exam board websites.

Mark schemes and examiners reports are also available which can show where students have made common mistakes.

*A quick internet search for the exam board and past papers will normally lead to past papers. e.g.*



**N.B.**

**If you have any trouble finding past papers, please contact the relevant department for advice.**

## **INEFFECTIVE REVISION METHODS**

**With the revision strategies in mind, it is vitally important to think about strategies that students may employ that have a limited or no real benefit on learning or memory. These include:**

- Simply writing out notes or copying from a textbook/exercise book.
- Cramming revision to the 'final minute' overloads your working memory so you can't learn at all. It can also cause stress/anxiety before exams.
- Re-reading and doing nothing with the information. Trying to focus on 'too much information' on a single page and cramming revision.
- Highlighting information for the sake of it.
- Not enough silent work or attention to a given task. Attempting to revise while multitasking and doing other things.
- Comfort zone revision of easy material that pupils have already mastered because it makes you 'feel good'.

# SPACED PRACTICE – PLANNING YOUR REVISION

Spacing out your revision into smaller chunks over a period of time helps you to remember the material better and ensures you are less stressed with your revision. This ensures you are not cramming as it will overload your memory and make you overconfident. By leaving time between revising and testing, the harder your brain works, the more chance of remembering.

*Procrastination is part of human nature. Simply put, the human brain doesn't want to have to think hard and will take all kinds of shortcuts in order to avoid it. This usually results in putting things off until you have no other option but to do it last minute. By spacing out your revision in smaller chunks over a period of time, you will remember that material far better and will also be a lot less stressed.*

*Putting off the work is a lot harder than doing the work.*

Let's say you have a test one week and you have 5 hours to prepare for it broken down into 30 minute chunks. Very often that process looks like this.

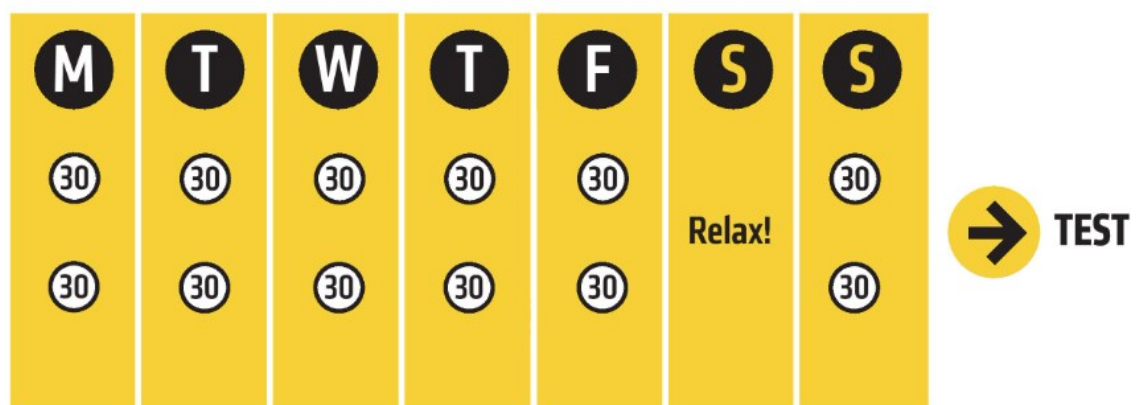


We call this process *mass practice* or cramming, and it's one of the least effective ways of learning anything. It may get you through the exam but most of the material is quickly forgotten.

It also tends to make people very stressed and unable to work properly.

If, for example, you do this for a mock exam in March, it's highly likely you will not retain any of what you have learned by June and will have to do the whole process again.

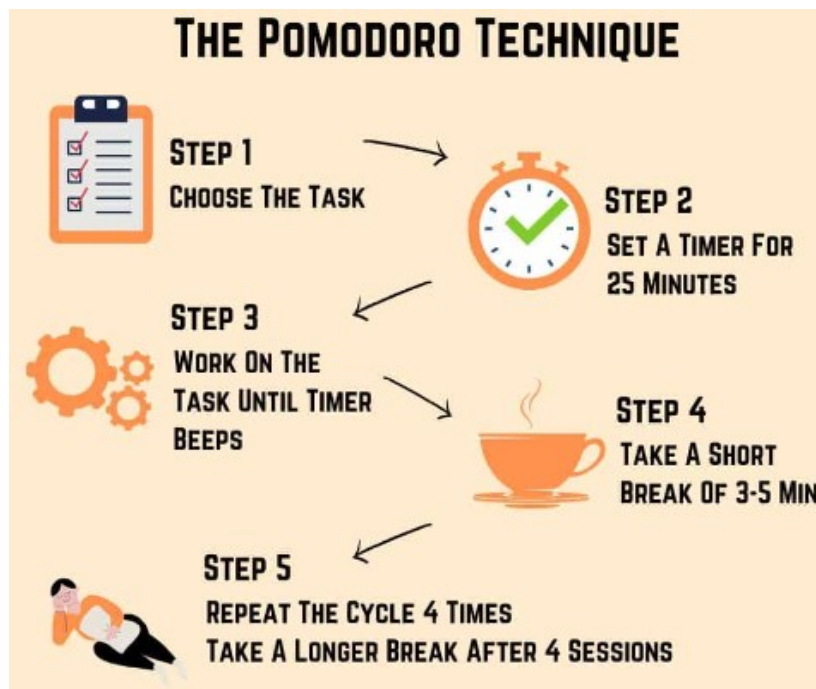
Instead of mass practice, a much more effective way of revising is to space out your revision like this:



By breaking up your revision into 30 minute chunks and spacing out the time between revision, you will consolidate what you have learned and retain the material much more effectively.

# **DELIBERATE PRACTICE**

Practice is essential. You can revise all you like but without practice, it is wasted. Start by spending time reviewing a topic/unit before quizzing/testing yourself with no notes and from your memory (this is vital for revision). Once you have finished, check your answers. This will support you in showing where your 'knowledge gaps' are and where focus needs to be in your future revision. Revision shouldn't keep you in your comfort zone, you need to be thinking hard and identifying your own areas for development. Avoid simply revising topics you enjoy. A technique to support deliberate practice is the Pomodoro Technique.



Practice should be applying the knowledge and skills you need to succeed so may involve exam questions or planning answers.

Deliberate practice 'do'	Deliberate practice 'don't'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spend time practising what you will be tested on.</li><li>• Practice the areas you struggle and need to improve on.</li><li>• Make sure you review your practice – get a teacher to check it or review your notes and answers against mark schemes .</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Copy notes, the point is you are doing it from memory!</li><li>• Only practice areas you find easy or do well at.</li><li>• Spend too long on a question – stick to timing and practicing what it will look like in exam conditions.</li></ul>



# PLANNING YOUR REVISION - REVISION TIMETABLES

A good revision plan is a must - you make your own (don't take too long on it though!) or you can download one for free (see below).







1. Collate all your topics and determine where you need to focus your time. Which subjects and topics do you need to target?
2. Create a table for a week with 25–40 minute revision slots and breaks built in.
3. Write the subjects in the table, leaving yourself at least two days between each. Be specific with topics to help you to focus and avoid procrastinating.
4. Type it up so you re-use it and edit it. Ensure it is easy to check and find.
5. Put it somewhere visible and tick off completed sessions = see the success! Ensure someone at home also has ownership of it. It will support motivation.

An example of a revision timetable is below.

**Collins**

# REVISION TIMETABLE

**WEEK**

		DONE 		DONE 		DONE 		DONE 		DONE 		DONE 
Monday												
Tuesday												
Wednesday												
Thursday												
Friday												
Saturday												
Sunday												

Find lots of helpful free tools to aid your revision from [collins.co.uk/revision/](https://collins.co.uk/revision/)

## WHAT CAN PARENTS/CARERS DO TO HELP?

- Help your child to get in the right frame of mind.
- Be ready for stress – stay calm and help them deal with it
- Revision, rest and recreation all go together.
- Help your child plan revision.
- Agree a reasonable revision programme and help them stick to it. Provide a quiet calm environment for them to revise in. Provide plenty of food and drink, treats and rewards.
- Provide resources – revision guides / stationery / past exam papers and mark schemes.
- Be overwhelmingly positive.

*As the main exams draw near...*

The amount of revision and work to do will seem overwhelming to your child. This is where prioritisation becomes the key to GCSE success. Get them to find out the key things to revise and prioritise those, then get them to do the hard stuff first, maybe the subjects they don't like to work on are actually the most important. Get the teachers help to prioritise, and do a plan so that they don't feel swamped by the amount they have to do. And once again just remind them that it's only for a few months.

## WHAT CAN STUDENTS DO TO HELP THEMSELVES?

- Maximise your attendance – If in doubt over illness – get to school. Be punctual – Late arrivals miss key lesson starters.
- Attend as many revision sessions as possible. Exam tips from teachers can make all the difference.
- Revise at home – Make a reasonable revision programme and stick to it. Take responsibility for your own success.

**Further subject specific guidance will be shared with students via their classroom teachers and SMHW. If students have any specific queries, please encourage them to get in touch with their teachers in the first instance.**



