

# Ansford Academy

## Preparing for Exams

### 2024 - 2025



## Guidance for students and families.

*'Success doesn't come from what you do occasionally, but from what you do consistently'*

**Name:**

# PREPARING TO REVISE

## Organise yourself early

- When it comes to revision, slow and steady wins the race. Look at when each exam is due to take place, and then create a revision timetable that **prioritises the subjects you'll be tested on first**. You should also include your Exams dates, times and locations. An example revision timetable can be found later in this booklet.
- By making a plan in advance of the Exams period (and sticking to it!), you'll feel more in control of your work - and you can avoid being gripped by last minute panic.

## Mix it up

- When you create your revision timetable, be honest with yourself about which subjects you are, and aren't, looking forward to spending time on.
- By placing less enjoyable topics next to ones you find more interesting, you'll find it easier to keep going. For example, an hour of maths revision might be more bearable if you know you have history to look forward to after lunch.
- Avoid spending more than an hour on each subject, and make sure you build in time for regular breaks, too.

## Get comfortable

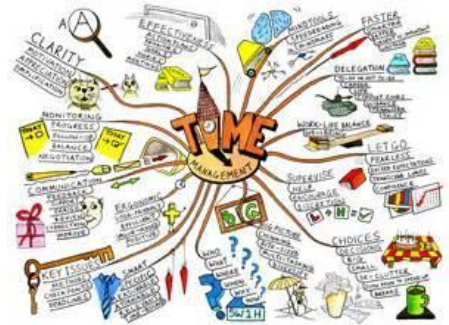
- Think about where you're going to be revising and make sure it's a space you can truly work in. You'll need plenty of light, plus room to spread out your notes, textbooks and other resources.
- You'll need to avoid revising anywhere noisy or where there are distractions that will affect your concentration - so if you can, try to stay out of areas where other family members will keep coming and going.
- Have a drink of water handy as staying hydrated will help you to focus. Also, consider opening a nearby window if you're in a warm place; a breath of fresh air will help keep you alert.
- Above all, be honest with yourself about whether or not 'background noise' truly helps you to concentrate. While relaxing music, played softly, is an aid to some people when they're revising, almost nobody can work effectively with the TV or radio on.

## Don't watch the clock

- Timing your revision sessions strictly isn't always the best approach - particularly if you're inclined to keep glancing at your watch, wishing the hours away! While sticking to your revision timetable is important, try to set yourself small goals while you're working as well as time limits.
- SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related. For example, a SMART goal for an English literature revision session might be: 'By the end of this session, I will have memorised five useful quotations from MacBeth.'
- *Achieving objectives like this will help you feel good about your revision and boost your confidence.*

## Revise 'actively'

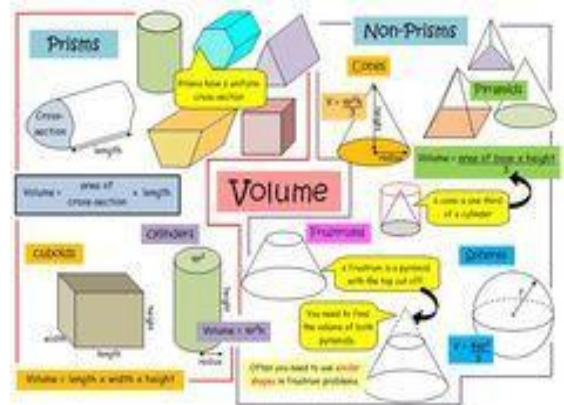
- This doesn't mean you have to do star jumps while practising Pythagoras' Theorem - but it does mean you need to 'exercise' your mind!
- Simply **re-reading your notes is a very ineffective way to revise**. According to scientists, your brain will retain less than 10% of what you read, unless you also do something active to boost your brain power.
- Re-writing or condensing (simplifying and shortening) your notes, creating posters, drawing mind maps or discussing a topic with friends will help you remember what you've studied far more successfully than reading alone.



## TECHNIQUES TO HELP YOU REVISE

### Create keyword lists

- Making lists of key words and terms, then looking back at them, can be a great way to test what you've learnt about a particular topic.
- For example, after a session spent revising the origins of the Second World War, you could try to list its causes as simply as possible: Treaty of Versailles, Weimar Republic, Wall Street Crash, appeasement, and so on. You can then use the list again, giving it to a friend or family member so they can see whether you remember your keywords and terms - and whether you're able to fully explain them.



### Keep things colourful

- Scribbling on sheets of lined A4 paper day in, day out might not help your motivation to revise - particularly if you're artistically inclined. But there's no rule that says revision always has to mean writing!
- Creating colourful A3 posters and drawing bright mind maps can be just as helpful as producing reams of text.
- Using bright stationery and colour-coding notes according to topic can also help to tackle the boredom you might feel with working in only black and white.

### Listen to yourself

- Bizarre though it sounds, some people swear by recording themselves reading their notes aloud and then listening back to the track on a laptop, mobile phone or music player.
- It might feel embarrassing, but it's definitely worth a try; some of us are 'aural learners' and absorb information particularly well when we listen. If that applies to you, this could be an easy way to get extra revision time in!

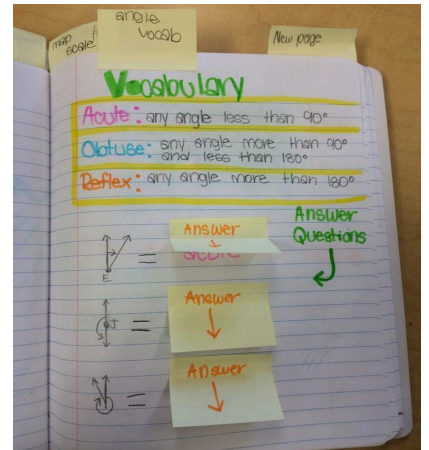
### Try flash cards

- Creating flash cards is a great way to condense your notes and revise key topics - and they can also be handy to use with family and friends.
- Lined, rectangular note cards are available from most stationers, and can be filled with key word lists, important questions and answers and bullet-point explanations of concepts. They can then be passed to willing testers who can check how much you remember!
- Flash cards are easily portable, too - helpful if you're heading out for a revision date with a friend.



### Put up post-it notes

- Using post-it notes can be a fun and powerful way to work on remembering important ideas, facts and definitions. Write single words on brightly coloured post-its and stick them up around the house, placing them on everyday objects such as the kettle, the fridge door... Even the top of the toilet!
- Then, next time you come to use that object, remind yourself of what the word means - whether it's 'mitosis', 'historical context' or 'Industrial Revolution'.
- If you can't remember what your post-it note means, look it up before you make that cup of tea, raid the fridge or use the bathroom.



### Use past test papers

- You could use any past tests from your teachers or online. You can use them to test yourself both in timed and untimed conditions, and to help focus your revision.
- Simply planning your answers to questions that require longer responses - such as in English and History - will help you to consolidate your understanding, without the need to produce whole essays

### Revise Exams skills, as well as subjects

- Refreshing your subject knowledge is obviously the primary purpose of revision - but be sure to remind yourself of how to approach your tests.
- Don't neglect vital skills such as properly reading the question and ensuring you answer it in full. Failing to respond to a question in just the right way could cost you marks - even if you really know your stuff.
- When it comes to subjects where you'll be doing lots of writing, make sure you plan your answers to essay questions. If you don't, it's all too easy to drift off the point and write a response that, even if it's good, doesn't directly address what you've been asked - and which therefore won't bring you any closer to a top grade.

## Test

- Test Yourself or ask somebody else to test you. Research has shown that ‘forcing your brain’ to remember helps assure information stays with you for longer

## If at first you don't succeed...

- Try, try again! Re-do questions you get wrong when you test yourself, even once you understand the mistake you've made. Prove to yourself you can do it. The more times you get something right, the more confident you'll feel.

## Don't always work alone

- Independent revision can be highly effective, but combining this with revision with a friend, or as part of a group, is the best approach. It's a great way to add variety to your routine, provided you concentrate on the task at hand.
- Participating in group discussion helps most students to focus for longer, can give you a different perspective on the topic you're studying and will help you achieve a broader understanding of the subject you're revising. Explaining concepts and ideas to others is also a key way of strengthening your knowledge and consolidating your learning.



## Ask for advice

- Revision is about refreshing what you've already learnt, not teaching yourself something from scratch. If you're really struggling with a particular topic, don't try to get to grips with it on your own - seek advice from a teacher who'll be able to help you make sense of it far more quickly and easily.

## Know your topic lists

- All of your subjects will provide you with revision lists, read them, identify your weakest areas and work on them. This is known as 'hard' revision, it's the stuff you're not very good at and it's uncomfortable doing it. It is the revision that will make the biggest difference come exam day.

## Know the exam structure of each paper you are taking

- How long is each paper?
- Which questions carry more marks?
- If you have a choice of questions do you know which ones to answer?
- Which skills/knowledge do you need to show?

## ICT resources

- Ensure you use the resources available to you. Your teachers will tell you which websites (e.g. Seneca, Maths Genie, etc) are best to use. We have also subscribed to the excellent resource of **GCSEPod** for you to use to help aid your revision - make sure you use it!

# MY WEEKLY CHECKLIST

Using the topic checklists your teachers have given you, create a weekly list of topics to revise.

	<i>Write a list of the topics you will revise each week</i>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Maths</b>	standard form reverse percentages loci
	<b>Science</b>	photosynthesis Hooke's Law
	<b>English</b>	Macbeth - Understanding of characters
	<b>Geography</b>	Coastal Erosion and sea defences
	<b>Business</b>	Private Limited Companies Public Limited Companies
	<b>Drama</b>	
	<b>Spanish</b>	

	<i>Write a list of the topics you will revise each week</i>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Maths</b>	
	<b>Science</b>	
	<b>English</b>	



## REVISION TIMETABLE

- Try colour-coding your subjects so that your timetable is easy to read and you can glance at it quickly and know what you're doing.
- Each week your revision timetable may change depending on your subject priorities.
- Make sure you put sessions in that allow you to relax and unwind.
- Try to find time to see friends and family and do the things that you enjoy.
- Be realistic! For example: Don't plan to revise maths for 12 hours solid on a Saturday, because it won't happen and you won't benefit from it. Break the day up into manageable pieces.
- Have your revision timetable somewhere where you will see it everyday, so it acts as a reminder of what you need to do.
- Put a copy on your phone or set alarms/reminders that will help you stick to your plan.

Day	9:00 – 3:30					3:30 – 4:30 <small>(Revision / Intervention)</small>	4:30 – 5:00	5:00 – 6:00	6:00 – 7:00	7:00 – 8:00	8:00 – 9:00	9:00 – 10:00
Monday						English	RE	Break	Music	English	Relax	Relax
Tuesday						Science	Break	Break	Maths	Geography	Relax	Relax
Wednesday						Break	Geography	English	Break	Maths	Music	Relax
Thursday						Maths	Science	Break	Spanish	RE	Relax	Relax
Friday						Football	Break	English	Break	Maths	Spanish	Relax
Saturday	Science	Maths	Geography	Science	Football	Football	Football	Football	English	Spanish	Relax	Relax
Sunday	Geography	Football	Football	Relax	Relax	Science	Maths	Break	Geography	RE	Relax	Relax

Day	9:00 – 3:30					3:30 – 4:30 <small>(Revision / Intervention)</small>	4:30 – 5:00	5:00 – 6:00	6:00 – 7:00	7:00 – 8:00	8:00 – 9:00	9:00 – 10:00
Monday												
Tuesday												
Wednesday												
Thursday												
Friday												
Saturday												
Sunday												

\*\*\*Remember: make sure you give yourself breaks and allow time to relax and do the things you want to do and enjoy doing.



# DO'S AND DON'TS

## Do... reward yourself

- Allow yourself a treat after working hard or achieving an important goal. Whether it's a relaxing night in with your favourite film, a simple bar of chocolate or an afternoon out with your friends, enjoy yourself for a while before you get back to the books.

## Don't... compare yourself to your friends

- You might have heard that someone in your English class has read A Christmas Carol 10 times - but do you really think it's true? Don't get hung up on what other people are doing to prepare for their exams, especially as you can't ever completely believe what they say!

## Do... use the web wisely

- The internet boasts a wealth of quizzes that can help test your learning in a variety of subjects - but use the web wisely when you're revising. If you start clicking around at random, it could be a long while before you look at your watch and realise how much time you've wasted. Be honest with yourself: if you can't stay on task when you're online, stay off your laptop.

## Don't... leave everything until the last minute

- Trying to stuff your brain full of information immediately before an exam is the worst way to revise.
- Not only is it unlikely to help you remember anything meaningful, it is almost guaranteed to stress you out right before your big day, when what you really need is a calm mind and a good night's sleep.

## Do... know how to spot stress - and stop it

- Relax. All of us feel stressed from time to time, but the run up to Exams can be especially intense. Stress can cause headaches, lead to difficulty sleeping, cause constant tiredness and result in increased feelings of anxiety - all of which are counterproductive when you're trying to concentrate on important work.
- If you're experiencing any of these symptoms it's really important to talk to someone about your stress levels - whether you choose a friend, a parent or a trusted teacher.

## Don't... panic after the Exams

- 'What did you write for question 3b...?' Don't answer that, because it doesn't matter now!
- Go into every Exam and do the best you can, but don't go back over everything you wrote once the exam is over
- Worrying yourself silly over things you have done (or not done) won't help you to concentrate on the revision and Exams that are to come - and they should be your priority.

## Do... what's best for your body

- It's always sensible to eat a healthy, balanced diet and get plenty of sleep, but this advice is really worth following in the run up to Exams.
- Avoid junk food, opting instead for wholesome meals that will give you plenty of energy for studying. Try to wind down fully before you go to bed, and aim for a full eight hours of sleep every night

## Don't... get distracted by social media

- Avoid getting distracted by social media. Switch your phone off whilst revising or leave it in another room.

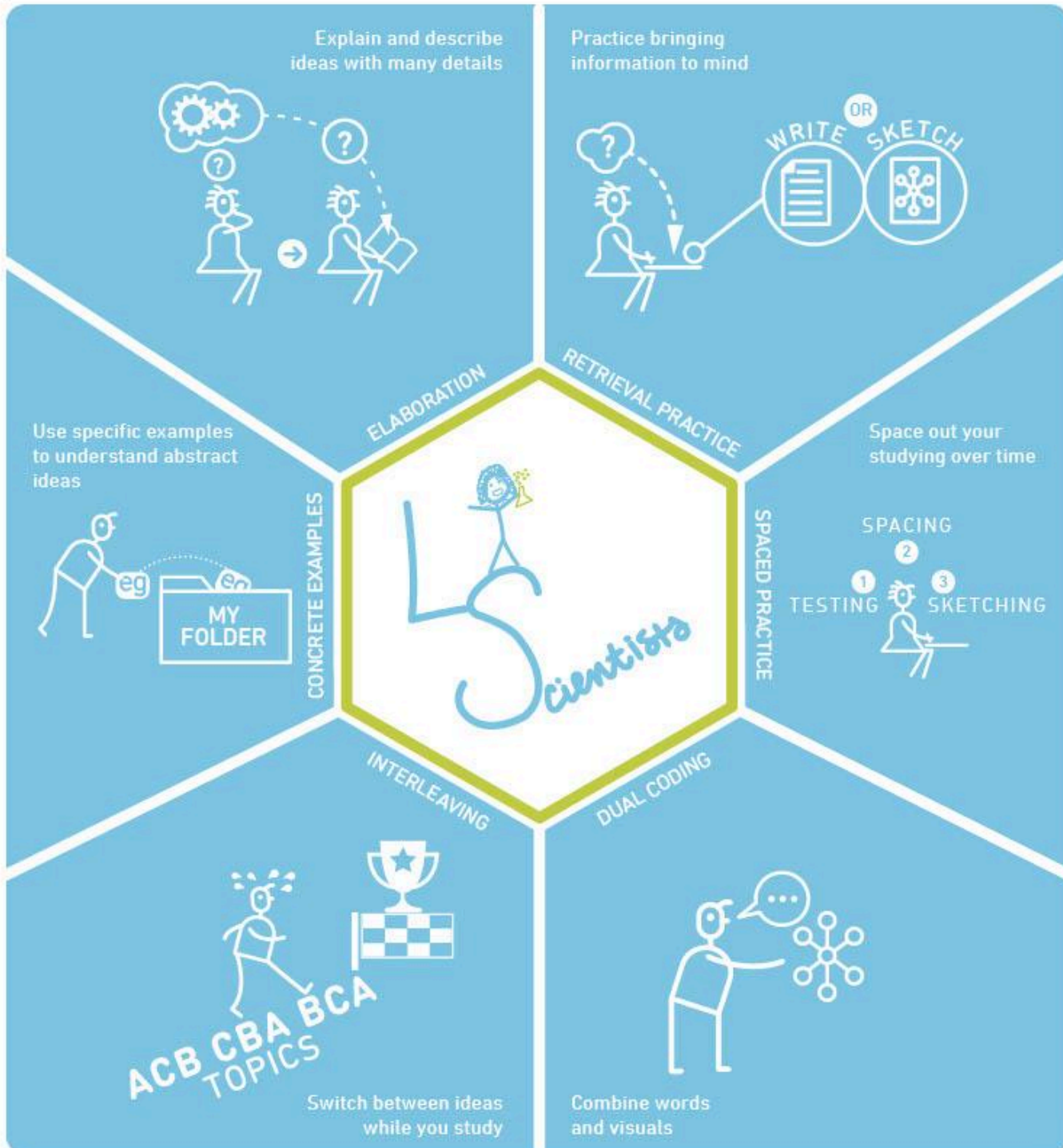
# SIX STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING



## Six Strategies for Effective Learning

LEARNINGSIENTISTS.ORG

All of these strategies have supporting evidence from cognitive psychology. For each strategy, we explain how to do it, some points to consider, and where to find more information.



Content by Yana Weinstein (University of Massachusetts Lowell) & Megan Smith (Rhode Island College) | Illustrations by Oliver Caviglioli (teachinghow2s.com/cogs.cil)  
 Funding provided by the APS Fund for Teaching and Public Understanding of Psychological Science

Lots of research has been done to investigate the most effective approaches to revision. One of the most widely used is by 'The Learning Scientists' and suggests six strategies that can help students revise.\*

# LEARN TO STUDY USING... Spaced Practice

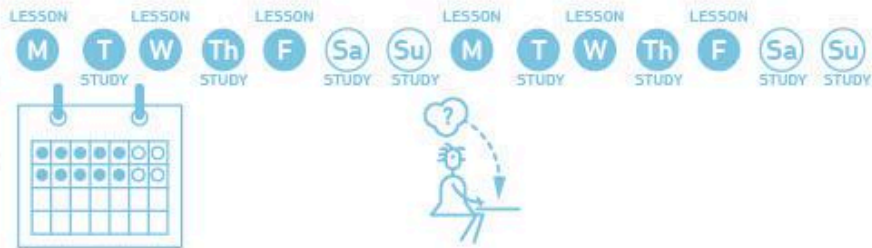
SPACE OUT YOUR STUDYING OVER TIME

LEARNINGSOCIETISTS.ORG

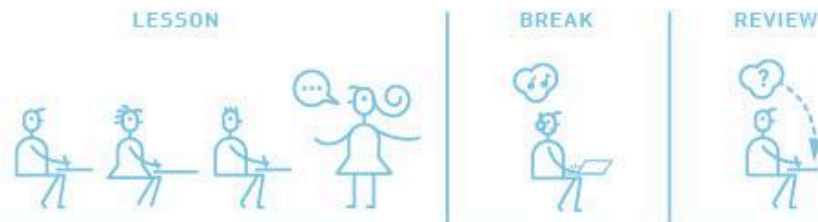


## HOW TO DO IT

Start planning early for exams, and set aside a little bit of time every day. Five hours spread out over two weeks is better than the same five hours all at once.



Review information from each class, but not immediately after class.



After you review information from the most recent class, make sure to go back and study important older information to keep it fresh.



## HOLD ON!



When you sit down to study, make sure you are using effective study strategies rather than just re-reading your class notes.

This may seem difficult and you may forget some information from day to day, but this is actually a good thing! This forces you to retrieve information from memory (see Retrieval Practice poster).



Create small spaces (a few days) and do a little bit over time, so that it adds up!

## RESEARCH

Read more about spaced practice as a study strategy

Benjamin, A. S., & Tullis, J. (2010). What makes distributed practice effective? *Cognitive Psychology*, 61, 228-247.





# LEARN TO STUDY USING...

# Elaboration

EXPLAIN AND DESCRIBE IDEAS WITH MANY DETAILS

LEARNINGSOCIETISTS.ORG

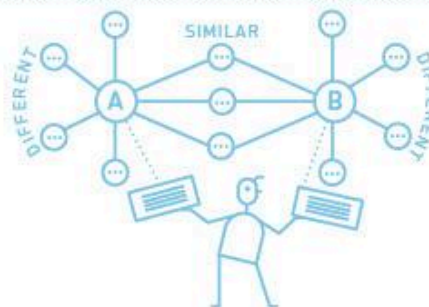


## HOW TO DO IT

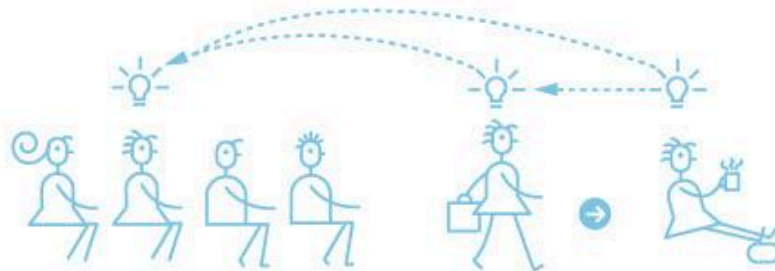
Ask yourself questions while you are studying about how things work and why, and then find the answers in your class materials and discuss them with your classmates.



As you elaborate, make connections between different ideas to explain how they work together. Take two ideas and think of ways they are similar and different.



Describe how the ideas you are studying apply to your own experiences or memories. As you go through your day, make connections to the ideas you are learning in class.



## HOLD ON!



Make sure the way you are explaining and describing an idea is accurate. Don't overextend the elaborations, and always check your class materials or ask your teacher.



Work your way up so that you can describe and explain without looking at your class materials.

## RESEARCH

Read more about elaboration as a study strategy

McDaniel, M. A., & Donnelly, C. M. (1996). Learning with analogy and elaborative interrogation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 88*, 508-519.

Wong, B. Y. L. (1985). Self-questioning instructional research: A review. *Review of Educational Research, 55*, 227-268.



# LEARN TO STUDY USING... Retrieval Practice

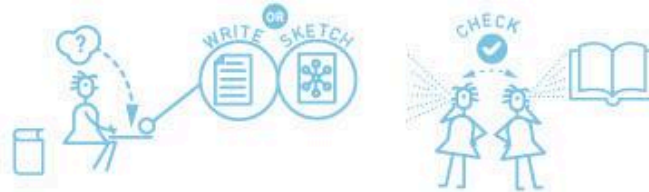
PRACTICE BRINGING INFORMATION TO MIND

LEARNINGSOCIETISTS.ORG



## HOW TO DO IT

Put away your class materials, and write or sketch everything you know. Be as thorough as possible. Then, check your class materials for accuracy and important points you missed.



Take as many practice tests as you can get your hands on. If you don't have ready-made tests, try making your own and trading with a friend who has done the same.



You can also make flashcards. Just make sure you practice recalling the information on them, and go beyond definitions by thinking of links between ideas.



## HOLD ON!



Retrieval practice works best when you go back to check your class materials for accuracy afterward.



Retrieval is hard! If you're struggling, identify the things you've missed from your class materials, and work your way up to recalling it on your own with the class materials closed.



Don't only recall words and definitions. Make sure to recall main ideas, how things are related or different from one another, and new examples.

## RESEARCH

Read more about retrieval practice as a study strategy

Roediger, H. L., Putnam, A. L., & Smith, M. A. (2011). Ten benefits of testing and their applications to educational practice. In J. Mestre & B. Ross (Eds.), *Psychology of learning and motivation: Cognition in education*, (pp. 1-36). Oxford: Elsevier.



LEARN TO STUDY USING...

# Interleaving

SWITCH BETWEEN IDEAS WHILE YOU STUDY

LEARNINGSIENTISTS.ORG



## HOW TO DO IT

Switch between ideas during a study session. Don't study one idea for too long.



Go back over the ideas again in different orders to strengthen your understanding.

TOPICS  
A B C



STUDY  
SESSION  
1

TOPICS  
C B A



STUDY  
SESSION  
2

TOPICS  
A C B



STUDY  
SESSION  
3

Make links between different ideas as you switch between them.



## HOLD ON!



While it's good to switch between ideas, don't switch too often, or spend too little time on any one idea; you need to make sure you understand them.



Interleaving will feel harder than studying the same thing for a long time. But don't worry - this is actually helpful to your learning!

## RESEARCH

Read more about interleaving as a study strategy

Rohrer, D. (2012). Interleaving helps students distinguish among similar concepts. *Educational Psychology Review*, 24, 355-367.





# LEARN TO STUDY USING... Concrete Examples

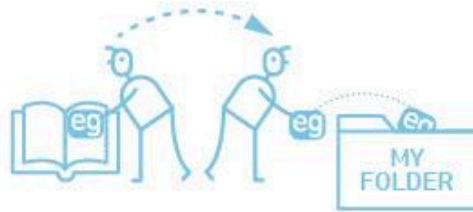
USE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES TO UNDERSTAND ABSTRACT IDEAS

LEARNINGSOCIETISTS.ORG



## HOW TO DO IT

Collect examples your teacher has used, and look in your class materials for as many examples as you can find.



Make the link between the idea you are studying and each example, so that you understand how the example applies to the idea.



Share examples with friends, and explain them to each other for added benefits.



## HOLD ON!



You may find examples on the internet that are not used appropriately. Make sure your examples are correct - check with your teacher.



Ultimately, creating your own relevant examples will be the most helpful for learning.

## RESEARCH

Read more about concrete examples as a study strategy

Rawson, K. A., Thomas, R. C., & Jacoby, L. L. (2014). The power of examples: Illustrative examples enhance conceptual learning of declarative concepts. *Educational Psychology Review*, 27, 483-504.



## LEARN TO STUDY USING...

# Dual Coding

COMBINE WORDS AND VISUALS

LEARNINGSOCIETISTS.ORG



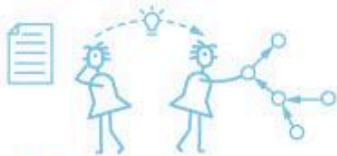
### HOW TO DO IT



Look at your class materials and find visuals. Look over the visuals and compare to the words.



Look at visuals, and explain in your own words what they mean.



Take information that you are trying to learn, and draw visuals to go along with it.

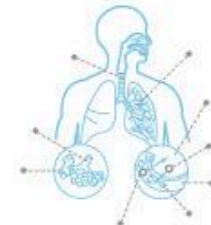
### HOLD ON!

Try to come up with different ways to represent the information visually, for example an infographic, a timeline, a cartoon strip, or a diagram of parts that work together.

#### INFOGRAPHIC



#### CARTOON STRIP



#### DIAGRAM

#### TIMELINE



#### GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Work your way up to drawing what you know from memory.



### RESEARCH

Read more about dual coding as a study strategy

Mayer, R. E., & Anderson, R. B. (1992). The instructive animation: Helping students build connections between words and pictures in multimedia learning. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 4*, 444-452.

# HELPFUL HINTS FOR PARENTS

## Be a role model

- **Planning** for the week
- **Eating healthily** and well
- Keeping **hydrated**
- Leading an **active** life
- Staying **calm**
- Being **organised**
- Good **sleep** habits



**Set a good example by modelling the behaviour you want your child to adopt...**

## Goal Setting

- Encourage them to keep their goals planner visible – e.g. printed and displayed on their bedroom wall
- Help focus them and talk to them about their goals regularly
- Give positive reinforcement
- Connect with them about ‘why’ and ‘what’ they want to achieve

## Keep Active

- Encourage them to keep active on a daily basis
- Carry out exercise in manageable chunks e.g. 3 x 20 min sessions throughout the day
- Plan to do active things together on a weekend
- Go out for a walk together and get some fresh air
- Help them plan out their weekly exercise schedule in advance
- After exercise your brain functions well, so encourage a revision session afterwards

**60 minutes per day**

## Healthy Eating

- Plan your family meals for the week – breakfast, snacks, lunches and evening meals
- Carry out a weekly food shop and make sure you write a list
- Avoid high sugary and fatty foods or drinks
- Aim to eat clean, fresh and healthy foods
- Have a couple or ‘treat’ meals / or meals out per week
- Use the Mark Lloyd recipes and meal planner as guidance
- Encourage them to eat breakfast everyday
- Hydration is key to brain functioning so make sure your child carries a bottle of water with them

**Eating the right food and drink can energise your system, improve alertness and sustain your child through the long exams**

## Time Out

For example:

- Going out for food
- Seeing friends
- Having a bath
- Listening to music
- Reading a book
- Doing a hobby
- Going shopping
- Going to the cinema

**Encourage them to build in opportunities to take some time out every week, away from study.**

### **Sleep Patterns**

- Young people need between 8 – 9 hours of sleep per night
- Help your child create a relaxing evening routine
- Make sure they don't eat too late at night
- Avoid giving them caffeine or sugary drinks late at night
- Make sure they don't work or revise too late before going to bed
- Encourage them to switch off from social media / technology at least an hour before bedtime

### **Unplugging**

- Encourage them to unplug from technology everyday
- Help them to switch off from technology at least 30 mins- 1 hr before going to sleep
- Support your child to appreciate the world around them rather than being governed by their phone
- Make sure they put their phone away, & on silent, while they are concentrating on tasks / revision / homework
- Help them learn to have the control to not be obsessed with their phone
- Choose some time each day/week to switch off and unplug from technology with them

### **Staying Cool & Calm**

- Set a good example by staying calm yourself
- Create a relaxing environment for your child
- Help them plan out coping strategies to deal with their stress
- Give them positive distractions away from studying
- Help them understand their stress & to focus on controlling the controllables
- Promote a balance of their academic studies & other activities during the week

### **Belief**

- Give them positive reinforcement
- Boost their confidence daily
- Celebrate any successes and reward them e.g. if they have achieved their mini-goals
- Try not to set your expectations too high
- Show them how proud of them you are
- Highlight things to make them feel good
- Give them the belief in themselves to help them achieve

### **Be Supportive**

- Be a good listener
- Be approachable
- Encourage them to take breaks in between revision
- Show some understanding of what they are going through
- Help them deal with their emotions & feelings
- Offer caring advice
- Just be there for them!

Further support can be found on the NHS website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/help-your-child-beat-exam-stress>

# HOW TO BEAT EXAM STRESS

## Worrying About Exams

- It is normal to feel anxious and worried about your exams. Nervousness is a natural reaction to exams. The key is to put these nerves to positive use.
- We feel like this because our adrenal glands produce a chemical called adrenaline which puts us on 'red alert'. This is the body's natural way of coping with a crisis.
- Adrenaline helps animals cope with being chased or attacked by making them react quicker. It's sometimes called the 'fear, fight or flight' hormone.
- You perform better in exams if there's a bit of adrenaline in your system, but lots of adrenaline can give you some uncomfortable feelings like having butterflies in your stomach, feeling sick, dizzy or hot, going to the toilet a lot, not being able to sleep, your muscles tensing up, a feeling of panic.

## So What Can You Do To Calm Down?

- **Don't leave your revision until it's too late.** Pace yourself over the weeks before the exams start.
- **Get some exercise.** Exercise uses up hormones which build up when we are stressed – so exercise makes tense muscles relax.
- **Don't spend hours in your room trying to revise.** It might impress your family, but quality revision is best done in short bursts with breaks in between.
- **Plan a treat for when you're taking a break.** Chill out. Try to do something which makes you laugh. Laughter is good for releasing tension.
- **Talk about your worries to your parents or a friend.** There may be someone in school you could talk to – one of your teachers, your coach, the school nurse or your head of year. Sometimes things can get out of proportion when you keep them to yourself.
- **Take care if you're sharing your feelings with people online.** Make sure that you're getting something positive out of it.

## Plan Ahead

### DO:

- Make your own revision timetable – start planning well before exams begin. Your teachers will be able to help with this.
- Make your books, notes and essays user-friendly. Use headings, highlighting and revision cards, and get tips on other revision techniques from teachers and friends with experience of exams. You could also consider buying revision guides.
- Make notes of the important points when revising. Try to answer the questions of past exam papers – explain answers to tricky questions to someone else.
- Everyone revises differently. Find out what routine suits you best - alone or with a friend or parent/carer; early morning or late at night; short, sharp bursts or longer sessions; with music or without noise.
- Ask for help from your teacher, coach, parent/carer or a friend if there are things you don't understand.

### DON'T:

- Don't leave revision to the last minute.
- Don't avoid revising subjects you don't like or find difficult.
- Don't forget that there is life beyond revision and exams.
- Don't cram ALL night before an exam.

## Pamper Yourself

*Remember that it's important to eat and sleep well!*

Put yourself first – this is an important time for you. Try to talk to your family about how they can make studying a little easier for you – for example, by agreeing times when you can have your own space, when they will try to be a little quieter around the house and when you'd rather not be disturbed (except perhaps for the occasional treat, such as a drink or a snack).

*Don't revise all the time!*

Make sure you give yourself time each day to relax, taking breaks to do something you enjoy – watch TV, listen to music, read a book or go out for a walk.

## Sleep Tips

A good night's sleep has proven advantages for memory and performance. A minimum of 8 to 9 hours' good sleep on school nights is recommended for teenagers.

- Products containing caffeine (tea, coffee, cocoa, chocolate, soft drinks etc) should be discontinued at least 4 hours before bedtime. Caffeine is a stimulant and can keep you awake.

*Too much caffeine stops you falling asleep and prevents deep sleep. The effects of caffeine can last a long time (up to 24 hours) so the chances of it affecting sleep are significant. Instead, have a warm, milky drink or herbal tea.*

- Avoid eating a large meal immediately before bedtime, although a light snack may be beneficial.

*Eating too much or too little close to bedtime may prevent sleep, due to an overfull or empty stomach. This can be a cause of discomfort in the night.*

- Try to do regular (even mild) physical exercise if you are able, but avoid doing this in the 2 hours before bedtime.

*It's official! Regular exercise helps you sleep more soundly, as well as improving your general health.*

*Moderate exercise on a regular basis, such as swimming or walking, can help relieve some of the tension built up over the day. Make sure that you don't do vigorous exercise too close to bedtime, however, as it may keep you awake.*

- Try to relax before going to bed.

*Have a warm bath, listen to quiet music or do some gentle yoga (stretching) to relax the mind and body.*

- Write away your worries.

*Deal with worries or a heavy workload by making lists of things to be tackled the next day. If you tend to lie in bed thinking about tomorrow's tasks, set aside time before bedtime to review the day and make plans for the next day. The goal is to avoid doing these things when you're in bed, trying to sleep.*



- Create a restful sleeping environment and keep your bedroom calm and tidy.

*Your bedroom should be kept for rest and sleep.*

- Avoid making your bedroom too hot or too cold.

*Temperature, lighting and noise should be controlled so that the bedroom environment helps you to fall (and stay) asleep.*

- Keep the bedroom quiet and darkened during the night, but try to spend some time in the daylight (or bright artificial light) during the day.

*Keep it as quiet and dark as possible.*

- Keep your bedroom mainly for sleeping; try to avoid watching television, using technology, or eating in your bedroom.

*Your bedroom should be a relaxing environment. Try to avoid watching TV, using your mobile phone/tablet whilst preparing to go to bed or once in bed. These gadgets will act as a stimulant and make it hard for you to fall asleep.*

- Try to keep regular times for going to bed and getting up.

*Having a routine can actually help you to fall asleep quicker and easier.*

*Going to bed and getting up at roughly the same time every day will programme your body to sleep better.*

- Don't worry in bed.

*If you can't sleep, don't lie there worrying about it. Get up and do something you find relaxing until you feel sleepy again, then return to bed.*

# SITTING THE EXAMS

## CHECK...

- Have a good breakfast if you can.
- Make sure you know where the exam is being held and what time it starts. Give yourself plenty of time to get there.
- Take all the equipment you need for each exam, including extra pens and pencils.
- Take in a bottle of water and tissues.
- Go to the toilet beforehand!

*If you feel really anxious, breathe slowly and deeply while waiting for the exam to start.*

## PACE YOURSELF...

- Read the instructions before starting the exam.
- Ask the teacher or exam supervisor if anything is unclear.
- Read through all the questions before starting writing, and make sure you are clear how many questions you are required to answer.
- If there is a choice, start by answering the question you feel you can answer best.
- If you are stuck on a question, go on to the next. You can always come back to it later. If you are really stuck, try to have an intelligent guess anyway.
- Leave time to read through and check your answers before the exam finishes.

*Plan how much time you'll need for each question.*

## Perform As Well As You Can

- Knowing that you've done your best may help you overcome feelings of letting anyone down.
- Don't go through the answers afterwards with your friends if it is only going to make you more worried.
- Try to put the last exam out of your mind and look ahead to the next one. You can't go back and change things.

*You're you, so you can only do the best you can on that day!*

## What To Do In The Examinations Themselves?

- While waiting for the examination to start, read the front cover of the examination paper to know exactly what to do.
- Read each question carefully – twice is better than once. Check how many marks are available for the answer. Write neither too much nor too little.
- Answer the question; don't simply repeat it or make up a question of your own.
- Write your answer if you feel confident. If not, go on to the next question. Don't spend time on questions you are unsure of until you have been through the whole paper once.
- Check all calculations. Does the answer make sense and have you included the units?
- Check information in graphs, tables and pictures. Did you read them correctly?
- Check your use of any subject-specific, or technical, terms. Have you used them correctly?
- Check your spellings of specific words, but if you are not sure of the spelling write your answer anyway.
- When drawing diagrams, charts or graphs, use a sharp pencil and draw carefully, using a ruler where necessary.
- Choice of questions – ensure you are clear about options if there is a choice
- Always check the back cover just in case there is a question on the back.

- Once you have answered all the more straightforward questions go through the paper again, tackling those questions which are more difficult. If on the second reading a question is still very difficult, move on to the next question.

## MOCK EXAMINATIONS

An important part of preparing for the summer examinations is for you to have a formal opportunity to sit exam papers in examination conditions. You must use these trial exams as an opportunity to practise revision techniques, prepare revision materials and practice using the topics list that will be provided by your teachers to help you organise your revision. After the trial exams, your teachers will go through the papers and provide you with details on how to improve to ensure success in the summer examinations. You will also reflect and improve on your revision strategies you used to ensure techniques chosen where successful - simply to say 'I should have revised more' is meaningless and does not inform you on what you need to do to improve.

### When should you start revising?

Trial Exams are a great way to kick off your revision, these take place in the weeks before Christmas. Here you can start getting your notes together, figure out a study plan and discover what techniques work best for you. This can save time when preparing for the real thing, later.

When you get your trial results back, this will tell you how you're doing, what material has stuck and what you need to work on.

You must make sure you revise the best you can for your trial exams. Trial exams about helping you understand what you still do not understand after revising rather than finding out what you can remember without revising.

From there, you can decide when to begin. This might begin with simply making notes or highlighting key information, and ramp up slowly to actually memorising this and doing past papers. Again, things will vary from student to student; don't try to get too bogged down by what others are doing.

Your teachers can also give you some guidance on when to begin and what you should be doing, as they will know you best.

### How many hours should you revise per day?

Again, this will depend on how much you need to revise, how you're doing so far and how you best revise.

You don't want to be in a situation where you haven't got enough time to cover everything you need to, so start early if you have to, to get the job done. Cramming, overly long revision sessions and not covering material in enough detail won't do you any good.

Stick to short revision sessions, take breaks, and switch up what and how you study to keep things interesting. A four-hour study session without breaks may look impressive; but if you're not remembering what you need to, how effective is it really? The human brain can only go so long without being distracted, so don't push yourself beyond your limits.

If you need to meet a certain number of study hours in a single day, experiment with revising at different times to avoid long, unproductive sessions. This might mean doing a little work before school, at lunchtime or after school (before and after dinner).

This might not sound fun, but exam season is where you'll need to learn to **prioritise commitments** in your life (temporarily) for a greater goal – a worthy life lesson. So things like extracurricular clubs, sports, part-time jobs, browsing Instagram, playing video games and seeing friends might need to be put on the shelf (if possible) for now. That doesn't mean you should be working 24/7 and not blow off steam here and there; but be smart with your time and earn your rewards.

## Disappointing Trial Exam results - what next?

- Poor trial exam results can be disheartening, and it's important to know why you didn't get the marks you wanted so you can improve next time.
- If you didn't bother to revise much, now's the time to be honest with yourself and prepare better in future.
- You're not alone. Lots of students have trial exam results they're less than pleased with, and pull it back for the main results – don't forget they're the exams that count.

### So what should you do now?

- Firstly, don't panic
- This is exactly what trial exams are for: a trial run before you face the real thing. Five steps to improve for the real thing...

#### 1. Don't dwell

- There isn't time to. You can't afford to spend a couple of weeks with a black cloud above you, lamenting that your future is down the toilet (it's really not).
- Shake it off, focus on what's ahead of you, and start making changes today.

#### 2. Don't ignore the problem

- The other extreme to avoid is pretending that your mocks didn't happen. If your results aren't what you were expecting, take it as a sign that you need to change something.

#### 3. Speak to your teachers

- Your teachers will be on the case already. Book in some time at lunchtime, break or before or after school to speak to them properly about where you went wrong. A rushed 30 seconds before you dash off for your next class isn't enough to make a significant difference.
- Ask questions where you don't understand something – don't just say you 'get it'. Do take up offers of after-school revision classes or regular catch-ups for extra guidance.

#### 4. Where did you go wrong exactly?

While a bad trial exam boils down to not getting enough marks, it's important to understand why this was the case. Was it...:

- Time management: did you set aside enough time for different sections of the exam (particularly those worth the most marks)? If not, learn to keep an eye on the clock and identify the sections where you can get the most marks.
- Misreading the question: the pressure of an exam situation can do funny things to you, and misreading a question is a common one, even if it seems really silly. In the real exam, don't pick up your pen until you've read the question two or three times. Underline key words and prompts so they stand out.
- Not showing calculations: a common one in maths exams especially, where your final result isn't always what the examiner is looking at. If your method is sound, you can still pick up marks.
- Not providing evidence: correct sourcing is important in subjects such as history or psychology, where there are lots of dates, names and case studies to remember. Making wild claims or arguments isn't enough; you have to show evidence to back up everything you say.

#### 5. Your revision timetable

- Plan what you need to study to ensure you cover this sufficiently in time for the exam – picking random chapters in a textbook to read probably isn't the most productive use of your revision time.
- Breaking down everything you need to study into chunks will make everything much less overwhelming. Draw up a revision timetable you can realistically stick to, factoring in extra time for those areas that need more attention, and to go through past papers.
- Past papers, past papers, past papers!

## Post Trial Exams Analysis

It is important to reflect on your trial exams so you learn how to make improvements in your preparation for the exams in the summer.

<i>How long did you approximately spend revising for your Trial Exams? (Be honest!)</i>	tick
Not at all	
For an hour or two before each exam	
A couple of hours a weeks	
A few hours a day starting after October half term	
Other (please describe)	

<i>To revise, did you:</i>	tick
Create a revision timetable?	
Make a list of the topics you need to revise?	
Reread your exercise book notes?	
Read a revision guide?	
Highlight/summarise your notes?	
Make mind maps?	
Produce flash cards?	
Use Flash Cards/Memory Techniques to test yourself or get others to test you?	
Test yourself using short answer questions?	
Watch videos such as maths genie?	
Use century tech?	
Work through an exam booklet? Did you self-assess your work?	
Help a friend?/Revise as a group?	
Complete Past Papers? Did you self-assess your work?	
Something else? (please describe)	

What was your environment like when you were revising? (Tick all that apply)	tick
Organised and tidy desk to work at	
Quiet with plenty of space	
Some distractions and other people	
Loud and in the main room of the house	
In front of a TV	
With phone notifications on	
Other (please describe)	

What have you learnt from completing your trial exams?

What three things are you going to do differently in preparing for the real exams at the start of May?

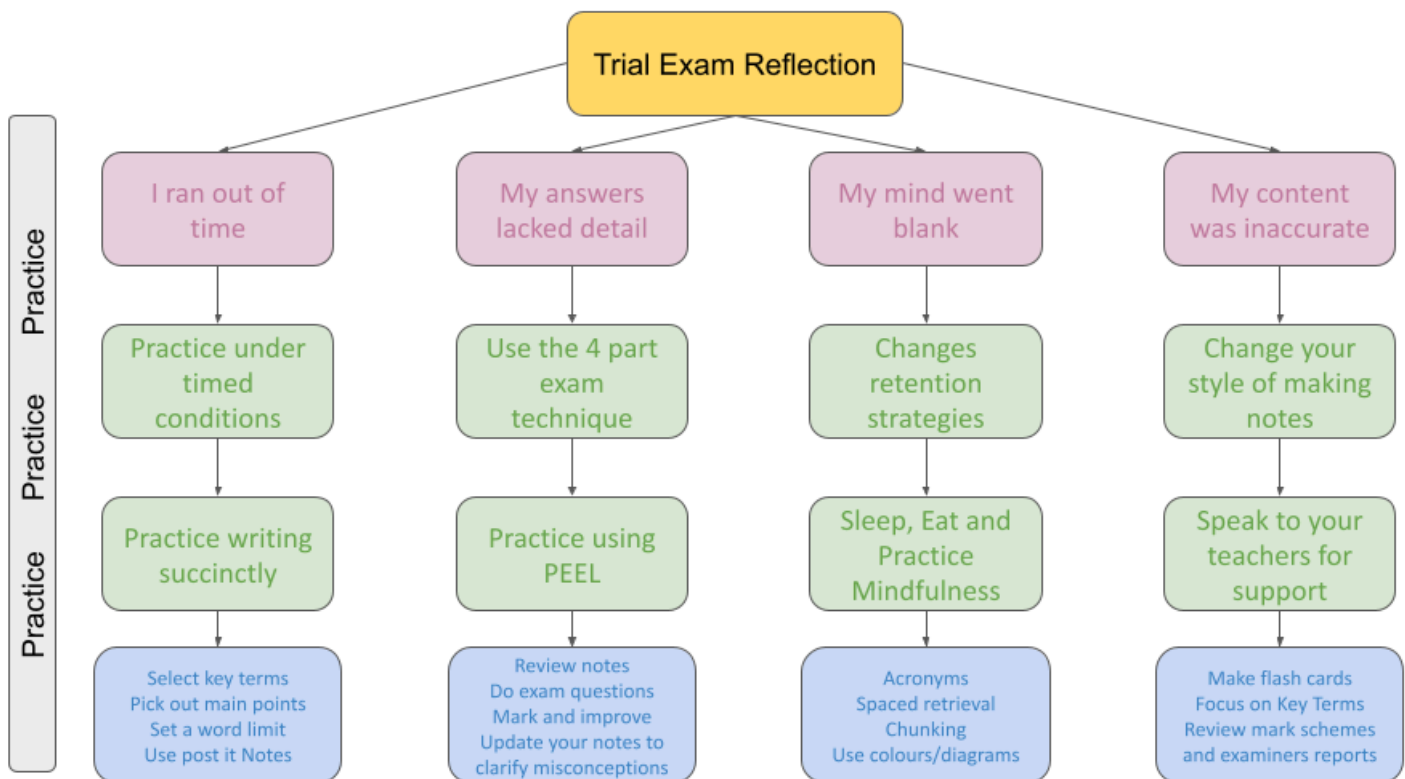
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## Post Trial Exam Solutions

Problem	Solution
Felt rushed, made careless mistakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Plan your time before you start.</li> <li>● Monitor your progress – regularly check the time</li> <li>● Slow down and use positive self-talk. Tell yourself that you have time, you can do this</li> <li>● Leave 5-10 minutes at the end to check for proofreading.</li> </ul>
Ran out of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Time management is critical in an exam situation.</li> <li>● Did you get as much information beforehand about the exam and make a tentative plan? How is it structured and how many questions are there?</li> <li>● Budget time for each part or question. Give more time to questions worth more marks.</li> <li>● Answer the easier questions first to build confidence.</li> <li>● Mark the questions you can't answer easily and come back to them later.</li> <li>● Don't spend too much time on a single question.</li> <li>● Keep an eye on the clock.</li> </ul>
My mind went blank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Put a mark next to the question and come back to it later. Another question on the paper may give you a clue.</li> <li>● Think of information related to the topic (another book by the same author, other muscles in the group). This may trigger an answer.</li> <li>● Don't beat yourself up about it. Stay positive.</li> </ul>
Didn't understand instructions and didn't ask for help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exam room supervisors are there to help. Don't be too embarrassed to ask.</li> </ul>
Misread or misinterpreted the question, didn't think the answer through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Slow down and read the questions carefully.</li> <li>● Underline key words in the question to help you focus.</li> <li>● Write down your ideas before you write your answer.</li> <li>● Review the question and your answer before moving on.</li> </ul>
Felt very stressed and anxious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Being prepared will help calm your nerves.</li> <li>● During the exam, put your pen down and take some deep breaths. Concentrate on your breathing and try again</li> <li>● Don't worry about what other students are doing during the exam. Stay focused on your exam paper.</li> <li>● If your exam stress levels are very high, make time to see your coach, subject teacher or head of year who can help you with some relaxation techniques to ease anxiety.</li> </ul>

# HELP AND ADVICE

During or after the exams, if you feel that you can't cope with the pressure or are feeling stressed, find someone to talk to. Don't bottle it up! Try to talk to your teachers, parents or friends.

***Whatever your worry, it's better out than in!***

If you feel unable to speak to someone you know, ring a helpline.

**ChildLine** is the UK's free, confidential helpline for children and young people. They're there in case you need advice and support, by phone and online, 24 hours a day. Whenever and wherever you need them, they will be there.

**ChildLine – 0800 1111**

Parents and carers can help too! Ask them to give you encouragement and support, and not to put pressure on you. Don't forget to talk to them if you are worried – don't bottle things up inside.

***Exams are important – but they are not the only key to a successful future.***