



NORD ANGLIA
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
SHANGHAI, PUDONG

Your Guide to Revision



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Your Guide to Revision

A Note for Parents

As parents, it can be frustrating when it comes to supporting your child with their school work and revision. Balancing the level of pressure or challenge with an appropriate level of support is no easy task.

As exam time approaches, the pressure on students increases by the day. Parents and students handle this in different ways and often the desire to support can be misinterpreted by teenagers.

We have produced this guide for students and parents, to help you prepare each other for revision time and help eliminate frustrations in the run up to examinations.

A Note for Students

This booklet is intended to help you revise effectively and achieve the best possible grades for all of your exams. Please take the time to read it carefully and try some of the tips inside.

Every individual has a style of revision which suits them. It is important that you find what works best for you. Your teachers will be available in lessons and at revision sessions and intervention sessions in order to help you and answer any questions you may have. You can also email your teachers who will arrange to meet you or reply in writing to any questions you may have.



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Introduction to Exams and Effective Revision

The prospect of examinations can be extremely stressful, whether you have performed well or badly in the past. You may even feel resentful - that it is a waste of your time, or that you know the material but cannot show your knowledge under exam conditions. Understanding the reasons for exams, being aware of ways that exams can be an advantage to you, and knowing you have some control over the process, can help to create the positive mindset needed for a successful exam experience.

Preparing for exams involves a high release of energy and an unusual degree of focus, which produces a very intense kind of learning. That focus and intensity are not easy to reproduce under any other conditions.

What does revision involve?

The pressure of the exam stimulates you to draw together the strands of your study, and to acknowledge areas that need more work. You can view this pressure negatively, as stress and the likelihood of failure, or positively - as a challenge encouraging you to heighten your own expertise. As an exam approaches, it is useful to make adequate preparations.

- Organise your notes. The process of sorting out what is essential from what is interesting in a general way reminds you of what you have covered.
- Reduce your notes to key headings, points and references (name and date only).
- Make master cards with key memory triggers for whole topics. These can be in the form of pattern notes or concept pyramids.
- Check your own learning. Work interactively with materials, then write out or record in audio what you have learnt. Check back to your notes and find the areas you omitted. Write and check three times to build up your memory.

Use past exam papers

Past papers are your best resource. At first the wording of exam papers can be off - putting; questions may seem vague as they cannot 'give away the answer.' It is important to get used to this style well in advance of the exam.

- Remember that each question links to an area of the course. You need to find that link and consider which issues the question is directing you towards.
- Look for patterns of recurring questions.
- What is the minimum number of topics you can revise to answer the paper?

Select what to revise

The revision process is especially one of selection.

- Select which topics you are going to revise. If you will need to answer three exam questions revise at least five topics.
- Work out answers to a range of possible exam questions for each topic, so that you feel able to deal with almost any question that might be set on the topics you have chosen.
- Select the most important theories, references and evidence for each topic. It is much easier to do this before the exam than during it.
- Organise the selected information so that it is easier to remember.

Draw up a timetable

Work out exactly how much time you have to revise, given potential 'emergencies', and time to relax.

- If they carry equal marks divide the time equally between the subjects you are studying, and then between the selected topics.
- Set aside time for practising past papers.
- Read about time management.
- Revise in short sections. 20 minutes and then shift focus.

Build up writing speed and strength

Quality and relevance is more important than quantity. Concise answers can get high marks. However, if you are used to word-processing most of your work, your handwriting speed may have diminished. Practising timed essays - or writing anything at speed every day will help build the muscles needed for handwriting at speed.

New reading just before the exam

Opinion varies on whether you should read new material just before exams. It can keep your thinking fresh and bring your work in to perspective. If reading new material confuses you, however, just focus on the notes you have already.

Ten common pitfalls in revision... ..and how to avoid them**1. Leaving revision until the last minute.**

Revision is a way of pulling together your understanding in preparation for the exam. You can include and plan for revision from the beginning of the course. Here are some examples:

- When planning and reading for part of the course, write alternative essay titles on separate pages. Jot brief notes, or page references to material under each title.
- Make your notes readable, attractive and visually compelling as you go through the course – this builds memory.
- If possible, start to over-learn names, dates and key details from index cards at odd moments early in the term. Even if you forget them, they will be easier to learn second time round.
- Read up about your examinations well before the day of the exam.

2. Reading through notes over and over again.

- Use creative and interactive strategies. This keeps your mind alert and helps to integrate information.
- Instead of just reading, read *in order to find out*. The best way to do this is to look for material related to possible exam answers. Try inventing your own questions.
- Discussing past exam questions with friends makes this process more interesting.
- Time yourself writing some essays without looking at your notes. This not only shows you which areas you need to work on but also helps to increase your handwriting speed and your ability to think and write under pressure.

3. Writing notes out over and over again.

- This can be a good strategy if you learn through 'motor memory'. Working to *different* essay plans keep the information fresh and develops your thinking about the subject.
- Some people find that rewriting notes interferes with the visual recall of their original set of notes. For them, it is preferable to develop one good set of notes, plus a series of index cards.
- Reduce information to a series of memory triggers. Reduce a set of triggers to one key word or image.

4. Writing out essays and learning them off by heart.

This is time-consuming and counter-productive – it is unlikely that the identical question will come up in your exam. It is better to spend time reflecting on, and practising, a range of answers, so that you over-learn the material. You will then be able to work with it flexibly during the exam, selecting exactly what you need for the exact title given.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 5. Finding ways of putting off revision (such as 'urgent' things that need to be done, watching TV or chatting with friends or family). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a revision timetable which leaves empty spaces to cater for real emergencies. Do a spell of revision <i>before</i> each 'urgent task'. • Use watching DVDs or playing a computer game as a reward – put them in your timetable. • You may be missing company. Try revising with other students, or involve others in your revision. Explain a subject to them; can they understand your explanation? Could they test you on your memory triggers, or ask you questions from your notes? |
| 6. "I can't force myself back to study." | <p>Rather than forcing yourself, encourage and entice yourself to study through short-term goals, challenges, creativity, and company.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that your timetable has sufficient rest breaks. |
| 7. "I start to panic. I feel I am never going to get through it all or remember it." | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with positive-minded people. • Read about Dealing with stress. • Work steadily to towards all goals. • Speak to a tutor or teacher. • Rephrase these thoughts into the positive: "I have been well taught, I have worked hard in school, I know I can always attempt to answer every question." |
| 8. "I can't cope with the boredom of it. I start to daydream or wonder why I am bothering." | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in a lot of shorter spells. • Boredom suggests that you are not using enough of a variety of interactive learning techniques, nor your creativity. • Look for ways of introducing variety into your study sessions. • Look for unusual angles on the material you have, or images that sum up the material. Think of ways in which seemingly unrelated material could be linked. Invent an essay or a test for yourself. • To stretch your mind and increase your interest, set yourself greater challenges, for example, read a more advanced article on the subject and consider how you could weave any relevant material into your exam answers. |
| 9. "I have too many responsibilities to make revision practicable." | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make use of short spells of time, on buses, at break, in the car. • Break the work into small pieces. Always carry some work with you. • Carry an exam question in your head and scribble down ideas in odd moments. |
| 10. Stopping revision before the process is complete. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to keep checking back what you have learnt, and to reduce your material to shorter, key memory triggers. • Keep asking yourself: "how can I use what I have learnt to answer other questions that might come up?" • Revision takes time – use spare moments well. |



"If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!"
— Benjamin Franklin

Setting the scene

- ### 1. A Study Space

Have a space in which it is comfortable to revise. This can be a bedroom or a study but is best away from the temptations and distractions of modern life e.g. television, video games and WeChat.

Note: Some of us work better with music on in the background. Do not be afraid to listen to music provided it is not distracting and it is aiding focus.
- ### 2. Know the syllabus

Be aware of what sections of the course are in each exam. Revise for the exams by linking the key topics together; this will help with memory retention.
- ### 3. Draw up a timetable

Work out exactly how much time there is to revise. If the subjects carry equal marks divide the time equally. Set aside time to practise past papers.
- ### 4. Plan the use of time

Below is an example of the kind of plan that can be used. It is best not to spend too long on any one subject / topic. Psychological research shows that the average length of time that we can concentrate on one thing and retain key information is approximately 20 minutes. Planning 2 or 3 small chunks of revision an hour will help retention as opposed to long sections on different subjects.
- ### 5. Plan your recreation time

It is important to achieve a balance between work and relaxation. It is good to break up the revision with enjoyable activities. This provides important time for information to sink in and relieves stress.

Example Revision Timetable

	8am – 3.30pm	3.30 – 4pm	4pm – 5pm	5pm – 6pm	6pm – 7pm	7pm – 8pm	8 pm – 9pm
Mon	Lessons in school						
Tue							
Wed							
Thu							
Fri							
	9 – 11am	11 – 1pm	2 – 4pm	4pm – 6pm	7pm – 9pm	Relax	Sleep
Sat							
Sun							

“ Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe ”
 — Abraham Lincoln

Looking after yourself

Eat, drink and sleep well

Food

Your brain needs energy from food to work. “As an adult, the brain weighs 2% of your total weight but uses 20% of all energy you develop.” The most important meal of the day is often cited as breakfast. It cannot be stressed enough the importance of breakfast. Not only does it kick-start the metabolism and get our bodies awake and working effectively, it also provides the energy our brain needs to begin working well. We would not try and exercise our leg muscles by going for a run without making sure we had taken on board the food to provide the energy required. Athletes use carbohydrates as these release energy slowly and enable longer training periods. Our brain is a muscle and requires food to make it work. The right type of food is important: lots of junk food, crisps and chocolate do not have a sustained energy input. Fresh fruit (bananas are good because of their high potassium levels and also fruit with high Vitamin C like oranges) and vegetables are good because they are high in glucose, which is what the brain requires for energy.

Water

Staying hydrated is also very important. A 5% dehydration = 20% loss in concentration. Drinking water is the best way to stay hydrated. Studies show that people should drink between 1 and 2 litres of water a day to remain hydrated effectively. Tea and coffee do not count for hydration. Energy drinks like Red Bull are very high in caffeine and will give a short term hit of energy but this is not sustained and will leave you feeling worse within about 20 - 30mins. Likewise, drinks high in sugar will give a short energy hit but not sustain or hydrate you. Always have a bottle of water with you when revising.

Sleep

Sleep is important for refreshing the brain and the body. A shortage of sleep will affect a student's performance and the lower energy levels will affect concentration. A student should aim for 8 hours of sleep minimum. Some students will want to stay up late and revise. As parents, encourage them to get sleep and wake up refreshed and do the revision then. 20 minutes of refreshed, hydrated revision will remain in the memory more than 1 hour of tired revision.

Create a supportive learning environment at home

Ensure the whole family are able to support. Put study plans on the fridge so parents and siblings know what is happening and when not to interrupt. Make sure there is space to spread work out. This may mean having post-it notes, crib cards, or posters spread about the house (without fear of them being taken down, moved or thrown out). Be available and ask for assistance to test learning. This support can keep students focused and make them feel as if they are not working alone. This is important to reduce stress levels.

Encourage communication about feelings

Encourage communication between students and family members / friends / teachers. Don't become ostriches with heads in the sand hoping it will all go away. Sharing ideas and thoughts with others is for many students a preferred learning style (interpersonal). Students who are unwilling to talk about their frustrations, concerns or feelings towards exams are often in denial about their pressure and need to accept reality to be successful.

Feed the brain: take some exercise

Exercise is good for the brain. It increases the amount of blood flow, and therefore oxygen, keeping the brain more alert. Exercise also releases chemicals like endorphins which make you feel more positive. Go for a walk, jog, swim or bike ride in between long revision sessions. Build in time for exercise into the revision plan.

All anyone can ask is for students to do their best

The desire to succeed can place pressure on students and parents and can quickly be taken as negative. All we can ever ask of anyone is that they do their best. Follow the advice in this guide; avoid sessions of revision which are too long, or using a learning style that does not help are important ways to keep the pressure at bay. Asking questions that encourage self-evaluation is a good way to do this. For example,

Do you think you have done your best with your revision today?

Are **you** are happy you have done your best today?

Is there anything you could do differently with your next revision session that would help you?

What can I do to help you with your revision today?

The following is taken from
Chapter 4, "The New Learning
Revolution 2005"
— Gordon Dryden

'Getting Motivated'

Lessons from sport

1. All sports achievers have a dream

They all set themselves targets to achieve, often dreaming the impossible but they make it happen, from breaking the world record to winning an Olympic medal, winning the FA cup to becoming a Wimbledon champion. What is your dream? What job do you want? What do you want from life?

2. Have specific goals and break them down into achievable steps

The big dream is broken down into achievable steps. These steps all lead towards the dream. Getting 5A* - C grades at GCSE is a step towards doing the IB diploma. Passing the IB diploma is a step towards getting a place at the University of your choice. These steps, however, can be broken down even further. Getting 5 A* - C may require you to pass Science, break this down...to pass the course you need to understand physics, chemistry and biology... break this down into smaller sections. Keep breaking it down until you get achievable chunks for revision. Never forget these little steps are all a part of your journey of success, your journey towards your dream.

3. All sports achievers combine mind, body and action

They know they can only achieve if they can create the right mental attitude, fitness level, have the correct diet and practice their physical skills, the actual "doing" of it.

4. They all have vision; they learn to visualise their goals

Muhammad Ali used to predict his fight because he visualised the fights beforehand. He was right to the round in 17 to 19 of his predictions. Jack Nicklaus said 90% of his success came from his ability to visualise where every shot was going to land. The key message is, visualise yourself passing the exams, visualise yourself getting your results and opening them up, how will you feel when they are what you want? Picture yourself in your dream job. The psychological impact of visualisation on a physiological outcome is well documented.

5. They all have passion

If you can't be passionate about your own dreams and goals then you have the wrong dreams and goals.

6. Each has a coach, a mentor or a guide

As a student, get yourself a coach or mentor to help you meet your goals, help you stay focused and on track. In school,

you are surrounded by coaches, mentors and guides. Your form teacher, your subject teachers, your Head of School! Listen to the advice, rise to the challenges they all set you. Always remember the challenge is based on you achieving your goals, on maximising your potential. There is no excuse for not having a coach, mentor or guide in school. As a parent, this is the role you are already playing. It is a vital role: developing an open dialogue between parent and child is the same as between coach and athlete. Parents are the best coaches children can have.

7. **All sports achievers have a fantastically positive attitude towards mistakes**

They don't even call them mistakes, they call them practice. No teacher would call the tennis shots Roger Federer hits out or in the net during practice as a failure. They would say they are practice and an important part of learning. The best quote I have ever found for this actually comes from a scientist, the great Thomas Edison. *"You must analyse each failure to find its cause. You must learn to fail intelligently. Failing is one of the greatest arts in the world. One fails towards success."*

8. **They all achieve by doing**

Sport is a hands-on operation. You do not get fit by reading a book, although it may help with the theory. Learning is also a hands-on operation.

We Learn

- 10% of what we read
- 20% of what we hear
- 30% of what we see
- 50% of what we see and hear
- 70% of what we say
- 90% of what we say **and do**

Think about it...

- You learn to talk by talking
- You learn to walk by walking
- You learn to golf by golfing
- You learn to type by typing
- You learn best by **doing it!**

Just do it! — Nike

An Olympian Challenge

By Marilyn King (Pentathlete)

If you have passion plus vision but no action

You're daydreaming

If you have vision plus action but not passion

You'll be mediocre

If you have passion plus action but no vision

You will get there but find it's the wrong goal!

“There is more than one type of smartness – and we each have a learning style as individual as our fingerprints.”
— The Learning Revolution 1999

Individual memory styles

We each have a combination of memory strategies that work best for us. We each use varied strategies to remember different kinds of information.

Activity: how do you remember things?

Try to recall each of the items 1-5 below. After each one, note down what you did to help you remember.

1. What is your best friend's phone number?
2. How do you use a pencil sharpener?
3. What was your first day at school like?
4. What did you wear yesterday?
5. What is your wifi passcode?

You probably used different strategies to remember the phone number than to recall your first day at school. You may have used some of the following strategies - if not, experiment with them now.

Fact Strategies

Many techniques may help in learning a fact such as a telephone number. You might try:

- Chanting the rhythm of the number.
- Using your fingers to map out the pattern of movements needed to dial the number.
- Seeing the number in your mind.
- Hearing your voice saying the number.
- Drawing out the digits with your finger.
- Writing the number down quickly.
- Noting any memorable peculiarity of the number, such as a repeated pattern (2727) or a reversible number (1331).
- Noting any smaller numbers of personal significance to you, such as the year you were born or a relative's house number, contained within the number.

“People of all ages can learn virtually anything if allowed to do it in their own unique styles, their own personal strengths.”
— Barbara Prashing, *The Power of Diversity*

Event Strategies

Trying to recall your first day at school may have called up different types of memory.

- The emotional memory of the event may have come to mind your excitement at starting school, or your distress at being left by your mother, or your fear of the teacher. You might experience this physically in your body, as a tightening of the stomach muscles, for example, or a change in your breathing.
- You may have a strong visual memory of the journey to the school, or of moments during the first day. These may run through your head like a film or a series of snapshots.
- You may be able to hear the noises of the school the shouts in the playground, or the school bell. You may remember certain smells, or even the taste of chalk on your fingers.

Other Strategies

In remembering the six items above you may have used quite different strategies.

- To remember how to use a pencil sharpener you may have moved your hands to guide you through the sequence of movements.
- To remember what you wore, you may have recalled the place where you were.
- To remember where your clothes are now, you probably used a mixture: visual recall of where they usually are, and a check through your memory of recent events to see if there was any reason why they might be somewhere else.
- For the postbox, you may have visualised the local geography, or remembered a time you posted a letter, or imagined the walk to the box, or repeated instructions under your breath.

Improve your memory*Memory Aids*

Particular practices can help you remember things. Below are some that are well known, and you may have others of your own.

Self-awareness

Know what tricks and methods you already use to remember things.

Repetition

This is essential. Go over information at least three times. Check back often for short lengths of time (rather than once for a long time).

Association

Link what you need to remember with something you already know.

Mnemonics

Any trick to help you remember is a mnemonic (pronounced nem-on-ic). One common mnemonic is to use the first letter of each keyword to make a new 'word' that sums up the whole subject. It doesn't matter if the letters don't make a real word.

Example:

Oil Rig helps students in Chemistry.

Oxidation It Loses (elections).

Reduction It Gains (elections).

Active listening

Discuss what you're trying to learn with friends. Listen to your voice saying or reading it. Record yourself. Exaggerate. Use accents. Be dramatic.

Writing things down

In your own words, write things out over and over again.

Personalise it

Relate what you learn to yourself. (For example in what way does it affect you? Does it remind you of someone you know, or somewhere you have been?)

Play

Play with information. Look for the fun in it. Relax and enjoy the process.

Think about advertisements

Advertising agencies deliberately set out to make us remember their advertisements. The 'tricks' and 'devices' they employ to prompt our memory can also be used to help us to remember what we study.

Think about popular products and brands and how they are advertised: how do we remember the product and the message?



Using the Brain

Left brain - right brain

The brain is divided into two hemispheres, left and right. Research into brain damage shows that different mental functions are affected depending on which hemisphere is damaged. This understanding led to the idea that each hemisphere is generally associated with particular thinking and memory styles.

- The two hemispheres are linked by over 200 million nerve fibres (known as the corpus callosum).
- There is a crossover effect: each hemisphere controls the opposite side of the body.
- The body is designed to help the two hemispheres to work together.
- Each hemisphere is also skilled in the mental capacities of the other hemisphere.

The hemispheres work together

Most activities involve using both hemispheres. For example, to remember a song, you need to bring together both the lyrics (left hemisphere) and the tune (right hemisphere). To remember a person, you need to link the face (right hemisphere) and the name (left hemisphere). If something in one part of the brain makes learning difficult, the brain has a tremendous capacity for finding a different route to learning.

This suggests that if something proves difficult to learn or memorise in one way, there is likely to be a different way your brain could learn it.

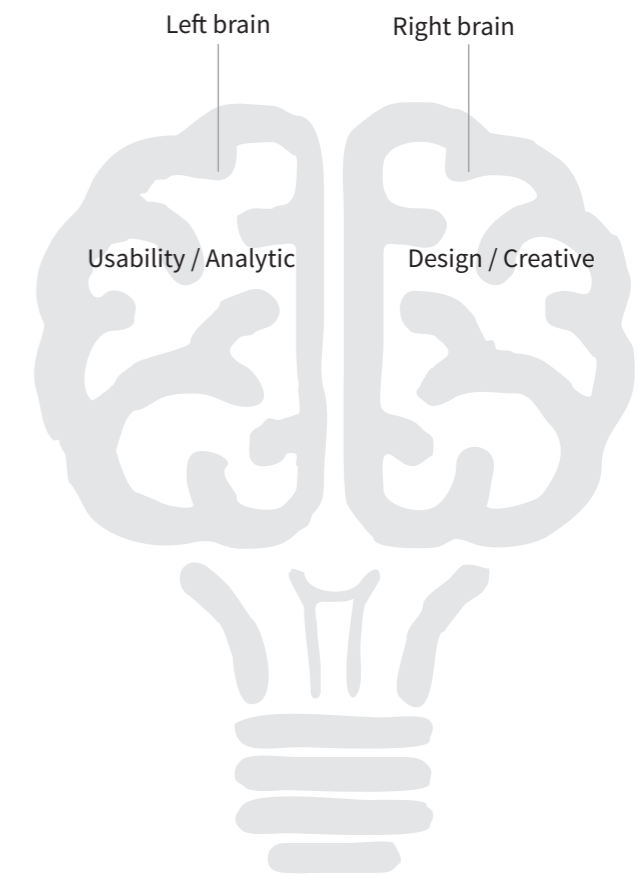
Many people identify more with either the logical or the Gestalt thinking style. Do you think you are more 'left brain' or 'right brain' dominant? You can use your preferred style to link information across the hemispheres. This encourages the parts of the brain to work better together and makes learning easier.

Using the left and right brain to improve memory

Although the brain uses both hemispheres for almost any activity, you can encourage this process, giving greater brain integration, and making use of more of your brain.

If you have a 'right brain' preference

- Draw a 'diagram or picture to show how varied information links up.
 - Personalise information - find a way to make it relevant to your own life or experience.
 - Use shape and colour to highlight and organise information.
 - Use different colours for different topics.
 - Sing the information you have to learn.
 - Move around as you learn - try to recall what you have just learnt as you do the housework or walk to the bus stop.
- If you have a 'left brain' preference.



- Write out the information by hand.
- Turn the information into lists.
- Number items of information so that the sequence is clear.
- Use headings to break up the information into different categories.
- Turn information into flow diagrams so you can see progression.
- Build up from details until you get the whole picture.

Locate the information in the brain

Make an experiment. While trying to visualise or recall information, first look up and to the left; then do the same but looking up and to the right. Also try looking left, then right, and then down to each side.

Which direction worked best? Does this hold true for different kinds of information? When you need to recall something, look first in the direction that is appropriate for you for that specific kind of information.

For optimum memory, combine different methods

Whatever your left- or right-brain preference, find a way of linking those skills to the skills associated with the other side. For example, if you are a picture thinker, number and sequence your pictures. If you use lists, then sing or colour them.

'Left brain' thinkers need to ensure they have the whole picture and can see how everything fits together. 'Right brain' thinkers need to ensure they appreciate the sequence, order, and hierarchy of importance. When learning something, combine a mixture of memory strategies.

Look at it, repeat it with rhythm, write it, number it, give it a shape, turn it into a diagram, say it aloud, sing it, draw it, colour it, act it out, make it bizarre.

Strategies of the memory process

Another way of using the brain to improve memory is to work with the different stages in the memory process.

Four stages in the memory process:

1. Taking in information - noticing or attending to information, and absorbing it
2. Retaining it - in short term memory
3. Encoding it - interacting with the information in working memory so that the brain can store it in long term memory
4. Recalling it - retrieving or remembering information, whether of purpose, by accident, or in dreams. Recall can seem accurate even when it is not.

Stage 1: Taking information in

What we already know and have a name for affects how we direct our attention, what we notice, and therefore what goes into memory. We need to maintain our attention in order to remember. If you study on 'automatic pilot', little attention is involved so you will remember less. You will remember more if you:

- Direct your attention consciously and purposefully.
- Focus in a relaxed way - not with hard concentration.
- Take breaks and make changes in what you are doing, so as to maintain relaxed attention
 - a few minutes moving around or doing something different is sufficient.
- Link information to what you know.
- Give names and labels to information.
- Deliberately arrange or adapt information so that it is structured and yet stands out as odd, distinct, different or more interesting, so that it grabs your attention.

Stage 2: Retaining information long enough to remember it

Rehearsing new information in short-term memory helps the working memory hold onto it.

Repeating it gives the brain time to call up stored memories to help you make sense of the information and encode it for storage.

Rehearsal must start within a few seconds, as information fades quickly. Rehearsal is a useful strategy for holding onto names, dates, numbers, formulae and instructions for long enough to write them down. You can then employ other memory strategies to remember the information long-term.

Stage 3: Encoding information - the key to memory?

The brain encodes new information so that it can be represented in the memory. Codes may be oral, auditory, kinaesthetic (using touch and feelings), verbal, semantic (related to meaning), visual, emotional, or motor (using a muscle sequence). For example, when you tell a story, the brain encodes the pattern of fine-muscle movements you used to speak and stores them. It can also encode and store the sound of your speech on your own ear; the images and emotions which the story brought to mind; the look of the text; and details such as who was in the room or the buzzing of a neon light. The brain links information it has encoded - so any one aspect could trigger the whole memory later. The more facets of an experience the brain has encoded, the more triggers there are to memory.



Suggestions for multiple encoding

Use your environment

- Use a different room for each subject.
- Notice aspects of the environment such as the light or feel of the room how do you feel in that place?
- Attach your notes to the furniture. Notice their location.
- Associate a different location with each subject. Associate furniture, windows, plants and ornaments with particular topics.

Use your clothes

- Associate items of clothing with topics in your learning, a shoe could represent one aspect of foreign policy; each button on a shirt could represent a quotation. Clothes with patterns, pockets and buttons are especially useful.
- Wear these clothes into the exam room as a memory trigger.

Use the parts of your body

Parts of your body are especially helpful as triggers to memory, as your body will be there in the exam room. For example, each hand could represent an essay plan - each finger one major topic; each segment of each finger a principal reference you would use. The fingernails could represent counterarguments; the knuckles could be associated with relevant quotations.

Use motor memory

- Study on the move. If you exercise, associate each movement with something you wish to remember. To refresh the memory, go through the exercise in your mind.
- Writing, drawing and speaking also use motor memory; the fine-muscle sequence is recorded by the brain.

Use auditory memory

- Using a digital recorder, record yourself and then play this recording back.
- Sing an essay plan for a possible exam essay to a well-known tune. Make a list of which tunes go with each subject.
- Go over a topic with a real or imaginary friend, or your cat.
- Read notes aloud in peculiar voices.

Use visual memory

- Make page layouts clear and attractive.
- Turn your material into a film sequence that you can watch in your mind's eye.
- Assign to a topic an object such as a car, and a label different bits of the object with the things you need to remember; the driving wheel with your main point; the four wheels with four main theorists; the doors with examples of practical applications of the theory; items in the boot could remind you of background information or historical development; and parts of the engine or objects on the front seat could indicate future developments.
- To remember complex lists and formulae, such as accountancy balance sheets, use a sequence of images linked by a story.
- Use scale (size) and visually distinct images to separate out similar or confusing material, such as information about similar theories. Arrange these in a visual hierarchy.

Use colour

- Assign each subject area a different combination of colours.
- You may find it useful to use a given colour for references or for formulae throughout your notes, so that you can spot them easily.
- Give each theme a different colour. As each theme appears, highlight it in the colour you allocated to it. You can then see at a glance which pages cover what, and which combinations of themes come up together. This makes reading more interactive, and finding information faster.
- Use colour on pattern notes or in concept pyramids to indicate information of similar types or levels. Organising your information clearly in this way can aid recall. You may also find that you remember different colour combinations easily.
- To help you recall sequences of information, use colour combinations that are familiar to you, such as the rainbow, traffic lights, or the order of stripes on national flags.

Use verbal memory

- Reduce information to keywords.
- Organise information into hierarchies under headings.
- Write out your information in the fewest words possible - this process encourages interaction with the material.

Use semantic memory

- Spend time considering the implications of what you have found out. For example, who is affected? What would it mean for the future? What changes might arise? What theories could this information overturn? What are the moral, legal or ethical consequences?
- Think of a different way of saying what you have already written.
- Decide which are the three most important aspects of the subject, or the most important theories or ideas. Then decide which is the one most important.
- Consider all the ways in which one area of a subject is similar to another.

Stage 4: Recall

Good recall is linked to how much attention and awareness you bring to the process of taking in information and encoding it.

Over-learning to aid recall

If you want to recall information at will, such as for exams or for complicated sequences that you use regularly, you may need to 'over-learn.'

If the information is hard to remember, there is probably a way of encoding it that suits you better, so experiment with something different.

References

* "The Study Skills Handbook" Stella Cottrell | * "The New Learning Revolution 2005" Dryden et al

For help with Revision Planning — contact your form tutors, subject teachers or ask to see the Head of School.

Email: exams@naispudong.com

www.naispudong.com

www.naispudong.com

Nord Anglia International School Shanghai, Pudong
2888 Junmin Road
Pudong New District
Shanghai 201315