



Some tips and advice for study and revision

April 2019

Revising for a set of subjects can initially seem quite daunting, but it is also a really good opportunity to reflect on just how much you've learned over the course of the year. End-of-year examinations are inevitably a very busy part of the school year, but they are also a great way to demonstrate to your teachers, parents – and most importantly, yourself – the progress you've made during the academic year!

The purpose of this booklet is to pass on some general hints and tips about effective revision and a chance for your teachers to outline the content that will be covered in your end-of-year examinations. A “little and often” approach is generally the best way to revise and, whilst it is sensible to plan out a revision timetable well in advance, you should make sure you leave yourself plenty of time to relax and unwind too.

We hope you will find this information helpful as you start your preparation; we are always here to offer more guidance and answer questions should you have them. Good luck!

How to keep your cool during exams

Manage your studying

Don't go overboard and lock yourself in with your books 24 hours a day. A few hours is the maximum amount of time anyone can study successfully. After that, nothing goes in and we just feel tired. So, break up periods of work with periods of relaxation. Ask your parents to help you plan some rewards to help you through revision and examination time.

Eat and sleep properly

Exam anxiety sometimes makes sleeping difficult. To help this not happen to you, set a definite time to go to bed and stick to it every night. (That extra hour of cramming late at night is unlikely to be as helpful as an extra hour of sleep.) A period of gentle music, a light snack or a glass of milk and a warm bath will help you relax before bed. Feed your brain with healthy foods. Ask your parents to put your favourite healthy snacks in the fridge during revision time. Remember to keep having regular exercise and get some fresh air whenever you can.

Get help

Ask teachers about how to revise and to give you hints about taking exams. Also, confiding in someone you trust and who will be supportive is a great way of alleviating stress and worry. Don't forget your form tutor is always there to help you. In short, if things are feeling difficult, find someone to talk about it with; don't just lock yourself away or keep your worries to yourself.

Be nice to yourself

Self-affirmation is really important. You may feel silly but tell yourself that you are great and you can do it, because you are and you can! Exams are supposed to be hard so don't assume that, if you are finding it hard, there is something wrong. It's a challenge to be faced and you are going to tackle that challenge with the very best you've got! (Also, make sure you have short breaks when you do nice things that you enjoy. Keep some balance and you will cope marvellously.)

Use relaxation techniques

Remember that heightened stress around difficult times in our lives is a natural and helpful reaction. It helps to sharpen our minds and work effectively toward the task at hand. So, don't stress about feeling stressed! Instead, find ways to help you cope with that stress. The quickest and most effective way of eliminating feelings of stress and panic is to stop everything, close your eyes and take several long, slow deep breaths, breath in for 7 and out for 11. Breathing in this way calms your whole nervous system. Simultaneously, you could give yourself a mental pep-talk by silently repeating, “I know I can do this”.

How do I go about revising?

Step One

Make sure you understand what topics you will be tested on in the examination.



Step Two

Be sure that all your class notes on these topics are up to date, complete and legible. Go through your exercise book or folder and make sure you have everything you need. If you were away through illness, sport or music, now is the time to make sure you have filled every gap. Ask your teacher for missing notes or borrow your friend's book to photocopy class work.

Step Four

Devise a timetable. This should be realistic – there is no point telling yourself you will spend 4 hours a night revising when you know you can't – you only set yourself up for a sense of failure and panic!

In the weeks before the examination, you should aim to get your information into a form which you can learn from. Spend a short achievable amount of time on this regularly. In the two weeks before the examination, when teachers are giving you revision homework, you can build up the time you spend actually revising each subject.



Step Three

Sort out your study space – make sure it is well lit and comfortable without too many distractions. Don't keep your phone here! Make sure you have all the equipment that you need – coloured pens, highlighters, A4 plain paper, revision cards, post-it notes, etc.



Step Five

REVISING! Make sure your revision is active. Reading the textbook or through your notes is passive. Think about all the times you've been taught about different revision techniques and try a few. (Some of them are outlined below). Part of the reason for end-of-year examinations is to help you refine your revision skills and learn what works best for you.

Revision – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

I don't know where to start with my revision, what should I do?

Make sure you have a copy of the list of topics that will be covered in the examination. You will find these lists in this booklet and, if you are in Year 9 or Year 10, perhaps in exam board specifications too. Go through this list, alongside your folder or exercise book, making sure you have information on all the relevant topics.

If you don't have information relating to a specific topic, remedy this – by using the textbook or asking a reliable friend or a teacher. Then check you understand all the information in your book or folder. In this context “understand” means being able to explain to someone else what the idea is, without any notes in front of you.

If you don't understand something, remedy this by checking for alternative explanations in textbooks, library books or on recommended websites, or by asking a teacher to go through it with you (either in a help session or speaking to them individually). Your teachers are here to help you, and you should not feel worried about asking them to revisit a topic with you. Once you know you have all the information you need and are sure you understand it, follow the advice below.

How should I revise?

You need to actively engage with the material you want to learn. Research shows that simply reading and then re-reading a textbook or a set of notes is not an effective way to revise. When you re-read something, it seems familiar but this familiarity is an illusion, and not an indication that you have learnt and understood the material in question.

What you need to do is check to see if the knowledge and information you have read is really in your brain. There are numerous ways to do this. Here are just a few:

- repeat what you have learnt aloud, only using a prompt if you get stuck
- make a mind map or other diagram of the material
- work through practice questions or past papers
- make flashcards with a key word on the front and important information on the back, so that you can use them to test yourself
- explain what you have learnt to someone else (e.g. a parent), and invite them to ask you questions about it

Using a variety of revision techniques will help prevent boredom and maintain motivation, so mix your methods up to see what works for you.

It is worth noting that, generally, there are not different ways to revise for different subjects. Working through practice questions, for example, is equally effective in the Humanities subjects (e.g. History, Geography) as in Mathematics or the Sciences.

Previously, I just learnt from the textbook and I got really good marks. Why can't I do that again?

Apart from the fact that reading and re-reading is not an effective way to revise (see above), the textbook is designed to be a guide or accompaniment to the course you are studying; it isn't a revision tool.

Particularly in younger year groups, the content that you cover is likely to be different (and probably larger) than what you would find in a textbook. The textbook may not even cover the whole course, or it might not cover it in sufficient detail.

A good textbook might help you understand the information, and it might contain some useful exercises to do, but that is all. You need to make your own notes – unless you have successfully explained something in your own words, you can't be sure that you have understood it.

Can't I just use ready-made notes from the internet?

No, (a) because lots of notes on the internet contain inaccuracies or omissions and can't be trusted. Even if they are correct, they won't necessarily cover all the information you need for the course you are studying and (b) because, again, you won't have processed or thought about the information yourself, and this is key to understanding it.

I am a visual/kinaesthetic/auditory learner, surely I need to take a different approach?

Whatever you may have heard about this previously, the educational research on this is really clear: there are no such distinctions between different "types" of learner. Yes, people have learning preferences, but the way in which you learn should be driven by what you are trying to learn, not by some mistaken idea of what sort of learner you are.

If you were trying to learn a song, you wouldn't learn it by simply looking at the musical notation; you would listen to the music. Equally, if you were trying to learn a dance or how to bowl a ball in cricket, you would learn primarily by watching and doing, not by listening to someone explaining the necessary actions.

What is wrong with cramming? I learn best at the last minute.

Cramming really does not work. Research shows that people who cram forget most of what they have tried to learn within a matter of hours. In order to learn material thoroughly, it is necessary to start a revision programme well in advance and regularly revisit and review that material. Each time you return to the material, you not only refresh but also strengthen your memory of it.

In educational jargon, this is called "spaced practice" and there is lots of evidence to suggest that students who revisit material frequently, but with gaps in between, are more successful in being able to recall and apply the information that they've learnt. It is for this reason the "little and often" approach is helpful, along with mixing up your methods to keep things interesting.

Is it OK to listen to music when I work?

There is some evidence that using 'deliberate distractions' when you work can be helpful. Playing music while you work will apparently prevent you from becoming distracted by other things (e.g. checking your phone) - because you only have a limited amount of attention, one distraction (the music) can fill it sufficiently to exclude other distractions.

The implication of this is that if you are the sort of person who is easily distracted, a small distraction like music (which allows you to keep working, albeit less efficiently) is preferable to a big distraction, like phoning a friend, which would stop you working altogether. But other recent research on music and revision produced the following findings:

- Students who revised in quiet environments performed more than 60% better in an exam than their peers who revised while listening to music that had lyrics
- Students who revised while listening to music without lyrics did better than those who had revised to music with lyrics
- It made no difference if students revised listening to songs they liked or disliked. Both led to a reduction in their test performance
- Students who revised in silence rated their environment as less distracting and accurately predicted that this would lead to better performances in subsequent tests

So, if you are going to listen to music whilst revising, it is probably better to choose music that doesn't have any lyrics. But, ideally, you should also try to build in some silent revision time too, as this really is the most effective.

Is it better to do revision notes by hand or on a computer?

Research shows that it is far better to handwrite notes. When you type, you tend to write down everything, and don't really process the information. Handwriting notes forces you to be selective and think about what is and is not important, and that is a really important process. If, however, your normal approach is to use a laptop in lessons and examinations, then it makes sense to use a laptop when revising. Just make sure your notes really are notes.

Handwriting your notes is also really good practice for the exams themselves, in which the majority of you will be handwriting answers. And, whilst we're on it, it is important that your handwriting is clear and legible, but neatness is not something you should obsess about when note-taking – having “perfect” notes will not help you remember them!

Now that I have learnt the material what do I do?

Learning the information you will be asked about in the examinations is a very important step. But you must also think about what you will be asked to do with the information. Once you have organised your information and begun to remember it, think about what questions you could be asked about it. Once you have learnt a topic, you must think about using your knowledge effectively.

You will have had essay questions and unit tests throughout the year. Give yourself similar questions to practise on. This is something that you could do with your friends – think up questions on each topic and swap them. Make sure any errors that you made in original answers are corrected.

How can I make sure I stick to my revision timetable?

Revision timetables are useful things but only if they are realistic. Plan in time off, including whole days off. Find time for a sporting activity or a walk or another hobby. Never eat and work at the same time. Meals should be times when you relax.

Do not set aside entire days for a single subject. The reasons for this are similar to the reasons why you should not cram. If you work continually on the same thing, you will acquire a sense of familiarity with it which you might mistake for learning but which is not learning in the true sense of the word.

Switching between subjects during a working day forces the learner to make more use of their powers of recall. If you study one subject, then another, then a third, then return to the first thing, you have to recall that first thing back to mind again, which helps transfer the information to your long term memory.

Finally, get enough sleep (it helps consolidate your memories) - and ask for help if you need it.

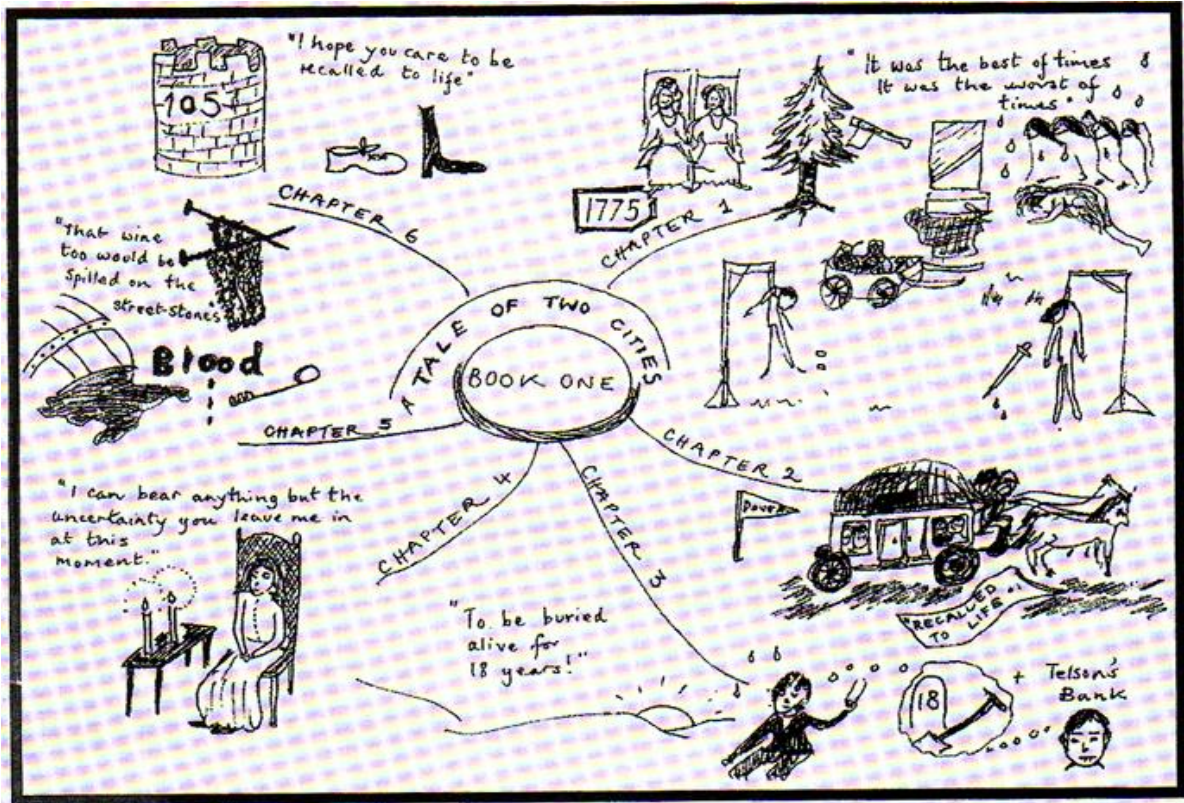
Topic Cards

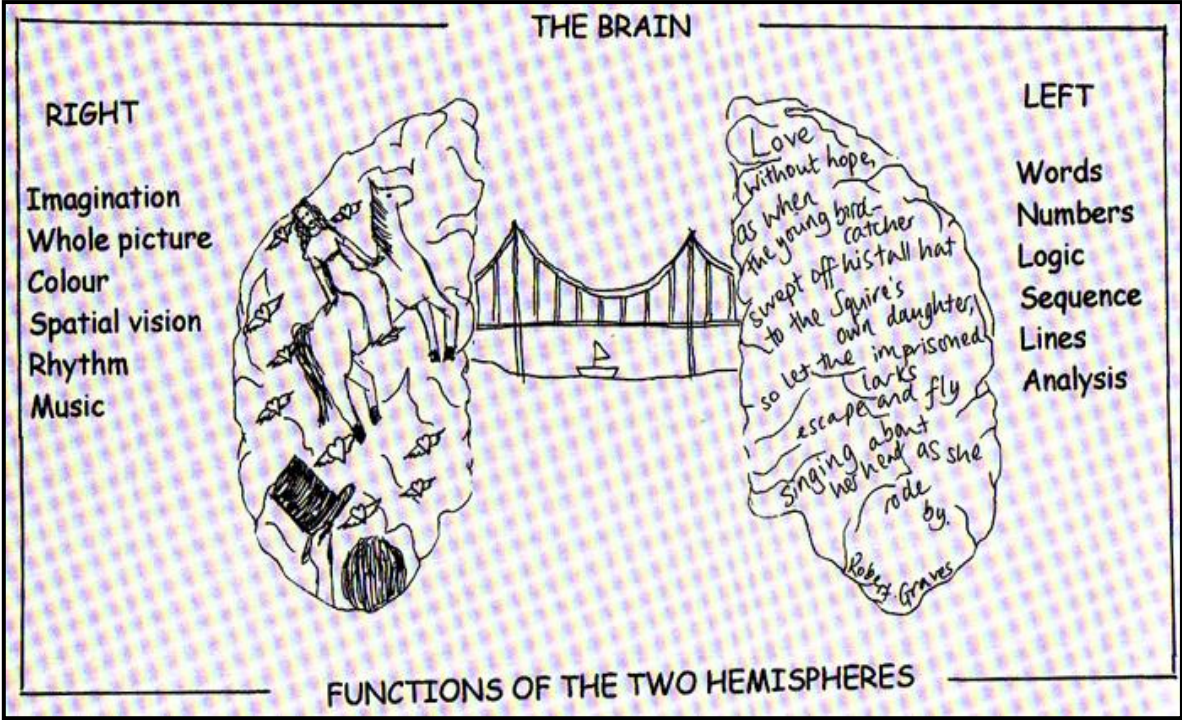
For some people, reducing their work onto cards – one for each topic with all the key words, formulas and information on them – works extremely well. You can carry them around, keep looking at them in a spare moment such as on the bus or tube or at break time. You can get friends and family to test them on the content. You can also put key definitions, concepts and formulae onto post-it notes. Stick these on your bathroom wall so you can revise while you brush your teeth.

<u>FRENCH</u>		
<u>REGULAR</u>	<u>ACTIVE</u>	<u>PRESENT TENSE ENDINGS</u>
-ER	-IR	-RE
eg MANGER	eg FINIR	eg VENDRE
je -e	-is	-s
tu -es	-is	-s
il,elle -e	-it	- NO LETTER*
nous -ons	-issons	-ONS
vous -ez	-issez	-EZ
ils,elles -ent	-issent	-ENT
eg tu mang <u>es</u>	nous fin <u>issons</u>	il vend <u> </u>
You eat	We finish	He sells
You are eating	we are finishing	He is selling

Visual Cards

For some people, visual clues and colours can be helpful ways to boost their ability to recall information. Pictures, diagrams, cartoons and symbols can all be useful “hooks” when trying to remember a piece of information or a key concept. Creating cards with images on are, therefore, quite a good way of revising – just don’t spend too long on the artwork!





Writing Notes

For some people writing brief notes on each topic can do the trick. They remember where each piece of information is on the page and remember what it is from the look of the page in their memories.

Henry VIII and the Break with Rome

Why did it happen?

Heir

- Henry needs a male heir to inherit throne
- Katherine of Aragon no living sons
- Girls don't count in 16th Century (Mary no use)
- Katherine of Aragon too old for childbirth

Religion

- Henry convinced all still births etc judgement of God for marrying Katherine - Leviticus

Love

- Falls in 'love' with Anne Boleyn
- Young, pretty, dark, lived at French court, very stylish
- Will not give in to Henry unless he marries her

Church

- Church extremely wealthy – Henry very extravagant
- Political control - If get rid of 'Roman' Church Henry will have full control of his Kingdom
- Church needs reform – corruption e.g. Wolsey and bad behaviour of priests/monks etc.
- Spread of protestant ideas from Europe

Pope

- Pope reluctant to undermine authority of previous pope – had allowed Henry to marry Katherine (even though had been married to his brother)
- Under power of Charles V – nephew of Katherine – after sack of Rome. Does not dare to go against his wishes.

Spider Diagrams

For some, creating a spider diagram about each topic can be really helpful. In the middle of the page you write the topic you are revising and leading from it all the information that feeds into or from that topic. This can be done with words or pictures. These can then be stuck on the wall so that you can look at them whenever you have a few minutes or perhaps just before bed or when you wake up.

