



Strategies for Successful Revision





That Dreaded Word 'revision'

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to pass exams. However, there are many things that you can do to improve your chances of doing well and achieving your best grade. This short guide aims to prepare you for any upcoming tests or assessments and introduce some strategies that will help you in the future.



The word 'revision' is a terrifying one for many students. It is associated with boredom, effort and hard work. However, if you were to turn it on its head and rephrase it as 'practice' rather than 'revision' it can be really motivational. Excellence is primarily down to sustained 'purposeful practice'. This means the more we practice something, the better we get and this is exactly how to approach revision. When someone says 'revise' what they mean is 'practice purposefully'. Take these famous people as examples:

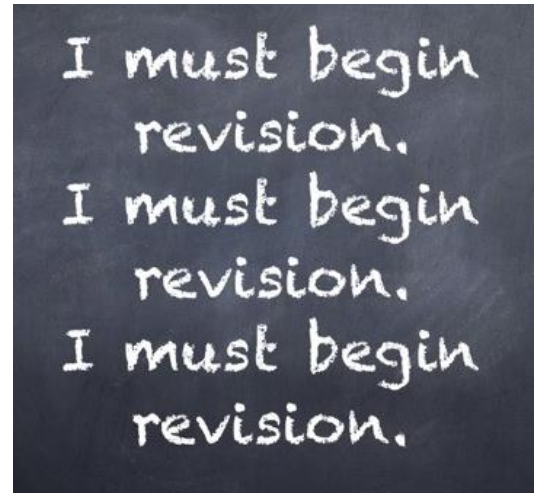
- Tennis – **Andy Murray** hits a million tennis balls a year.
- Music – **Mozart** had clocked up 3500 hours by the time he was 6 and had studied his music for 18 years before he wrote his Piano concerto No 9 at the age of 21.
- Acting – **Leonardo DiCaprio** started acting when he was 2 years old.
- Football – **David Beckham** practised hundreds of thousands of free kicks in his career.



The Hardest Thing is Getting Started

You can be given all the advice and fantastic study resources in the world but these are not as important as the person reading them – **YOU!**

It is **you** who has to make a start and practise applying these skills. If you do, you will improve not only your performance but confidence and happiness too. But remember; to get better at something, you have to **practise it**.



Where to Revise?

The place you revise can have a big impact on the success of your revision. The ideal study room is light, airy and quiet. Ideally you should have a desk or table to work at. Remember the idea of revision is for it to be purposeful so any distractions such as Phones, tablets and TVs should be removed.



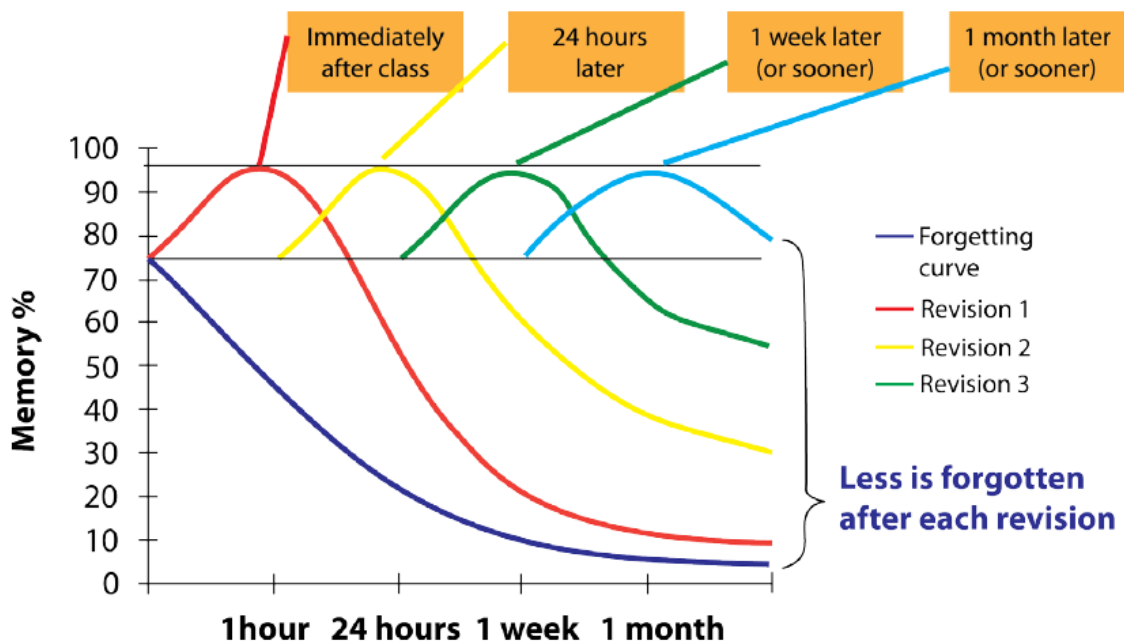
Working in a space that is tidy can make a real difference to the success of your revision. A cluttered and unorganised work space will reflect the quality of your work. So ensure it is tidy as this promotes an efficient and good working environment for you to focus on your learning.

Some students find that background music helps the revision process. Classical music such as Mozart can help to stimulate your brain waves. However, music with lyrics must be avoided as you are likely to concentrate on these rather than your work!



Why Revise?

Your brain is awesome! It contains billions of neurones (nerve cells) which connect with each other. Every time you learn something new, a new connection between these cells is made. So every day throughout your school life you are making new connections and the more times you **revisit** them, the more likely you are to remember them. Decay theory states that if the learning isn't used or rehearsed it simply fades away. The graph below illustrates this showing how important it is to **revisit your work** to ensure it stays in your memory:



However you choose to revise, you need to make sure you revisit your work regularly. There is no point in making great flashcards or mind maps only to let them gather dust in a drawer. Every time you return to your notes you will find you have retained more information. You need to come back to your notes at least three times to commit them to long-term memory.

In addition to this, **effective revision** is important for so many other reasons:

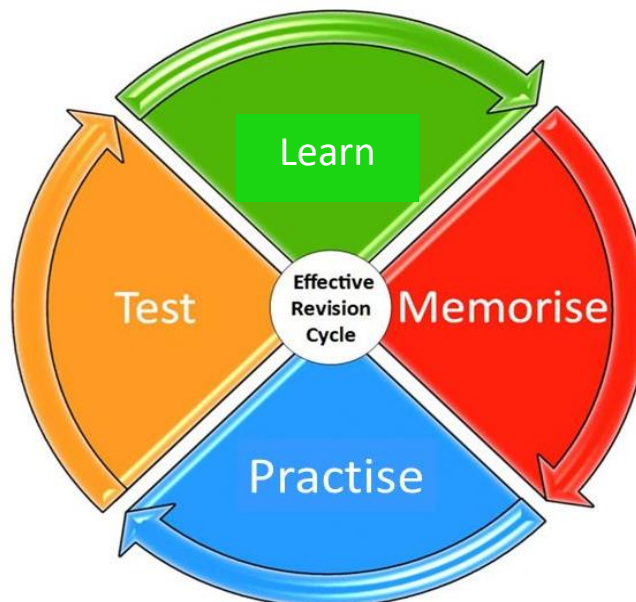
1. It helps your learning and memory.
2. It increases your chance of achieving a higher grade in tests.
3. You will feel less stressed when it comes to exams.
4. It will improve your time management, organisation and discipline.
5. You will feel great and give you a sense of achievement!



How do I Revise?

This is the big question! Revision is a skill, just like riding a bike or playing a musical instrument. Therefore, it will not happen overnight and you must **practise it**. As you practise it you will find a technique that works for you and you can then refine this skill as time goes on.

Revision can be broken down into a simple cycle shown in the diagram below. As it is a cycle you can start anywhere but it is recommended that you start in the learn phase. You will need to learn many facts when you revise so starting here and then memorising them is important. This can then be followed by practising and then testing yourself.



The first step is to try to **change**. By changing what is in your exercise books, revision guides or textbooks into a different form, you can kick start your brain into action. You start thinking about new ways of presenting and digesting the information and start learning.

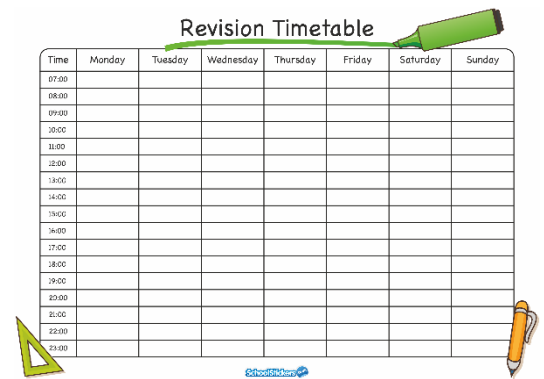
When are my Tests?

This is something for you to find out! It is so important that you know when your tests are and what will be on the test. This allows you to plan your revision and structure it around what you will need to know. There is no point revising for a test on percentages if the test is on fractions! So it is up to you to ask your teacher and find out when the test is and what you should revise.



Preparing a Revision Timetable

Putting together a revision timetable can be extremely useful in ensuring you feel organised and are committed to your revision. Once you have found out when your exams are, plan in regular revision sessions in the weeks/months leading up to them. Try to mix up which subjects you revise rather than revising one all at once. Put your timetable where others can see it and share it with your parents and friends – the more people who know about it, the more likely you are to follow it, or to have to explain yourself! There are lots of free revision timetable websites which can help with this and here is a link to two of them:



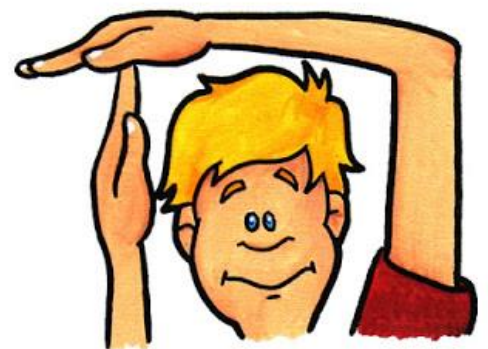
<https://getrevising.co.uk/planner> and <https://revisionworld.com/create-revision-timetable>

Down Time

It is important to be good to yourself and factor in time to continue to do the things that relax you. If your plans allow you to take the time to see friends, play sports or read for pleasure you are far more likely to remain relaxed and in the right frame of mind to study.

Frequent Short Breaks

When revising a lot of material, you will soon discover that your ability to retain information will become less efficient the longer you study. The optimum time has been found to be 45 minutes after which the ability to recall information begins to diminish. The key is to take short, frequent breaks: go and make a drink or a sandwich, call a friend, take the dog for a walk. When you return to your studies you will have re-booted your memory and will be efficiently remembering again.



Mix It Up

Prioritising areas of difficulty is effective, but break them up with aspects that you enjoy and are confident with. If you find that you get completely stumped by a topic, take a break and when you return you may find that you see the material with new eyes. If it isn't any clearer, you know you need more help from your study partners, your teacher or an online resource.

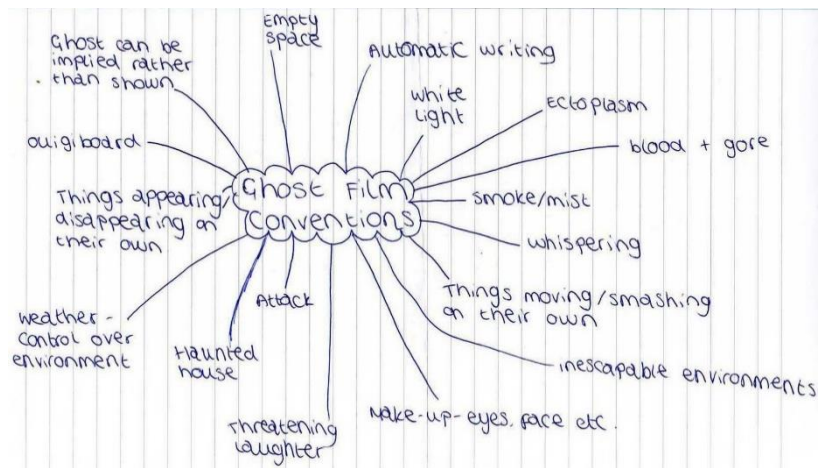


Strategies to Revise

There are so many ways to revise and you need to find the one that works for you. Here are some examples to help you with the Learn and Memorise stage of the cycle:

Spider diagrams

Place a topic in the middle of your page in a circle and draw lines radiating out like spiders legs. Then write words or phrases associated with the topic at the end of each line. This can then be extended to draw more lines out from the first set of words/phrases you have written.

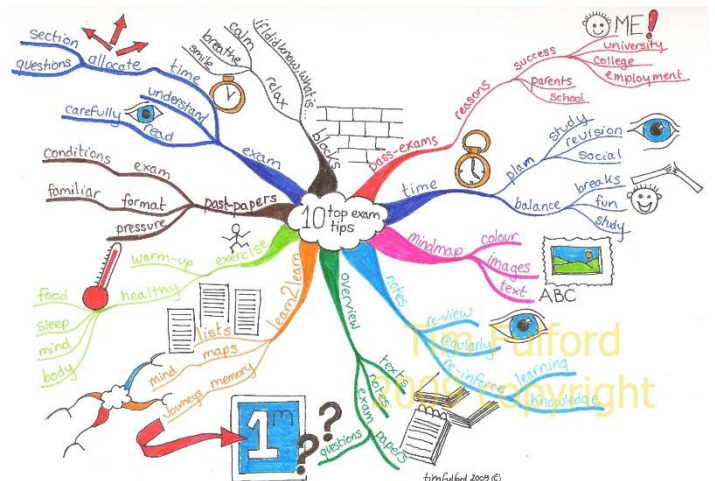


Your turn – pick a topic you have just finished and complete a spider diagram to include all the key words and phrases.

Mind Maps

These are similar to spider diagrams but mind maps are more extensive and use fewer words. A topic is written in the middle of your page and words or pictures can be used to describe the topic.

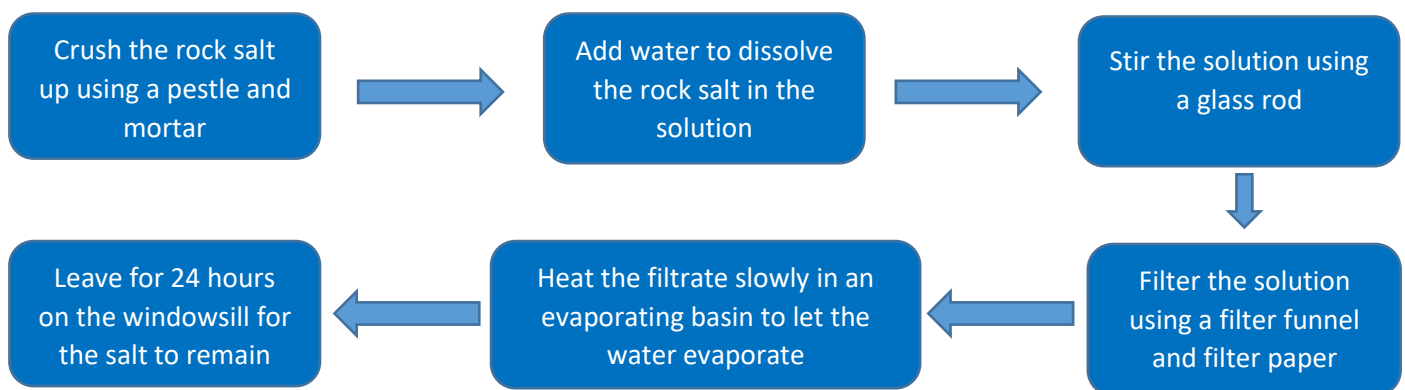
Your turn – pick a topic you have just finished and draw out a mind map to include all the key parts you have learnt about.





Flowcharts

These can be used to learn a step by step process or a series of instructions. For example in Science it would be useful to remember the stages to get pure salt from rock salt. You place one step in the first box and draw an arrow to the next box and write the second stage in. This continues until the process is complete. The best thing is you don't have to be rigid in what shapes or arrows you use. They can be any size or shape you want!



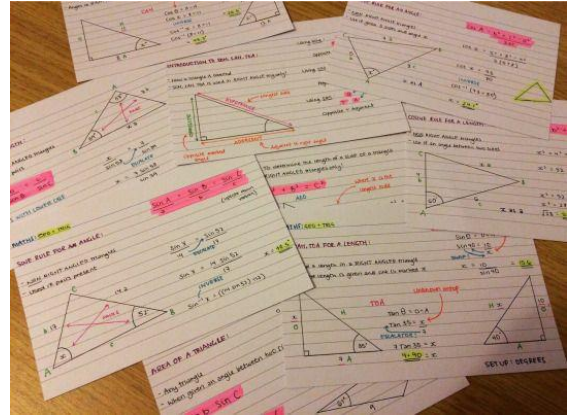
Your turn – put the following paragraph into a flowchart:

To make a jazzy pencil holder, collect some multi-coloured beads, sequins, shells, clay, a small plastic plant pot and a rolling pin in a plastic tray. Cover your work area with newspaper. Knead a handful of clay into a round ball. Use a rolling pin to make a flat shape. Cover the plastic plant pot with the clay ensuring that it overlaps the edges at the top and bottom of the pot. Stick the coloured beads, sequins and shells on the pot. Keep the pot aside for drying. When the pot has dried completely, apply a layer of white glue. Keep it aside to let the glue dry. The jazzy pencil holder is now ready. Use it to keep pens and pencils.



Flash cards

Many students find making flash cards really useful. The idea is that you write out the key information on separate flash cards. You could write some questions on one side and the answers on the back. The flash cards can be colourful and include pictures. Once completed they can be stored easily and taken around with you to quickly refer to. It is important to note that more effort should be spent on the written information on the cards rather than the colour and design of them.



Condensing

This strategy relies on reading your revision guide, the internet or exercise book to write out the information in a shortened/condensed form. This active revision strategy helps to go over the work you have learnt in lessons and make quicker connections back to it. You can use colours and highlighters to identify the key information.



Your turn – condense the following information about the Amazon Rainforest:

The Amazon Rainforest is Earth's largest rainforest. It is situated in South America where it covers approximately 40% of this continent measuring 6.9 million square kilometres in area. It stretches into nine different countries including Brazil, Peru and Columbia. Flowing through the rainforest is the Amazon River which is one of the largest of its kind in the world. It has 17 smaller rivers which flow off of it all of which are longer than 1000 miles. The Amazon is estimated to have 16,000 tree species and 2.5 million species of insects. Unfortunately, the rainforest is being cut down at a rapid rate through what is called deforestation. Farming cattle (cattle ranching) accounts for roughly 70 percent of deforestation in the Amazon because farmers need land for their cows to graze. Plans are being put in place to reduce the deforestation by introducing new laws and pressure from environmental groups.



Top Five

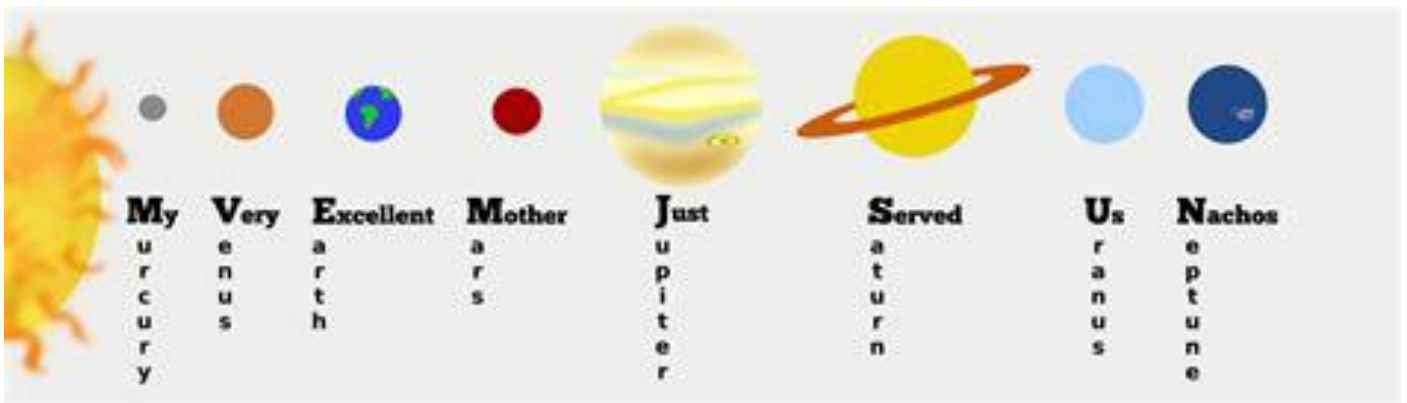
This is more of a summary method to remember the five most important parts of a topic. The idea is to create a top five list of things to remember. They can be sentences or keywords which allow you to quickly associate all parts of the topic.



Mnemonics

Making up mnemonics is a good way to remember key facts. The one below demonstrates how it can be used to remember the order of the planets.

Your turn – try to think of your own mnemonic for something you have just learnt about.



Record It

With so much technology around it gives you a fantastic chance to use it by recording your own voice. Listening back to keywords/phrases or explanations about revision can be a powerful way to remember important information. The best thing is you can take it around with you and listen to it on the move. It may sound daft to begin with but it has proven to be extremely worthwhile.

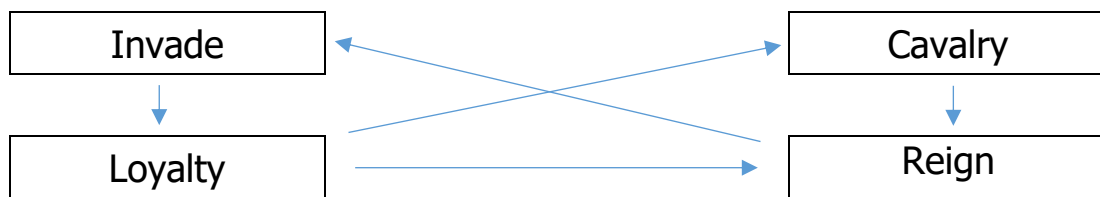




Making links

This exercise encourages you to make links between words in a topic. It is as simple as it seems. Just write out four words and try to link them together in some way either by using keywords or sentences.

Your turn – link these four words from History together:



Journey Pegging

This revision technique gets you to think of your learning as a story and remember significant parts along the way. It is used by people all over the world to remember long lists of instructions or sequences of numbers. The way it works is by taking a topic and associating the key parts of it into a story. Take this example for Acids and Alkalis in Science; my alarm woke me I woke up and the backlight lit up blue so I thought it must be an alkali. I got out of bed and had a drink of orange juice which I knew was acidic so it would turn universal indicator paper red. In order to neutralise it I brushed my teeth because toothpaste is an alkali etc.



Online Resources

You can find excellent online revision tools for most subjects. There are animations, videos and quizzes which can be really useful to help you absorb a topic in a new format. It is important to note that you cannot rely on this method of revision alone as it does not replace your own notes and lesson resources but they can add a new dimension.



Practise and Test Yourself?

Now that you have armed yourself with all the facts you need to know and they are stuck in your brain, it is time to practise and test yourself. The best way to do this is by answering previous questions on the topic. The nature of these questions and where to find them will be different for each subject.

Hopefully by the time you have finished reading this booklet you will feel motivated and inspired to revise. You should have a better idea of how to start and approach it. Making the first steps is the hardest part but it is possible and you can do it. The best thing to remember is that the effort you put in will be worth it when you achieve the grades you want at the end of it.

Good luck and smash those exams!

