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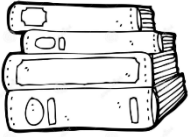
## Revision Guidance & Exam Technique

# 10

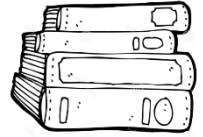
## Top Ten Revision Tips!

# 10

1. **Short bursts** of revision (30-40 minutes) are most effective. Your concentration lapses after about an hour and you need to take a short break (5-10 minutes).
2. Find a **quiet place** to revise - your bedroom, school, the library - and refuse to be interrupted or distracted.
3. Make sure you don't just revise the subjects and topics you like. **Work on your weaker** ones as well.
4. **Make your own revision notes** because you will remember what you have written down more easily. Stick key notes to cupboards or doors so you see them everyday.
5. **Rewrite** the key points of your revision notes; **read** them out loud to yourself. We remember more than twice as much of what we say aloud than of what we merely read.
6. **Use different techniques.** Make your own learning maps, use post-it notes to write key words on, create flash cards. Record your notes on tape and listen to them back on your Walkman. Ask friends and family to test you. Use highlighter pens to mark important points. Chant or make up a rap song.
7. **Practise on past exam papers** or revision tests available on the web. Initially do one section at a time and progress to doing an entire paper against the clock.
8. You will need **help** at some stage; ask parents, older brothers and sisters, teachers or friends. Use websites specifically designed for revision.
9. **Don't get stressed out!** Eat properly and get lots of sleep!
10. **Believe in yourself** and be **positive**. If you think you can succeed you will; if you convince yourself that you will fail, that's what will probably happen.



## Getting Started on Revision



### **Where?**

Find a fixed place to study (a particular desk/room at home, a spot in the library, etc.) that becomes firmly associated in your mind with productive work. All the equipment and materials you need should be within reach, and the room should be well lit and ventilated, but not too comfortable! Turn your room into a positive learning environment. Keep books and notes on the desk to a minimum and decorate your walls with colourful notes and key facts. Music is fine as long as it helps you to study and blocks out distracting noises. The very best sound to study to is thought to be that of Baroque composers or Mozart. Experiments show that brains are positively stimulated and IQs boosted by such music.

### **What?**

Remember that it's all about being active and *focused on tasks, not time!* Know at the start of a session what you want to have completed by the end of the period. Make the tasks specific and realistic, not vague and large.

### **How?**

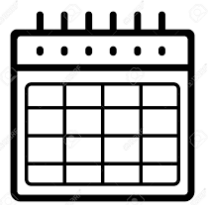
Always work with a pen and paper at the ready. Getting started is often the most difficult bit, so start by 'doing'. It usually helps to begin with a subject you like, move on to other less favoured areas, and then finish up with a favoured topic to maintain the interest.

### **When?**

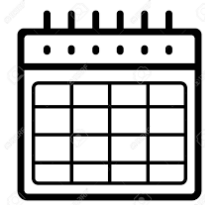
Try to schedule your study for times when you are more mentally alert. Most people find their ability to focus deteriorates towards the end of the day. Getting revision done earlier in the day aids efficiency and also offers the reward of having time to relax after the work is done.

### **Why?**

Test your progress at the end of a study session. Ask yourself "what have I just learned?" Review the material covered in your revision session. Merely recognising material isn't enough - you must be able to reproduce it without the aid of the book or notes.



## Revision timetable.



Getting an early start on your revision is always a good thing. The more time you allow yourself to revise, the more room you'll have to cover each subject without needing to cram. You'll have more time to practice what you need to learn and consolidate it into your memory.

Creating a revision timetable should be your first step. This will allow you to spread out your study time evenly and avoid cramming during the days leading up to your assessments. You can also allocate more time to any subjects you're struggling with.

### How to create a revision timetable.

There are many perks to making a revision timetable. Not only does it keep you organised, but it ensures that you're maintaining a healthy study-life balance while getting you ready for your exams. Here's how a revision timetable can help you.

#### **1. Prioritise topics**

Before creating your revision timetable, decide which subjects you're strongest at and which are your weakest. Outlining this before you start revising will give you oversight into what topics you need to spend a bit more time on.

#### **2. Divide time appropriately**

Once you've outlined which topics you'll need to spend more time on, reflect this in your revision timetable. Allocate more time to any subjects you feel less confident about. Do remember to still make time to cover topics that you're feeling confident about. What's important is revising each topic but being smart about the time allocated to each.

#### **3. Chunk subjects**

Split each subject you plan to study into separate chunks. This allows you to separate the subjects that you don't need to spend as much time revising from those you do. You'll also get an overview of how many topics you need to cover and how much time you should be allocating to each.

#### **4. Colour-code subjects**

Representing each subject in your revision timetable with a different colour will provide a better visual overview of your study. At a glance you can easily see what's coming up. You can check that you're spending the right amount of time per subject and pinpoint which topics you need to allocate more time to.

#### **5. Schedule breaks**

Divide your study time up with appropriate breaks. Short breaks every 30 to 35 minutes will allow you to vary what you study throughout the day. You'll be able to approach each topic with a fresh mind and not feel burnt out after a few hours. Stepping away from your study and coming back with a clear head can also help with problem solving.

#### **6. Fit around your daily life**

Your daily life shouldn't be put on hold because you're revising. It's important that you create a revision timetable that considers your usual daily activities. Scheduling these into your timetable will provide balance and give you the chance to take breaks when you need.

#### **7. Be flexible**

Studying a topic for less time than you intended or missing a study session isn't the end of the world. Life happens and a revision timetable should account for that. Leave room in your timetable for flexibility in case you need to move some topics around. You might also find that on some days, you have more energy and motivation than others.

#### **8. Try going digital**

You might prefer crafting a hand drawn revision timetable, and that's ok. But you may find a digital one more convenient. Using the calendar in your phone, your email or any timetable app will mean you always have your revision timetable with you. When you need to be flexible, it's also a lot easier to make changes to a digital version of your timetable than a written one.

## **Revision resources (WJEC).**

**Project planner:** <https://www.wjec.co.uk/media/dqijxphd/project-planner-for-print.pdf>

**Homework tracker:** <https://www.wjec.co.uk/media/ac1idupz/homework-tracker-for-screen.pdf>

**Daily Planner:** <https://www.wjec.co.uk/media/nikbuijys/daily-planner.pdf>

# Revision strategies.

## What type of learner are you?

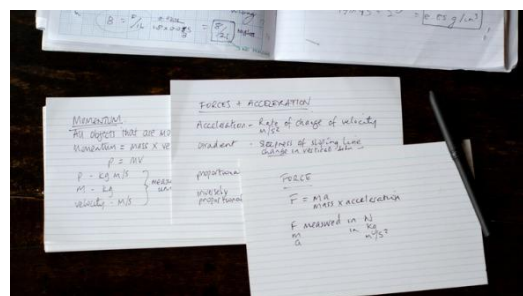
Every brain works differently and the revision techniques that suit you may not suit your friends. Past papers might seem like the best revision method, but that isn't the case for everyone. You may learn best visually, auditorily, verbally, through demonstration or a combination of these. Many online tests let you know which type you are, and it's a valuable starting point towards creating effective revision methods.

Once you know your learning style, you can start to plan the best revision methods for you. If you learn best visually, you might want to try making mind maps or using post-it notes. Auditory learners might want to listen to a podcast summarising the key points, while verbal learners might want to teach someone else or explain the key concepts out loud.

**Quiz:** <http://www.educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/learning-styles-quiz.shtml>

## Flashcards.

Of all the revision techniques out there, you'll hear this one frequently. Flash cards or revision cards use keywords or questions to test your knowledge. To keep each subject separate and avoid confusion, use different colours for different subjects. If you don't have coloured card to hand, trying using post-it notes.



This revision method is particularly good for people with a visual learning style and breaks down the information you need to know into small, easy to remember chunks.

## Make your own PowerPoints.



Creating a presentation about what you've learnt not only tests your memory but your ability to retrieve information from memory and verbalise it. This will solidify the knowledge you need to retain. You could use your PowerPoint to teach someone else, or just present it to yourself.

If you're especially creative, you could create mind maps on PowerPoint to include in your presentation or draw them out on paper and insert an image into your presentation.

### **Use Post-it notes**



Post-it notes can be a healthy alternative to staring at a screen. They act as a reminder on topics you might want to dodge while revising. You can put them up in places you often look at as well to make sure you're taking in the information.

Creative places to put your post it notes include on the bathroom mirror, on the fridge door or somewhere near the dining table so you can look at them as you eat. Having them in places you'll see them every day means you'll have a quick glance over them whenever you see them and get them embedded in your memory faster.

### **Listen to (calming) music.**

Calming music, whether it's instrumentals, a bird soundtrack or whatever you fancy can lead to effective study. As long as it isn't overly distracting, these background sounds can be really effective for helping you stay focused.



Putting on music is a great way to curate your study space and get into the right mindset to revise. YouTube and Spotify have a lot of options for suitable study music to make sure your brain is calm and focused.

### **Make a video / record yourself.**



Another creative revision technique is to put together a revision video. Writing is not the only way to revise, so try engaging the creative parts of your brain to consolidate what you're learning into memory.

This is a great way for both auditory and verbal learners to revise, as you'll be speaking out loud to create the video, and then watching it back to consolidate.

# Note taking

The purpose of making summary notes on a topic or section is to aid your overall understanding of material, to help you distinguish between what is really important information (*depth*) and what is merely supporting *detail*. Reference to the main syllabus topics will help the process of discernment within each subject.

In addition, good summary notes make retrieval of information quicker and easier.

## **Sort out your filing system**

If you haven't already done so, get your subject folders and notes organised immediately. Invest in some ring binders, dividers, plastic pockets, etc. Have a separate folder for each subject (a permanent reference point) and then keep a 'current folder' for managing notes in progress.

## **Less is always more**

When writing notes, remember they should contain a summary, not an extensive repetition of what is in the textbook. Don't crowd the page. Stick to main headings and sub-headings. Use abbreviations where appropriate. Try to reduce what you need to know on the topic down to one A4 sheet. Once you have an overview, it is easier to fill out the detail.

## **Make your notes visual**

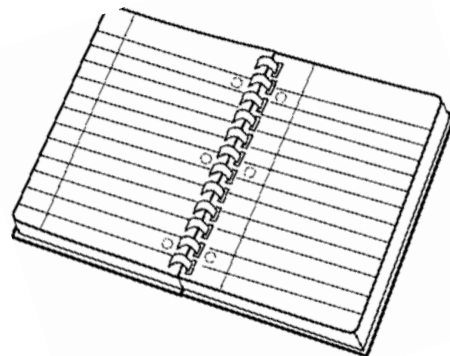
Ensure your notes have a memorable appearance so that you can recall them easily. Use illustrations, diagrams, graphs, colours, and boxes ('a picture is worth a thousand words'). Arrange the material in a logical hierarchy (title, sub-point, explanation, example). Ideally, you should be able to close your eyes in an exam and visualise a particular page of notes.

## **Beware of transcribing and highlighting!**

Merely re-writing the text from the book into your notes does not ensure retention. Try to put things in your own words and devise your own examples - this will make the material more meaningful. Only use the highlighter pen AFTER you have previewed and questioned a text, this makes you identify the most important material and you avoid the creation of a highlighted textbook!

## **'Save' your notes carefully**

Practice following the logic of your computer files, when storing information. Think - "Where does this material best fit (subject, section, topic, sub-topic, etc.)?" In this way, you will ensure that it is efficiently processed and easily retrieved both physically (during revision) and mentally (when you need it in an exam).





## Improving Memory



We often blame our memory for poor academic performance.



We really should be addressing our faulty input and storage system. There is a big difference between short-term and long-term memory. If you study a topic one night and can recall most of it the next morning, don't be fooled into thinking that you will be able to remember it accurately in two months time.

If the goal is to improve your long-term memory, then the key to success is based on the efficiency of input (the 'mental filing system' we employ). Reducing the burden on the limited short-term memory, and channelling information into long-term storage, is based on the creation of patterns and the avoidance of randomness.

- **'Chunking'**: as the average person can only hold seven 'items' in short-term memory, grouping items together into 'chunks' can increase capacity. This is generally used for remembering numbers (think of how you remember phone numbers by grouping the seven digits into 2 or 3 chunks) but can be applied to other listings in various subjects.
- **Repetition**: Studies indicate that 66% of material is forgotten within seven days if it is not reviewed or recited again by the student, and 88% is gone after six weeks. Don't make life harder for yourself - build in a brief daily and weekly review of material covered. It will save you having to re-learn material from scratch!
- **Application and association**: The best way to channel material to long-term memory is to organise it into meaningful associations. Link it to existing information and topics and create vivid personal examples which act as 'mental hooks' or 'cues' for recalling material in the future. Thus, new items are put in context. If you learn a new formula / verb / rule, try to put it into practice immediately with a relevant example.
- **Use of mnemonics**: these are various word games which can act as memory aids and which allow personalisation and creativity. Think of *stalagmites* (come down from the ceiling) and *stalagmites* (go up from the ground); the colours of the rainbow - **Roy G. Biv** ('Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain' to remember red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet); the seven characteristics of living organisms - **Mr. Grief** (**M**ovement, **R**eproduction, **G**rowth, **R**espiration, **I**rritability, **E**xcretion, **F**eeding). You can devise many more of these to aid your personalised recall of items in your subjects.

## Review

Looking over a topic every now and then will help to keep it in the memory, taking away the need to cram before exams.

Make a summary of the work and look over it ten minutes later, the next day, the next week and then the next month for a few minutes each time. This reinforces the knowledge learned.

Understanding increases as time spent studying passes. However, the ability to recall things being memorised becomes progressively less efficient as time passes in a study session.

20 minutes is needed for the mind to get into the rhythm of and flow of the material. Any more than 40 minutes spent memorising means that memory declines to a point where it is no longer valuable.

The answer in revision lessons therefore is to do 30 minutes with a 5-minute stretch break and then review the topic.

### **After a one-hour memorising session:**

10 minutes later revise the topic for 10 minutes

1 day later revise the topic for 5 minutes

1 week later revise the topic for 2-5 minutes

1 month later revise the topic for 2-5 minutes

Before exams revise the topic as required.

**Each time knowledge is reinforced; it enters deeper into the long-term memory and becomes more stable.**

## Past papers

Use practice papers to familiarise yourself with the format of your assessment and how questions may be structured. Time yourself to avoid getting flustered when sitting the actual assessment, and you'll be able to gauge how much time to roughly spend on each question.

Past papers are a useful revision tool. They enable you to gauge your subject knowledge and uncover your strengths and weaknesses, enabling you to understand what areas you need to devote more time to and conversely, what areas you can devote less time to.

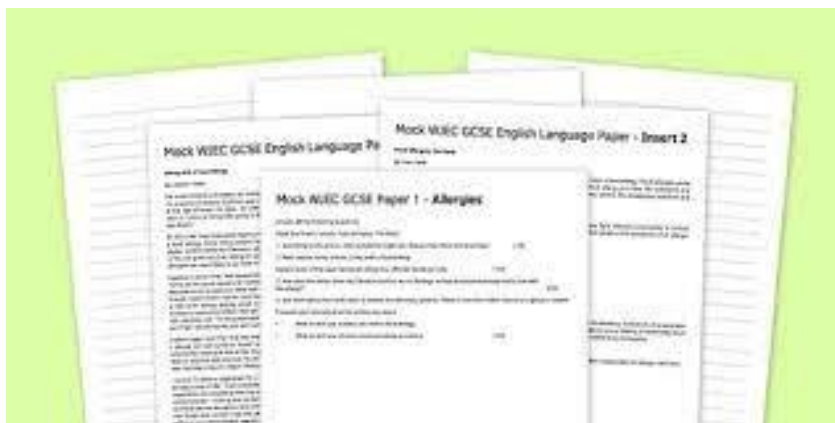
These should be your constant companion in all revision tasks. For each topic you revise, consult the past questions on this subject and then attempt answers to them. Check your answers, fill in the 'knowledge gaps' where necessary, and file away the correct 'model answer' in your notes for future reference. You will also start to notice any trends in the questions asked.

Each exam paper contains its own particular structure and challenge, with varying emphasis on answering style and depth. While much of your ongoing revision will be based on individual topics and questions, it is a very useful exercise to tackle an exam paper in its totality (at least once before they start). It forces you to consider your strategy – the questions you will want to attempt or avoid, the issues of timing, the number of points you will need to make in each part of a question. Having performed this exercise a couple of times, your confidence levels rise as you fix on your strategy for the exam.

WJEC Past papers: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/past-papers/>

## Mark schemes

Marking schemes are an invaluable aid to exam preparation (available online from WJEC etc). You can see how the marks are allocated for each question on the paper and what quantity or style of answer is required in each case. This knowledge will greatly inform your revision work and helps to remove the mystique of the exam.



## Knowledge Organisers

The WJEC have developed a collection of handy sample Knowledge Organisers to support the delivery of the learning of a range of qualifications.

They can be used to aid revision, or as a starting point for creating your own.

<https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/student-support/revision/revision-resources/new-knowledge-organisers/>

## Walk through exams

Aimed at learners, these Exam Walk Throughs resources offer practical hints and tips on how to effectively approach questions in examination papers. Using questions from past exam papers, each PPT with audio help and audio script in the notes will walk you through a mock examination paper, helping you revise and practise useful exam techniques. You can complete the “mock” in a single sitting, tackle one or two questions at a time or revisit some parts of the presentation to reinforce your learning.

<https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/student-support/revision/revision-resources/exam-walk-throughs/>

## Performing on the Day



### **Get a good night's sleep**

While the temptation is to stay up half the night 'cramming' in more facts and figures, the evidence suggests this approach is counter-productive. In the context of a two-year course, an extra night's studying can make very little difference to your knowledge. However, having a mind that is refreshed, alert, and ready to respond to circumstances will obviously be of far greater benefit.



**Arrive in plenty of time:** To perform well on the day, you need to be relaxed and to feel in control of the situation. This is difficult to achieve if you have missed breakfast and are stuck on a bus in traffic or standing on a train for 45 minutes as the exam time approaches. You will need about 15 minutes 'quiet time' to mentally rehearse your exam and run through your 'game plan' for the final time.



### **Have your equipment ready**

Each exam has its own requirements. Apart from properly functioning pens, pencils, rulers, etc, you may need a calculator for the Maths or Science exam. Drawing pencils may be required for diagrams in some subjects. A lot of nervous energy can be expended on last-minute hassle if these items aren't checked in advance.



### **Think positive**

On the day of the exam, remind yourself of the good things (the material you know well, the revision you have completed, all the past exam questions done, the good grades achieved) rather than dwelling on areas of weakness. Having that self-belief will give you the confidence to trust your judgement within the exam hall and 'hit the target'.



### **Maintain your focus**

There can be a lot of tension, drama, and hysteria in the air on the days of an exam. You want to keep the balance between maintaining your focus and interacting normally with your friends and classmates. Try finding a quiet spot *far from the madding crowd* to 'warm-up' before each exam and 'warm-down' afterwards. Surround yourself with people who are likely to add to the calm rather than add to the clamour.



### **Beware of post-exam analysis**

The more you participate in the exam post-mortem, the more confused and disheartened you are likely to become. You can't change what has happened, you can only focus on the present and this will need your full attention.

## 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.



### 1. **Allow time to read the paper carefully**

The importance of reading the paper carefully and choosing your questions wisely cannot be emphasised enough at this stage. The natural inclination is always 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 will 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 elementary 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. Simply changing a definition / formula / calculation at this stage could be the difference between a good and an average grade.

### 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, the examiner can't give you 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!