



Revision guidance and advice



Do's and Don'ts

DO Make a list of all the topics you need to revise

Each subject that you are studying can be broken down into its smaller parts, with main sections, subtopics and supporting details. A very useful start is to list out all the topics on the course according to this hierarchy and use this as a 'revision checklist' for the subject. Tick topics off as you've learnt them.

DO Create a realistic schedule

Block the waking part of each day into three portions. Allow yourself one portion a day off and allocate subjects and topics to the remaining two. Put the schedule on display so that your family can see when you are available. It will also reassure your parents that you are in control.

DO Plan by working backwards

By using revision checklists in your various subjects, you should know what quantity of material has to be covered over the coming months. Start from the final date (end of May) and divide your revision up week by week, allowing some flexibility for unforeseen delays. Surprise yourself by being ready in time! Use the learning plans created by your teachers to help guide your revision.

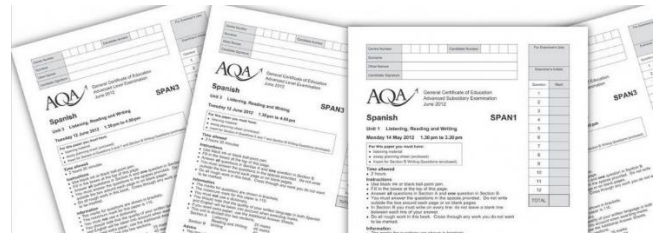
DO Sleep rest and eat

Your body cannot function without being rested and fuelled. This does not always mean sleep, but research demonstrates that a lack of sufficient sleep can negatively impact on your cognitive abilities (think back to Mr Riley's assembly). Rest should also mean giving yourself rest days/evenings. It is beneficial to give yourself a day off schoolwork to focus on your hobbies, socialising and the things you want to do.

DON'T Just keep going!

The body and the mind need regular 'time-outs'. When you're tired, concentration is more difficult, you get distracted easily and learning and memorisation is less effective. There comes a point in an evening study session when it is counter-productive to stay at the desk – nothing is going in and you are only tiring yourself further. Use breaks effectively, particularly after completing a task.

TOP TIPS ON EXAM STRATEGY



Success in exams involves two ingredients: having a thorough knowledge of the subject matter AND making the most of your knowledge in the exam through effective answering technique. Two students with identical knowledge and attainment levels can sit the same exam and their final grades can differ by as much as 25%. The difference is down to having an effective strategy and exam technique.

Here are **four golden rules** to apply to all your exam papers:

1. Allow time to read the paper carefully. The importance of reading the paper carefully and choosing your questions wisely cannot be emphasised enough. It's natural to want to start writing immediately and launch into a favoured topic. Resist the urge. Take your time. Be smart and size-up the paper before answering.
2. Stick to your game plan. An overall strategy should have emerged from your revision and exam preparation in each subject. This covers the areas you will tackle, the topics you will avoid if they appear on the paper, the sequence in which you tackle the various sections, the style of answering you will employ in each subject, the amount of time you will allocate to answering each section. In some cases, this plan will work like a dream but there will always be surprises to deal with in some papers. Don't get flustered. Stick to your game plan, trust your judgement, and move on.
3. Sweep up any mistakes. In the pressure of the exam hall, it is easy to make basic errors. These will sometimes have the potential to lose you a lot of valuable marks. Misreading the instruction on a question can render an entire answer invalid. You might have known the correct answer, but you didn't put it down. A simple miscalculation can lose you valuable time as you try to figure out the balancing item. Be disciplined with your time. Always leave a few minutes at the end to tidy-up errors.
4. Attempt all questions. It is amazing how many exam scripts are handed up unfinished. Every year, capable students who just didn't get time to finish the paper lose easy marks. Don't fall into this trap. Work on the basis that you will get an answer written for the required number of questions. Remember that it is much easier to get the first 20% of the marks for any question than the final 5%. You can always polish an answer further but, if there is no attempt made at part of a question, you can't get any marks. But if the instructions on the front of the paper tell you to answer a certain number of questions – stick to this – don't answer too many!

Revision techniques and strategies

1. Believe in the power of "yet"

One key aspect of successful revision is to embrace a "growth mindset". The psychologist Carol Dweck first developed the term to describe the mindset that individuals have when they recognise their potential and ability to improve overtime. Individuals with a growth mindset will recognise that improvement requires practice and revision. You might not be able to immediately recall all the information you need to remember for an exam, but you should recognise that the more you revise the more you'll remember. Individuals with a growth mindset will always believe in the power of yet.

"I can't recall all the key dates of the Russian Revolution . . . yet".



2. Establishing routines and habits

Successful revision is based upon established routines and unconscious habits. Routines require conscious effort to establish and maintain. The first few weeks of establishing a revision routine are the most challenging. Make the conscious effort to establish and maintain your revision routine and before you know it (usually around 4 weeks) the routine will become an unconscious habit that requires little effort. Once unconscious habits have been developed, changes to your daily plan do impact on your habit. For example a gym user who has developed an unconscious habit won't think about going to the gym or worry about other commitments interfering with their workout.

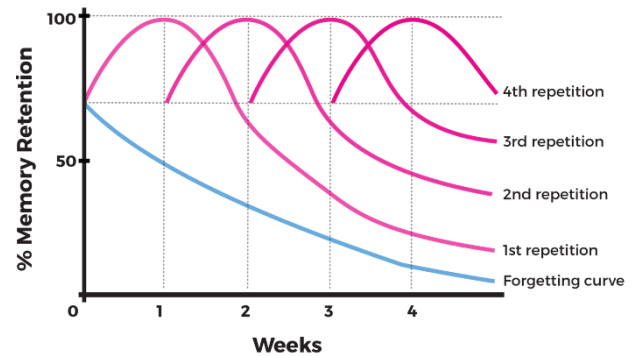
To do this be strict with yourself and rigidly follow a timetable or plan, such as revising for English every Monday from 4.00pm – 5.00pm. Set yourself daily reminders on your phone of the routine you are trying to establish and perhaps link the routine to a long-term goal such as a particular grade or university that you would like to attend. Before you know it, the routine will be established and become unconscious. Every Monday at 4.00pm you naturally find yourself revising English.

3. Create the correct learning environment

Our working memory has a very limited capacity and is constantly bombard with information demanding its attention. When you are revising you need to create an environment in which your working memory can prioritise what you are trying to learn by removing all other potential distractions. Ideally your revision space should replicate that of a classroom or the exam hall. Listening to music, watching TV, chatting with friends and having your phone close by are all potential distractions that will only negatively impede your ability to learn. Create the correct learning environment so that your not wasting time trying to multi-task and spending more time than necessary on revision. If you really struggle, try the pomodoro technique!

4. Spaced retrieval

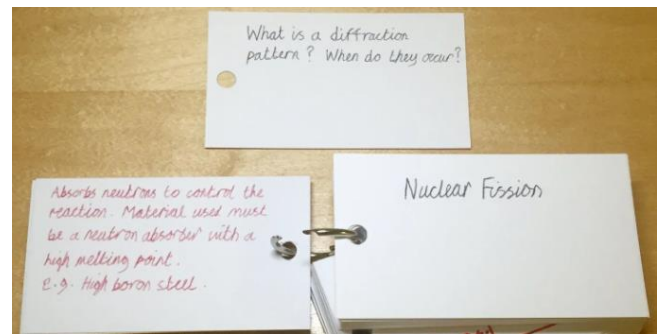
The German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus recognised that our ability to retain information is significantly increased if we return back to the information after a short period of time. He called this "the forgetting curve".



When you are revising it is easy to create a list and tick of a topic once it has been complete or feel that you have so much to revise that returning to previous topics is counter productive. However, Ebbinghaus' research demonstrates that even when we have revised a topic, it starts to decay from our memory overtime. To tackle the forgetting curve, you need to ensure that you frequently return back to previously learnt information as part of your revision. The Leitner method can help you achieve this.

5. Flashcards and the Leitner method

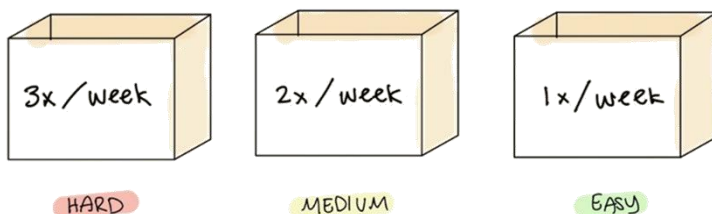
Most students create flashcards as part of their revision, however not all flash cards are beneficial for revision and sometimes creating flashcards can be counter productive. A good flash card is one that requires active engagement from the user. This means that you are expected to think when using the flashcard. An easy way to ensure that your flashcards achieve this is to ensure that each flash card asks a question that requires an answer.



Student often include too much information on a flashcard. The flashcards should be short, direct and include specialist terminology or language essential for the answer. *The flashcard above is a perfect example. "What is a diffraction pattern? When do they occur?"*

Using your flashcards – A German psychologist called Sebastian Leitner created an ideal method of using flashcards, which also helps tackle the issue of the 'forgetting curve'.

Once you have created your flashcards test yourself on the knowledge you need to remember. If you get the information correct, place the card in an 'easy' envelope. If you are muddled and struggle with the card, place it in a 'medium' envelope. If you find that flashcard really difficult, place the card in a 'hard' envelope. Each day you'll continue to use the



flashcards in the hard envelope until the cards transfer to the 'medium' or 'easy' envelope. The 'medium' cards are used every couple of days and the 'easy' cards once every two weeks.

6. The pomodoro technique

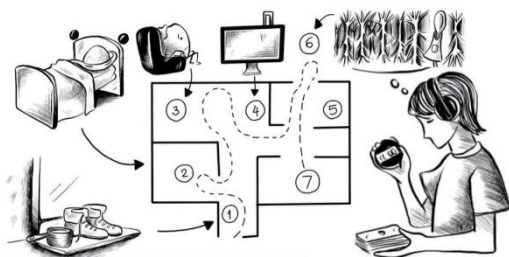
The pomodoro (tomato) technique helps prevent procrastination and distractions from impeding revision. It was developed by Francesco Cirillo, an Italian university student who was struggling to revise for his final exams.



The technique involves setting yourself a revision activity to be complete and giving yourself 25 minutes to complete the task. During the 25 minutes you remove all possible distractions (such as a phone) and you place maximum attention and effort into the task. Once you have completed 25 minutes, you reward yourself with a 5 minute break where you can do what you want. This technique works because a 25-minute block is manageable for most people and fits nicely into a busy schedule.

Ideally you want to aim to complete four pomodoro sessions back-to-back before giving yourself a longer break. There are some great apps on your phone that will help use the pomodoro technique.

7. Method of loci



The 'method of loci' comes from Ancient Greece and requires new learning to be linked and associated to long-term memories that require little effort to recall. To use this technique you simply use a location that is familiar to you, such as your home. You then start to associate what you are trying to learn with the specific features or areas of the location you are using.

This could be done by drawing a map, creating a story or revising the information in the specific locations. The technique works because your brain processes the new information alongside the long term memories. This technique can be further enhanced by turning your revision material into a silly story.

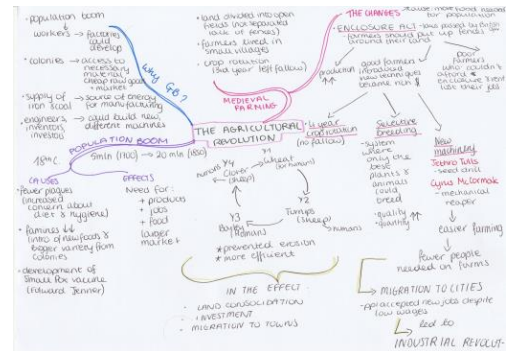
For example: *"One day when I got home from school, I opened the door to see Karl Marx sitting watching TV in my dad's favourite chair. He was complaining about the BBC news being an ideological tool of bourgeoisie. I asked him what he meant, and he replied, "the news only report about working class crime and never corporate crime, giving the illusion that the rich and powerful never commit crime."*

8. Brain Dumps and Blurting

The brain dump or "blurting" technique is a very useful tool that only requires a blank piece of paper or mini whiteboard. In the centre of your paper you write a topic or question that you are going to revise, this could include little retrieval prompts or success criteria.

Without using any notes, you recall as much as you can remember relating to the topic or question. Ideally this would be timed to increase challenge. Once you have exhausted your memory or run out of time, you compare your blurt to your notes or the textbook, adding any missing detail in a different coloured pen.

You repeat your blurt after a week or two and compare the difference. The more you blurt the more you recall!



9. Digital Content Creator



If you like using social media platforms like TikTok, YouTube and Instagram, why not turn this passion into a tool for revision? Not all revision has to be created using paper and pen. Choose a particular topic you want to revise and a platform you would like to use. Turn your revision information into a study video on Youtube, a viral dance on TikTok or a piece of photography on Instagram. The things you create don't need to be published but will enable a deeper level of processing and opportunities for dual-coding in your brain. You could share what you create with your classmates and support each other.

10. The Protégé Effect

The Protégé Effect is a psychological term that explains how teaching others is a significant tool of learning in itself. Talk about the topics you are revising with friends and family, teaching them the content that you have learnt. This naturally requires you to process the information on a deeper level and helps push the information into your long-term memory. If you find a particular topic a challenge, you could create an activity or presentation on the information using your notes. If you are not feeling overly confident, record yourself giving the presentation or explaining the concepts.

11. Quiz Master

Create a series of quiz questions or use a platform like Kahoot or Quizizz to create your own topic quiz. Just by creating the questions you be able to remember more.

12. Cornell Notes

Cornell Notes is a system developed by Cornell University in America and has been specifically developed to help students prepare for essays and extended answer questions. The system is effectively a big flashcard that links more information.

TOPIC		DATE
<p>CUES</p> <p>WRITTEN AFTER CLASS</p> <p>MAIN IDEAS</p> <p>VOCABULARY</p> <p>QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY NOTES</p>	NOTES	
	TAKEN DURING CLASS LECTURE OR DURING TEXTBOOK READING	
	. MAIN POINTS	
	. PARAPHRASE	
	. BULLET POINTS	
	. OUTLINES	
	. CHARTS/DIAGRAMS	
BRIEF SUMMARY OF NOTES HIGHLIGHTING MAIN IDEAS		<p>SUMMARY</p> <p>WRITTEN AFTER CLASS</p>

The system requires an A4 piece of paper with a question or topic area written in the heading. You split your page below the question or topic area, giving 1/3 of the page to the heading 'Cues' and 2/3 of the page to the heading 'Notes'.

Using your class notes and textbook you complete the 'Notes' section of your page, including specialist terminology and key information. Underneath the heading 'Cues' you create little retrieval cues that relate to the information in the notes section.

At the bottom of the page you summarise the notes into a simple sentence or bullet point.

Once the notes have been created you can cover the information with a separate piece of paper leaving only your 'Cues' visible to help jog your memory.

Revision checklist

- I know when the dates are for my exams in each subject.

Subject	Paper	Date

- I have copies of the learning plans created by my teachers for each of my subjects.
- I know where to find past exam papers for my subject and specification.
- I have created a revision timetable.
- I know which topics I will be assessed on for each exam paper.
- I know which topics I need to prioritise for my exams.

If you are struggling with the answers to these questions, then speak to your subject teacher as soon as possible. Remember that the earlier to establish your revision routine, the more manageable it will become.

If you are starting to feel anxious or overwhelmed with your revision, you can speak to your tutor or anyone of the Sixth Form team.