

What is Revision?

Before we all start to panic about this terrifying revision thing, here's what revision actually is.

Revision is storing away information. It's a bit like saving information on a disc or recording some music. By being in lessons for a year and completing your notes and essays you already have all the information you need, the next stage is fixing it in your memory!

Revision gives you a greater understanding of your work and helps you use the information you know when you're doing your exams. There are different types of learners, and different ways to revise.

Most importantly: *Don't Worry & Keep Calm....*(but do actually do something!)

If you find revision (learning material, being able to recall ideas and link them to subject knowledge) difficult consider the following strategies and ways of learning, and see what works best.

Self motivation is always the KEY ingredient in successful revision.

1) Habit and Routine

It's usually easier to revise if you can get into a habit of working at the same time each day. But you need a balance between work and rest/play. If you divide the day up into three chunks (eg morning, afternoon & evening) decide to spend two working and one resting. So, if you're going out in the evening, work morning and afternoon. Try and stick to set timings if you can.

For example:

Morning: 9.00 – 10.30, 11.00 – 12.30pm (3hours)

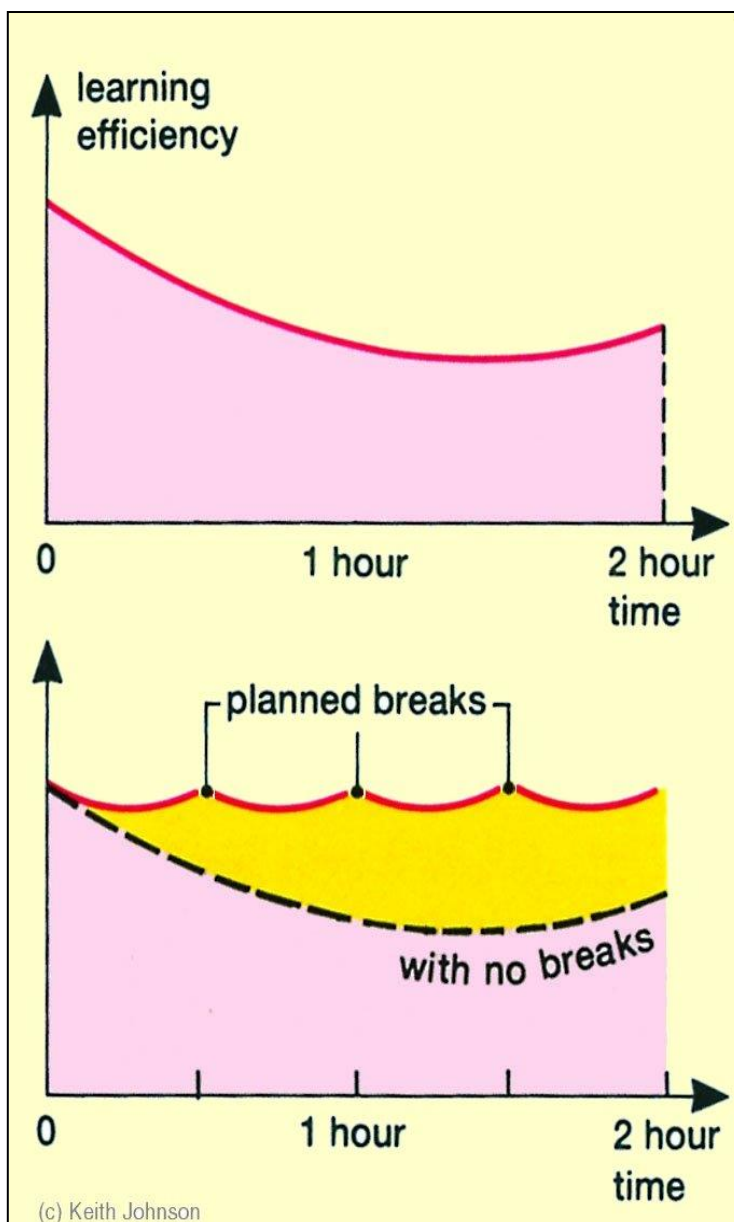
Afternoon: 2.00 – 3.30, 4.00 – 5.30pm (3 hours)

Evening: 7.00 – 8.30, 9.00 – 10.30pm (3 hours)

If you can do **two** sessions a day, that's 6 hours a day. I don't think you can do much more than this! The diagram below shows that it can be more efficient to work in 25 minute slots and then take a 10 minute walk around the garden or get a drink.

Remember the following tips:

- **Water** hydrates the brain and memory and concentration improves, so, have a glass of water handy.
- **Take breaks** but be strict with yourself about starting again. Set an alarm to remind you.
- **Don't watch TV in a break** – you'll never be able to switch it off and get going again. If you're a TV watcher, save it for one of your 'down' times.
- **Peace & Quiet.** If you need to really concentrate, the fewer distractions the better, and a quiet room is best. Sorry!



2) Sort your learning environment

Is there a room at home where you will not be distracted, but where you can easily be checked up on by others? If so, use it to revise in. Because if you lock yourself in your room, upstairs, out of sight, with possible distractions (bed, TV, phone) you are more likely to daydream. If you are working and can be seen to be working, subconsciously it can help you remain focused on what you are doing.

You can help yourself remember material by being constantly subjected to it, so why not produce some big A3 pieces of paper, with key ideas/ content/ quotes/ whatever it is you need to remember, and post them up around the walls of your room AT EYE LEVEL. It is rather sad, but you'd be amazed at how it works. If you find remembering the chronology of events difficult, for example, create a big timeline (in itself a useful revision exercise) and stick it up around the wall of your room. Make sure that the writing is large enough for you to be able to read it from across the room!

3) Use different exercises

i) Mind maps These are brilliant for remembering tricky material. The key is to use symbols and little pictures that you can associate with content knowledge, to help you remember. The process of creating and inventing the symbols and pictures will help you go over the material in your mind. A mind map can give you a good overview of a large subject area, hold large amounts of data, be enjoyable to look at, muse over and remember, attract your eye / brain, let you see the whole picture and smaller detail at the same time.

Mind map guidelines:

Start in the centre with an image of the topic.

Use symbols, codes, images throughout.

Select key words and phrases



Have lines that radiate out from the centre and then more lines that radiate out from these extra hubs.

ii) Flashcards Buy some cards from a stationers. On each one write a key question and on the back write in the specific detail in bullet points. You can carry these around with you for speedy revision sessions! Use mnemonics to help you (e.g. 'PROPER' for functions of political parties).

Use mnemonics- Silly Sentences – make up your own!

- or even for remembering formulae

May I have a large container of coffee?

3 . 1 4 1 5 9 2 6

Counting the letters of each word gives you the value of pi to 7 places !

Mercury Venus Earth Mars Jupiter
Saturn Uranus Neptune Pluto

*My Very Efficient Memory Just Stores Up Nine
Planets*

iii) Testing yourself - A crucial part of any revision is testing whether you can remember material and knowing how much you know.

There's no substitute for sitting down with a blank piece of paper and just writing down everything you can remember about a topic. Then seeing what you've missed. Then doing it again the next day. Use the revision booklets and class handouts to find past questions to practise this way.

So.....

- **start with a key question,**
- **time yourself 10 minutes, and see how good a plan for that question you can do in 10 minutes,**
- **then use your file to add in other ideas in another colour, until you have a really good plan that really answers the question.**

Learn it, and then have another go over 10 minutes and see how much better you do the second time around. Hopefully, you will be able to see the improvement the second time around and this will increase your own self esteem and confidence. It will also get you working and thinking under pressure of a time constraint, which is what you will have to do in the exam.

Testing yourself is the only real way to be sure that you know stuff. Reading things through (passive revision) is just a cop out, you are simply 'reminding' yourself of information rather than actually sitting down and learning/ remembering and then seeing how much you can remember.

Your revision should always be active and not passive. This means that you should have something tangible to show for your time at the end of your session.

iv) Go through past papers

We left the most important method until last. ***Your main practice and preparation for exams should be USING past paper questions.*** These can be found on Godalming online under the ISkills section (see All Courses), or on the individual examining boards' websites. If you can't find any then e-mail us immediately and we'll send you some more. ***DO use this method!***

Start to attempt to answer past paper questions by using the following method:

1. **THINK:** Read the question and in rough write down a few bullet points of what you might include in this answer (do not look at your notes). Do not worry if you are unable to write anything. Try and see if you can put something down within 3 minutes of thinking time.
2. **RESEARCH:** Check your notes (your revision worksheets) and then add anything else which you have left out in another colour.
3. **FINAL WRITE UP:** Write up your bullet point answer/plan. Be thinking whether you have answered the question correctly? Do you have enough information? Do you have too much information?
4. **DISPLAY AND TEST:** Print off your answers, display them on your wall, stick them onto index cards etc. You now should have a set of rough answers to "read through" before your exam. Get your friends and family to test you.
5. Practice a few exam questions and tests under timed conditions (in the final few days before you go into the exam)

WHAT NEXT? Remember once you have completed all of your past papers, start from the beginning again and start stage 1 above. You should now be getting the right answer and should not need to look at your notes. Continue this cycle until you are getting them 100% right.

Why do we need to do this? Why will this revision method work for us?

The process you have just gone through from stage 1-4 above means you have been preparing thoroughly and making sure you can answer the questions. The same questions might come up in the exam or variations in the questions. The more time you have spent on them, the better you will be able to think in the exam and adapt your answer from previous past questions you have answered.

This method is a bit like practising to pass your practical driving test; you would not practise by looking through a book on how to drive a car. You would be getting in the car and practising. Exams are exactly the same – you need to be practising them. The beauty of the plans is that they give you focus, and are not too boring to do. You can complete several questions in 30 minutes and feel like you have achieved!

A warning though, the very first past paper question you do, you might not be able to answer. BUT this is brilliant because you have identified an area where you need to do

some thinking, revisit your notes and help provide an answer. You have identified a gap in your knowledge and you can then find the relevant revision worksheet to fill that gap. You can also always check your progress by emailing your teachers with brief summaries of answers to questions.

Final thoughts – Get into the right mindset!

Rote learning of material (memorization by repetition) should be gone over again in the 2 weeks before your exam, because that is when your brain will peak, just like how an athlete fine tunes his/ her body for a race.

The 'build up' time - ie the holidays for you, should be spent doing the plans, mind maps, revision notes, spider diagrams, that will help you build up your familiarity with the content knowledge and understanding of the ideas.

Contact with friends

When you are revising, it is nice to know you're not alone and not the only miserable one going completely mad, so...

- Help each other to work – ask each other how much you've done and how well you know topics.
- Test each other, if you are together.
- Don't distract each other.

To adopt a 'growth mindset' *read on below.* You can do it!

The psychologist Carol Dweck has done some fascinating work on mindsets. In a nutshell, people are usually one of two mindsets. The "fixed mindset" maintains that people's ability is innate and static; the "growth mindset" claims that ability is the result of hard work and a learning process. Each of us tends to apply one of these two beliefs, to other people as much as to ourselves, as we go through life; and this has far-reaching consequences for our success and our relationships with those around us.

Of course, empirical evidence from all sorts of fields (from neuroscience to athletic coaching) tells us that the brain has remarkable plasticity, that performance is far more likely to result from sustained effort, and that people are coachable. But they have to be open and willing to grow; no amount of coaching will improve performance if the subject is stuck in a "fixed mindset". It has been proven experimentally that even toddlers have one of the two mindsets, and that mindset strongly correlates with performance even when it is briefly and temporarily induced.

So to aim high and to believe that you can do well in your exams you need to adopt a 'Growth Mindset'. Having the right mindset, as we said at the beginning, is the single-biggest determinant of how well you'll do in exams (yes, even more than ability). The even better news is that anyone can get into the right mindset.

Fixed Mind-set
Intelligence is static



Leads to a desire to look smart and therefore a tendency to...

Growth Mind-set
Intelligence can be developed



Leads to a desire to learn and therefore a tendency to...

CHALLENGES

...avoid challenges



...embrace challenges



OBSTACLES

...give up easily



...persist in the face of setbacks



EFFORT

...see effort as fruitless or worse



...see effort as the path to mastery



CRITICISM

...ignore useful negative feedback



...learn from criticism



SUCCESS OF OTHERS

...feel threatened by the success of others



...find lessons and inspiration in the success of others



As a result, they may plateau early and achieve less than their full potential.

All this confirms a deterministic view of the world.

As a result, they reach ever-higher levels of achievement.

All this gives them a greater sense of free will.