



United College Sixth Form

Your bright future starts here

Part of Swindon Academy & United Learning
Beech Avenue, Swindon, SN2 1JR

Revision Toolkit

Don't let this be you...



Plan ahead!



KEEP
CALM
AND
STUDY
FOR EXAMS

What doesn't work

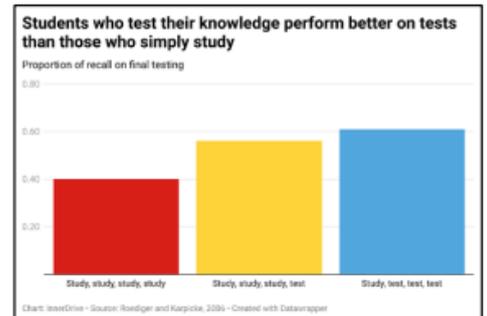


Re-reading notes and highlighting key points

According to research, 84% of students admit to using this technique to revise, and 55% claim it is their favourite technique. But is it really effective? Reading a whole chapter of a textbook, or reading through 3 previous essays, is quite a lot of work, so surely it's beneficial? But how much do you actually remember the next day, next week, next month?

What does the research say?

A study in 2006 (*Roediger and Karpicke*) compared the learning of three groups who used a combination of re-reading and retrieval practice to prepare for a test. When asked, those who just relied on re-reading *believed* it was an effective strategy for learning and felt really confident about the final test. The results said the opposite, though - those who used retrieval practice did at least 30% better in the final test.



Another study in 2016 (*Smith et al*) took similar groups and subjected half of them to stressful environments before testing how much they could remember. Students who had just re-read their notes performed 32% worse in stressful situations, whereas students who had used retrieval practice were not negatively affected by increased stress. This is clearly beneficial in exam situations.

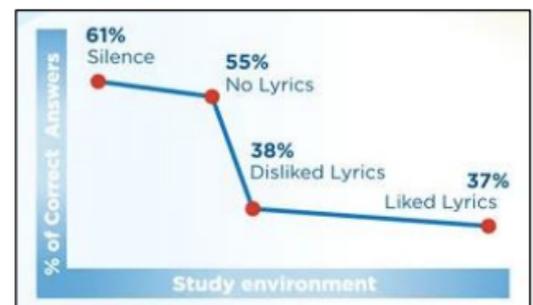


Listening to music when revising

Music can be beneficial for certain tasks - it can improve our mood, boost our motivation and increase creativity. But is it helpful when revising? According to research, 47% of students believe music helps them concentrate and 29% claim it keeps them calm.

What does the research say?

A 2014 study (*Perham and Currie*) compared four study groups: one group working in silence; another revising to songs they liked; a third group revising to songs they didn't like; the final group listening to music without lyrics. Those revising in silence performed significantly better than those listening to songs with lyrics, and it made no difference if they liked the songs!



Despite what many students think, listening to your favourite songs is not the best way to revise; music takes up processing space in the brain, leaving less space to process revision materials.



Lots of testing – also known as retrieval practice – done in silence, is the best strategy when revising.

How can you make this even more effective? Read on...

What does work

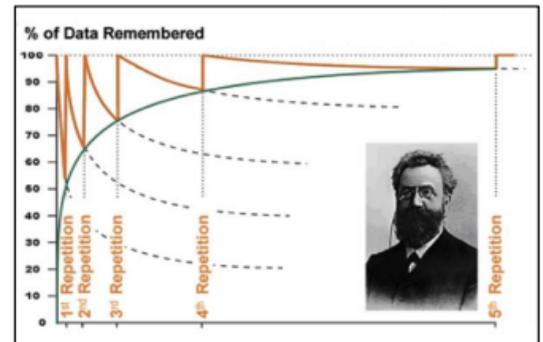


Retrieval practice

Retrieval is trying to remember information you have previously learned, so you can access it easily at a later date. When we are asked a question, our brain makes connections to other things we know. By repeating the question regularly, those connections are strengthened, and eventually the information transfers to our long term memory.

What does the research say?

This is one of the most extensively researched areas of learning - dating back to Ebbinghaus in 1885. If we only learn something once, we are more than likely to forget it; we need to force ourselves to remember and re-learn the information if we want to cement it in our long term memory. Look back at the study on the previous page – those students who self-tested 3 times before the exam were far more successful than those who just re-read the text.

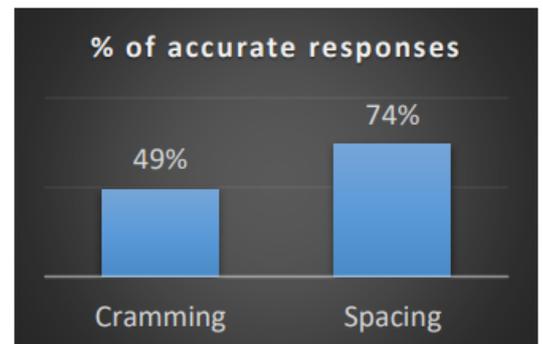


How can you make it even more effective?



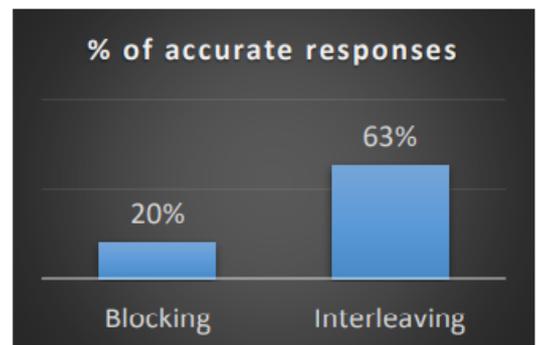
Spacing

Cutting up your revision into smaller chunks and spacing them out over a period of time is much more beneficial than cramming an entire subject in a day. An hour of Physics each day for 5 days is much more effective than 5 hours in one day.



Interleaving

To improve your results further, also consider interleaving. This is where you mix up the subjects and topics you revise: 30 minutes of Shakespeare, 30 minutes of algebra, 30 minutes of Poetry, 30 minutes of Ratio - rather than an hour of English and an hour of Maths.

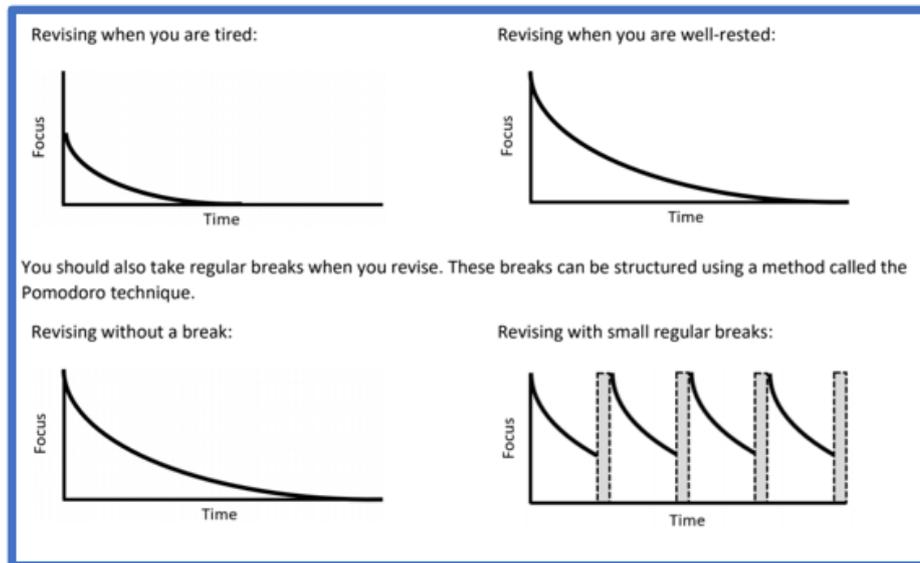


A 2007 study (*Rohrer and Taylor*) found that students who spaced out their revision over a week, compared to one sitting, achieved a much higher average mark in their final exams. In a second study, students were given a mock test after blocking or interleaving and another test a week later. Even though blocking was effective in the mock test the next day, the students who used interleaving did considerably better a week later in the final exam.

Need some examples of effective retrieval strategies?
Read on...

When should I revise

In order to revise effectively, you have to think hard. Thinking hard is tiring. Therefore, when you revise, you should choose a time when find it easiest to focus. This should be a time when you are well-rested and when you are used to working.



Managing your time when revising

Pomodoro technique is **highly effective** as it helps you effectively manage your time and work on a task without distractions. It is also beneficial as it helps you become more disciplined and think about your work. This technique is designed to combat multitasking and improve concentration.

STEP 1



Pick a task

STEP 2



Set a 25-minute timer

STEP 3



Work on your task until the time is up

STEP 4



Take a 5 minute break

STEP 5



Every 4 pomodoros, take a longer 15-30 minute break

When revising:

Do:

- Get into a routine of revising at a particular point every day.
- Revise when you are well-rested or at a time when you are used to working.
- Take regular small breaks.



Don't:

- Depend on when you want to revise.
- Revise late at night or when you are tired.
- Try to force yourself to work for long periods of time without a break.



Simple Study plan

5

Step Study Plan

It's never too late to plan your revision!

This simple plan from @KateJones_teach & @Inner_Drive is a great place to start. 



Make a list

What do you need to know? Break it down into topics and units. When you can retrieve it without effort, cross it off the list. It might help with motivation and organisation to have a 'to do' and 'have done' list.



Timetable a spaced schedule

Look back at the notes about spacing and interleaving. Study each topic little and often and mix up subjects and topics so you are revising a mixture each day. Be sure to leave yourself enough time to cover everything.



Use effective study strategies

That's what this booklet is all about. Keep re-reading and highlighting to a minimum. Highlight what you need to learn – but that won't make you learn it. Test yourself, using retrieval strategies. Think twice before loading up your favourite playlist!



Identify the gaps in your knowledge

Having used the retrieval strategies, where are the gaps? What are you confident with? What do you need to go back to? What do you need to study more? Be honest with yourself – don't just focus on what you *do* know.



Close the gaps

Repeat the third and fourth steps of the plan until you are confident with everything. Some parts will be difficult, but don't give up. The harder you have to think, the more likely you are to remember in the end. 'Memory is the residue of thought.' (*Dan Willingham*)

Revision Timetables

During your exams, you have a lot to think about and a lot of different things which you have to juggle. You should revise independently so that you can close the specific gaps which you have in your knowledge.

However, because you have to plan your own independent revision, it's easy to forget revision or to only do it in large bursts right before an assessment.

Planning when and what you are going to revise reduces the number of decisions you need to make every day and will reduce the risks of you not revising or your revision being ineffective because you have left it until the last minute.

Prioritise your subjects



- List all your subjects
- Rank your subjects from number 1 -9 (1 being strongest)
- Then re-write your list in the order of the subjects you have numbered.

Writing your timetable

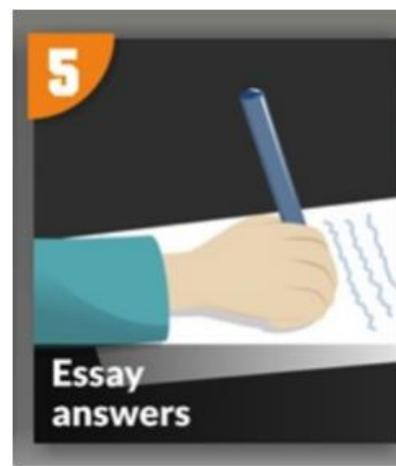
1. Write in everything you have planned prior to creating your revision timetable. (Going out for tea, going to the gym, playing sport etc)
2. Write in upcoming exams & deadlines
3. Not every space needs to be full – leave yourself time to relax too!
4. Focus on the subjects in RED first, these are the ones you are least likely going to choose – but they are the highest priority.
5. Write in the subjects you are going to cover and when. Be specific around what you will cover each time you sit down to revise.
6. Each revision slot should last around 30 mins and should aim to do between 1- 3 a day (prep doesn't count)

Example timetable

Day	Saturday	Sunday
9:00 – 10:00		
10:00 – 11:00	Work	
11:00 – 12:00	Work	
12:00 – 13:00	Work	
13:00 – 14:00	Work	
14:00 – 15:00	Work	History WW2 flash cards
15:00 – 16:00		Geography – Rivers Mindmaps
16:00-17:00	Maths – long div practice questions	
17:00-18:00		
18:00 – 19:00		
19:00-20:00		
20:00-21:00		

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Prep due	English	Maths	Science	Option	Option
16:00- 17:00					
17:00- 18:00		<u>English</u> <u>Prep</u>	<u>Maths prep</u>	<u>RE –</u> <u>Practice</u> <u>intro to</u> <u>essay</u>	<u>Science</u> <u>Prep</u>
18:00 – 19:00	<u>English</u> <u>Macbeth</u>	<u>Chemistry</u> <u>self quiz</u> <u>atoms</u>	<u>Science</u> <u>Biology</u> <u>cells brain</u> <u>dump</u>		
19:00- 20:00		<u>Football</u> <u>Practice</u>			<u>Out to</u> <u>dinner</u> <u>with</u> <u>family</u>
20:00- 21:00					

Revision Strategies



Retrieval practice is one of the most effective ways to revise. By answering questions rather than merely reading or highlighting information, you're putting yourself in the best position possible to succeed and remember as much of your subjects as possible. Past papers, essays, multiple choice tests and flashcards are a great way of doing it.

Revision Strategies



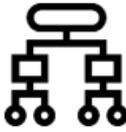
Brain dump

Choose a topic and write down as much as you can remember, without referring to your notes. Check your notes and see what you missed then try to fill the gaps without the notes. Check your notes a third time and add the missing information.



Flash cards

Write flashcards for each topic, in all subjects, then mix them up for the most effective revision. Check out the Leitner System for effective spacing and interleaving. Keep your flashcards simple – one question, one answer per card.



Map it out

Take an essay question or writing question and map out your answer, without writing a full response. Look at the mark scheme and decide if your plan meets the criteria. Do this for a number of questions, then choose one and write the full response.



Past papers

Ask your teacher for practice questions or exam papers. Complete them without notes in exam conditions, then check your answers and identify the gaps in your knowledge, so you can target your revision.



Quizzes

Write a set of questions and answers and ask someone else to test you. It's important to either write or say your answers aloud. Reading through quizzes in your head can give you a false sense of security.



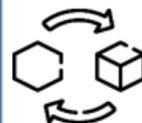
Practise introductions

For essay subjects, take a past exam question and practise writing effective introductions and conclusions. Look back at your notes and remind yourself of the important things to remember. Practise for different topics, texts and papers.



Thinking hard: reduce

Read a section of your notes then put them aside and reduce what you read to 3 bullet points, each one no more than 10 words. Look back at the notes and decide if you missed anything important. Hide the notes and write a fourth bullet point.



Thinking hard: transform

Read a paragraph from your notes or a text book and transform it into a diagram, chart or sketch – no words allowed. Look at a diagram in Science, for example, and transform it into a paragraph of explanation.



Thinking hard: connect

For each subject, consider the exam papers and group together questions that require the same technique to answer. Write down the requirements of each type. Find a previous example you've completed and identify where you've met the criteria.



Key vocabulary

For a particular topic, make a list of key vocabulary, then do the following: define each word; use each term in a sentence; create a question where the key word is the answer; identify other words which connect to each of the words in your list.

Summary: Spacing

- Spacing is regularly revisiting material so that you are doing little and often instead of all at once.
- Doing a little amount regularly is more effective than doing a lot all at once. We do this so that we don't get swamped and overwhelmed

WHY? This is because the time in between allows you to forget and re-learn the information, which cements it in your **long-term memory**

To commit something to memory, it takes time and repetition.

Optimum Spacing

- Research suggests there is an 'optimal gap' between revision sessions so you can retain the information.
- If the test is in a month, you should review the information around once a week. If the test is in a week, create time once a day.

Why use Spacing?

- Doing something little and often – spacing – beats doing it at once, or cramming
- The time in between revision allows you to forget and re-learn the information, which cements it in your long-term memory
- It cements information into your long-term memory
- We can learn more information over time than in one longer session
- It helps you revise more efficiently

Time to the test	Revision Gap
1 Week	1-2 days
1 Month	1 week
3 Months	2 weeks
6 Months	3 weeks
1 Year	1 month

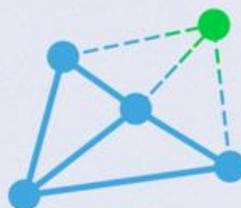
Retrieval

“ Retrieval practice is defined by **Mark Enser** as ‘retrieving something from our memories to make it easier to recall in future.’ If using it makes recall easier, surely this is a big win for learning and the progress of our students. ”

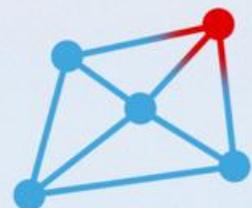
1. Identifies gaps in knowledge



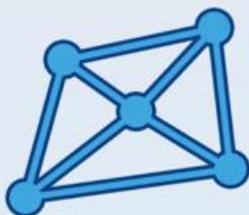
2. Makes connections



3. Checks for misunderstandings



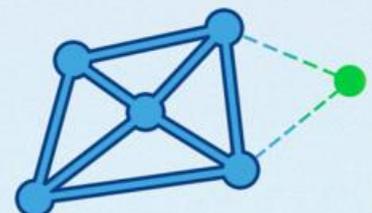
4. Strengthens connections



5. Makes connections robust under pressure and stress



6. Makes it easier to learn new things



Summary: How to use flash cards



1.

Identify knowledge

What are you creating flash cards on?

Do you have your knowledge organizer?

Use your book to look at previous misconceptions from whole class feedback.



2.

Colour coding

Use different coloured flash cards for different topics. This helps with organization NOT recall



3.

Designing

1 Question per flashcard.

Making them concise and clear.

Use a one word prompt, so that you can recall as much as you can.

No extended answer questions.



4.

Using

Write your answers down, then check. Or say your answers out loud. This really clearly shows the gaps in your knowledge.

Do not just copy & re-read.

Shuffle the cards each time you use them.

Use the Leitner system to use flash cards everyday.



5.

Feedback

How have you performed when you look back at your answers?

Is there anything you need to revisit in more detail?

Is your knowledge secure? If so, move onto applying knowledge in that area in specific extended exam questions.

Avoid answering the questions in your head: research shows that when you read a question and answer it in your head, you aren't actually testing your knowledge effectively. Say the answer out loud or write it down before checking it against the card, so you are truly testing if you can explain the answer properly

Flash card top tips

- The most effective flashcards include one question followed by one answer (or one term followed by one definition).
- Don't force your brain to remember a complex and wordy answer. It's easier for your brain to process simpler information so split up your longer questions into smaller, simpler ones.
- You will end up with more flashcards this way but your learning will be a lot more effective.

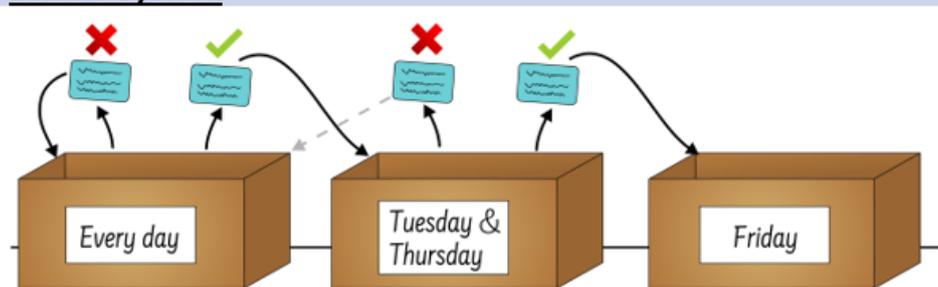


Using flash cards

Self Quizzing

1. **Read the question** on your flash card
2. **Write your answer** in your HL book
3. Put your flash card **down to one side**
4. Move onto the **next** card
5. **Repeat** steps 1-3
6. Keep your flash cards **in the order** you have quizzed them in.
7. **Mark** your answers – **highlight** any answers you got incorrect.

Leitner System



1. Every card starts in Box 1.
2. If you get a card right, move it to the next Box.
3. If you get the card wrong, move it down a box — in the original version you move it all the way back to Box 1.

Summary: Interleaving

Interleaving is a theory that revising more than one topic in each session will help you make better links between them.

A → B → C → D

B → D → A → C



1.

Switch

Switch between topics during each session.

It allows you to think about what you are doing with your time when you are revising.

2.

Review in different orders

When reviewing make sure you do it in a different order that you learnt them, or previously revised them.

By revisiting material from each topic several times, in short bursts, this **increases the amount of information you can recall in your exams.**

3.

Make links to remember more.

Try to make links between ideas and review your revision notes.

This helps you make connections between topics and forces you to think harder about which strategies need to be applied to which problems.

Applying interleaving to your revision

1. Break units down into small chunks and split these over a few days rather than revising one whole topic all at once.
2. Decide on the key topics you need to learn for each subject.
3. Create a revision timetable to organise your time and space your learning.

Blocking



Interleaving is for topics within one subject – not subjects themselves.

Interleaving



You can apply this in your revision timetable.

When revising science, mix up the topics that you study in that session, don't just focus on one.

Dual Coding

Summary: Dual Coding

Dual coding is the process of blending both **words** and **pictures** while learning. Viewing those two formats gives us **two different representations** of the **same** piece of information.



1.

Drawings

These boost learning by getting you to think deeply about information.



2.

Diagrams

These are helpful for breaking down complex concepts or processes to make them easier to understand.



3.

Posters

These are great for combining writing, pictures and diagrams all within one page of information.



4.

Timelines

These can be used of information that happens in a particular order or sequence.



5.

Graphic organisers

These organise verbal and visual information by the relationships between different concepts. Examples include tree diagrams, mind maps and Venn diagrams.

4 Key Principles for using dual coding



Cut - Reduce the amount of content, be selective and only use the most important information.



Chunk - Divide the content into groups of related information;



Align - Make sure that words and pictures are neatly ordered, making them easier to read;



Restrain - Avoid "overdoing" it. In other words, don't go crazy with different colours and fonts.

Summary: Self Quizzing



1.

Identify knowledge

Identify knowledge/content you wish to cover.



2.

Review and create

Spend around 5-10 minutes reviewing content (knowledge organisers/class notes/text book)

Create x10 questions on the content (If your teacher has not provided you with questions)



3.

Cover and answer

Cover up your knowledge and answer the questions from memory.

Take your time and where possible answer in full sentences.



4.

Self mark & reflect

Go back to the content and self mark your answers in **green** pen.



5.

Next time

Revisit the areas where there were gaps in knowledge, and include these same questions next time.

Ensure that you complete all subjects and all topics – not just the subjects you enjoy the most of find easiest.
Practice makes perfect!

Summary: Brain dumps



1.

Identify knowledge

Identify the knowledge/topic area you want to cover.



2.

Write it down

Take a blank piece of paper/white board and write down everything you can remember about that topic. (with no prompts)

Give yourself a timed limit (e.g. 10 minutes)



3.

Organise information

Once complete and you cannot remember any more use different colours to highlight/underline words in groups.

This categories/links information.



4.

Check understanding

Compare your brain dump to your K/O or book and check understanding.

Add any key information you have missed (key words) in a different colour.



5.

Store and compare

Keep your brain dump safe and revisit it.

Next time you attempt the same topic try and complete the same amount of information in a shorter period of time or add more information.

Brain dumps are a way of getting information out of your brain.

Summary: How to create a mind map



1.

Identify knowledge

Select a topic you wish to revise. Have your class notes/knowledge organisers ready.



2.

Identify sub topics

Place the main topic in the centre of your page and identify sub topics that will branch off.



3.

Branch off

Branch of your sub topics with further detail.

Try not to fill the page with too much writing.



4.

Use images & colour

Use images and colour to help topics stick into your memory.



5.

Put it somewhere visible

Place completed mind maps in places where you can see them frequently.

Avoid using too much information: mind maps are designed to summarise key information and connect areas of a topic/subject. If you overcrowd the page, you lose the point of the mind map and will find it harder to visualise the information when trying to recall it



Speak to your subject teachers

Find out if there are any useful apps, websites, books or blogs which will assist with your revision. Jot down the details here.

9 Ways to Beat Revision Stress

by @inner_drive | www.innerdrive.co.uk



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