



There's more to effective revision than just putting in the hours. Follow these proven tips from neuroscientists and teachers to help you revise more effectively.

Less is more

Avoid highlighting whole chunks of text. Instead, keep it limited to the key words in a paragraph or the most important parts of an image that can then be used as a trigger for remembering the rest of the information. If you have a habit of highlighting more than just the keywords, try to gradually reduce the amount of cues available to you. For example, if you have a paragraph that you need to remember, first condense/summarise the paragraph into a few sentences, then into one sentence, then into one word, and so on.

Get lots of sleep

When it's the night before an exam, you may be tempted to revise through the night instead of sleeping. But sleep is important for consolidating memories; it is crucial for cementing all of the things you have just revised. So to give your brain the best chance of remembering all the information you've been learning, avoid late nights.

1

BREAK IT DOWN

Little and often

Revise a bit of a topic every day rather than spending hours on one subject. Turn your revision into bite-sized nuggets and mix up topics to help your brain practise recalling information.

When you cram information before an exam, the synapses between the neurons in your brain have to work extra hard. Eventually the synapses become 'maxed out' and lose their ability to encode new information. By starting early and spacing your learning, you are giving your synapses breaks in between learning, preventing them from becoming overloaded.

Create a revision timetable

Avoid last-minute cramming by tackling the topics you are less confident on first. Remember to schedule breaks into your revision so that you don't overload yourself.

Categorise your mistakes

When self-marking past papers, separate your mistakes into knowledge and exam technique. This will help you recognise where you are losing marks and where to focus your study time.

2

FOCUS YOUR REVISION

Instead of revising everything to have ever learnt in a subject, consider which topics to prioritise and where your gaps in knowledge or weaknesses lie. This will make your revision time more effective than blanket revision.

3

MAKE IT MEANINGFUL

When you find something difficult to remember, try to make it meaningful. This could be by connecting it to things you already know, like linking the fact to something you learnt in another subject, or making it memorable by turning it into a song, a rap, or an acronym. This encourages your brain to make connections, making it easier to recall information.

Mind maps

Display the key terms, key ideas and key diagrams of a whole topic on one large piece of paper.

This will help you organise related information together. Your brain will create connections between these different bits of information into a network of long term memories. It is easier to retrieve information across a topic if the connections between ideas are strong.

Mnemonics

This technique involves associating each letter of a word with information. For example, you can remember the magnetic field lines by thinking ANTS (Away from North, Toward South) and iron filings around a magnetic look like ants.

Memory palaces

Imagine a physical space such as your house or school. Imagining walking through this space and seeing the things that you want to remember. For example, to help you remember the order of the planet you might open your front door and see the planet Mercury behind it, you then notice a picture of Venus in the hallway etc. etc.

PRACTISE RETRIEVING INFORMATION

4

You might think that repetition is the key to remembering information, but when forming long-term memories, it is actually more effective to regularly practise taking information OUT of the brain, rather than continually trying to put the same information IN (through trying to memorise via repetition). Instead of re-reading or highlighting information, try testing yourself using these techniques.

Essay & extended answer plans

For essay based subjects, such as English literature, make essay plans on key topics, such as key characters and themes in a text.

Revision dice

Use these to help you remember formulas, conjugations or key words. Make a net of a cube. On each face write the information you want to learn. Roll the dice and practise applying the information shown.

Teach a friend

Try to explain topics to your friends and family. Get them to ask you questions for more details. You'll be able to work out if you fully understand the topic if you can properly explain it.



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