



Clapton Girls'
Academy
Est. 1906

**REMEMBER:
EDUCATION GIVES YOU POWER!
OF THIS YOU ARE IN CONTROL!**

STUDY SKILLS

A booklet to help enhance your ability to study and improve your performance in 6th Form and Post-18 education.

HOW TO USE THIS:

- Read through & highlight tips you are going to take on board.
- Complete the activities – this will help you think about your current habits and how you can improve.
- This is light enough to carry around & use in study & at home.
- Complete the final activity once you've read through this.

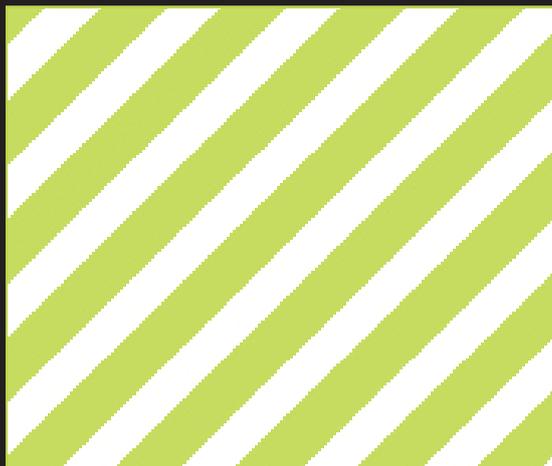
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STUDY SKILLS – WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

ACADEMIC SKILLS	SELF-RATING (1-5) 1 = WEAK 5 = EXCELLENT	EXAMPLE OF LEVEL OF ACADEMIC SKILL
e.g. Managing deadlines	2	I miss coursework deadlines quite regularly and always seem to leave work until the last minute
Managing deadlines		
Being self-motivated and to person with task		
Having the confidence to 'have a go' and ask questions		
Finding out information from different sources		
Reading complicated material and understand new information		
Being able to summarise lots of information in own words		
Being able to select relevant and irrelevant information		
Comparing different opinions and concluding		
Being able to weigh up 'pros' and 'cons'		
Being able to argue my point of view		

STUDY SKILLS – PRIORITIES



COLUMN A: Tick if the statement is generally true of you

COLUMN B: Rate how important it is to acquire this skill.
6 = unimportant; 10 = essential

COLUMN C: Rate how good you are at this skill now.
1 = very weak; 5 = excellent

COLUMN D: Subtract the score in column C from that in Column B (B-C).

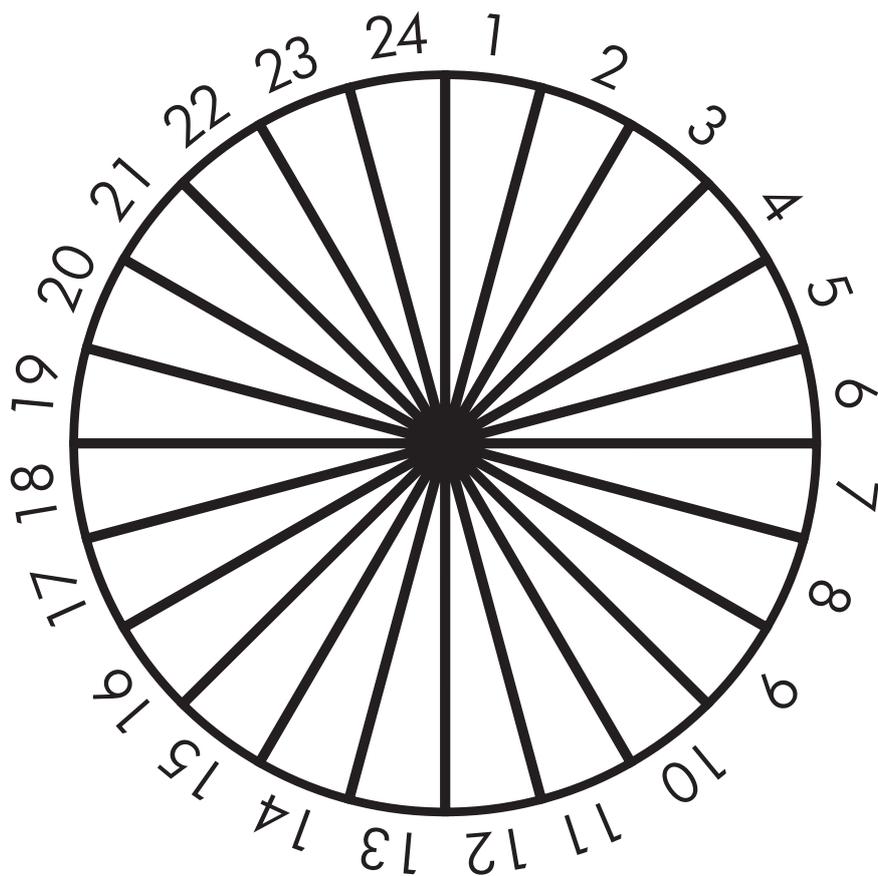
Items with the highest score are likely to be priorities.

STUDY SKILLS STATEMENTS	A THIS IS TRUE (TICK)	B SKILL NEEDED? (SCALE 6-10)	C CURRENT ABILITY (SCALE 1-5)	D PRIORITY (B-C)
I am aware of how I learn best and how to reflect and evaluate my work				
I am well motivated and can set goals				
I can organise my workload and have good time management				
I am confident about my reading strategies				
I am good with numbers				
I am able to make, organise, store, find and use my notes effectively				
I take an active role in lessons				
I know how to structure and organise essays				
I am able to think critically and analytically				
I have good revision strategies				

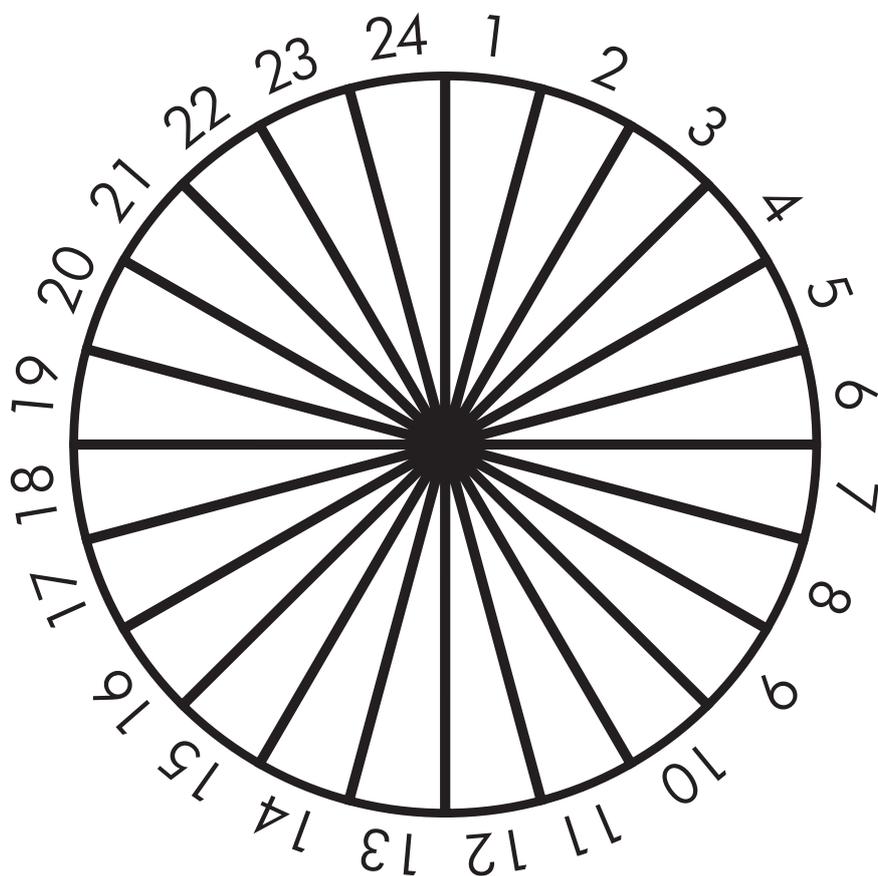


Highlight your priorities – when you think you have achieved them over a set period of time, cross them off.

HOW DO I USE MY TIME?



Current use of time –
Choose SATURDAY or SUNDAY fill in blocks of time for everything you currently do e.g. sleeping between 11pm and 7am, school day etc..



Ideal use of time –
choose SATURDAY or SUNDAY think about where you have wasted time and how you can improve – now fill in the below time wheel.

WHAT STUDY SKILLS ARE THERE?

Organisation
Revision Skills
Analytical thinking
Prioritisation
Summarising work

Time Management
Reflective Learning
Reading Skills
Research
Comparing and Contrasting

Memory Skills
Critical thinking
Essay Writing Skills
Active Learning

BECOMING AN ACTIVE LEARNER

ACTIVE VS PASSIVE

AN ACTIVE LEARNER IS SOMEONE WHO:

- Prepares for lessons
- Asks questions
- Organises information
- Links ideas and information
- Evaluates information
- Drafts and re-drafts work

A PASSIVE LEARNER IS SOMEONE WHO:

- Copies work down, often word for word, and doesn't attempt to understand it
- Doesn't reflect on what they have done
- Doesn't organise information
- Has lost or is losing motivation as a consequence of the above

WHAT TO DO TO IMPROVE:

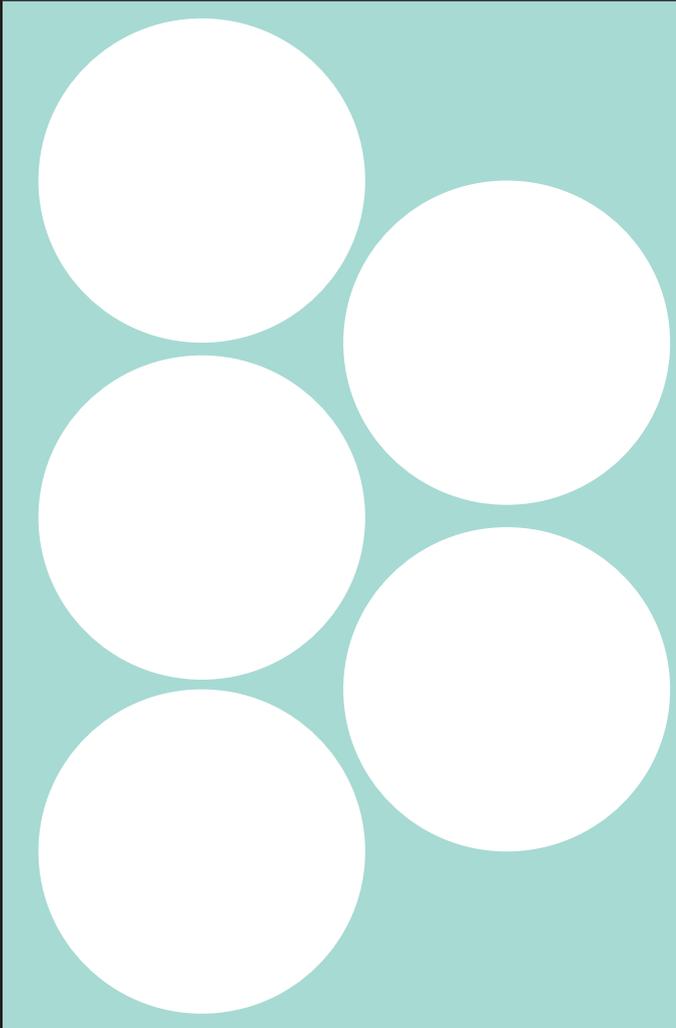
- Summarise paragraphs
- Create spider diagrams/mind maps
- Think of examples and decide the best one
- List questions about a topic
- Teach information to someone else
- List key words/points – create index cards
- Make a poster of the information
- Think about how you would argue against what you are reading
- Write quick essay titles and then write a draft essay or the outline of an essay

CONTROLLABLE STUDY FACTORS

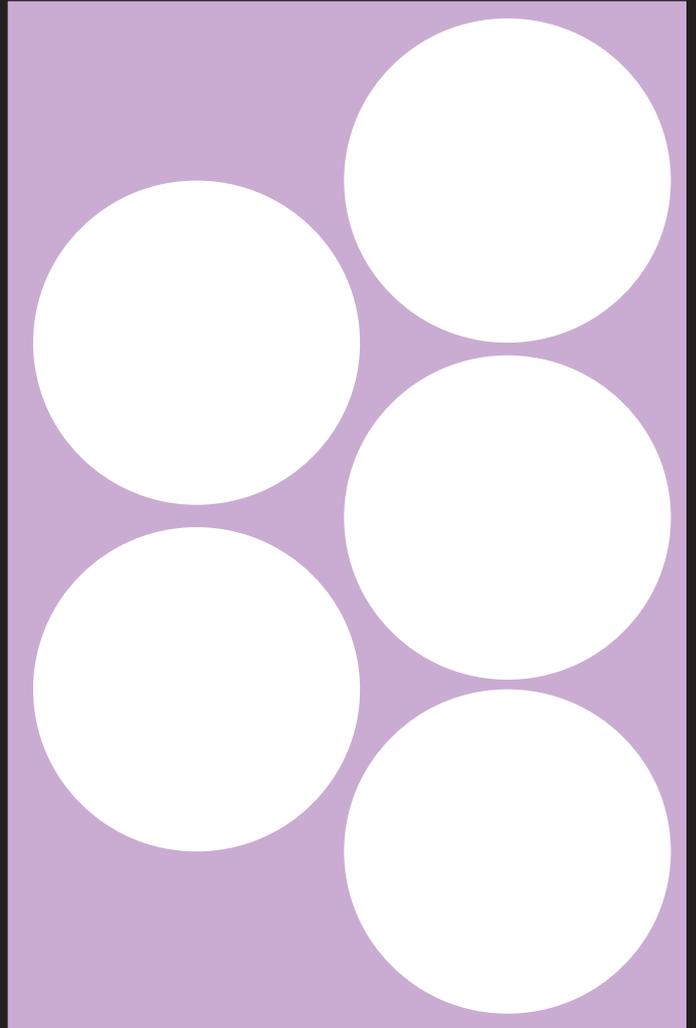
Write down the factors that stop you from studying or revising.

Write down the factors you CAN control, e.g. watching t.v., as well as factors you find DIFFICULT to control, e.g. looking after a family member.

FACTORS YOU CAN CONTROL



FACTORS DIFFICULT TO CONTROL



WHAT NEXT?

- Identify the top two factors that you CAN control.
- You need to manage those aspects that are within your control to prevent them from stopping you from studying – these should be relatively easy as they are within your control.
- Think about each barrier and WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT e.g. many students find internet communication such as online chat rooms can consume a great deal of time. Will you allow your grades to suffer because you spent too much time chatting online?

ORGANISATION TOP TIPS

Make sure you have a separate space at home for studying, ideally near a window at the side or behind you. Make sure the work space is organised and comfortable.

GET KITTED OUT! – suggested equipment and study advice below:

- A4 ring binder for each subject, with dividers
- Smaller file(s) with dividers for weekly notes
- File your notes in the subject ring binder weekly
- Put dates and titles on everything, use subheadings, highlight key words.
- Note where you got information from – what book? Page number?
- Diary/Planner – fill in all dates, deadlines, schedule catch up work time
- Always have your diary with you!
- Every week write a brief plan: write up notes, reading, coursework, homework, revision
- Write regular job/task lists and prioritise – use sub headings
- Get some coloured pens and highlighters!
- Break up larger tasks – set start and end times for tasks
- Avoid interruptions
- Write down and then look up words you don't understand
- Make good use of study periods

READING

Read a few paragraphs, stop and without looking sum up what you have read – write down key words. Highlight key sections in the text.

Ask questions about the topic before reading – what are you aiming to get out of the section you are reading – then when you are reading try and answer them.

Give yourself a goal of how much you are going to read in one sitting, e.g. two chapters, or 30 minutes. Psychologically this is better than being filled with dread and just thinking about how many pages the whole book has.

Before reading, do 5 minutes (max) of mind mapping – writing down everything you know about a topic. This will help focus you and increase your concentration, getting you mentally set. It also 'activates' your storage system and makes your brain more susceptible to information.

If you know little about the topic, think about what questions you want answered about that topic before you start reading.

Try sub-vocalisation! This means internally pronouncing words in your head – so imagine you can hear yourself saying it out loud. This will help your memory and your concentration.

Write down and look up words you do not understand.

MAKING NOTES

WHY WRITE NOTES?

TASK 1

Select two articles from broadsheet newspapers or text books. Read one of them through and, as you go, highlight the most relevant details and facts with a marker pen. Now write a comprehensive summary of the article you have just read. Write it in list form, with each item numbered.

Now, without looking at your notes, present a 30 second newsflash to your tutor/parent/friend.

TASK 2

Read a different article, but this time make no notes.

Now present a 30 second newsflash to your tutor/parent/friend.

Q: WHICH ALLOWS FOR THE MOST RECALL???

TOP TIPS FOR TAKING NOTES:

GENERAL

- Think before you write
- Keep notes brief and organised
- Use your own words
- Leave a wide margin and spaces to add notes later

USEFUL STRATEGIES

- Note key words and main ideas
- Write phrases – not sentences
- Use abbreviations
- Use headings
- Number points
- Make the page memorable – with colour, illustrations, etc.
- Link up information – using arrows, dotted lines, numbers, same colours etc.
- Note sources of information
- Write quotes in a different colour

UNHELPFUL STRATEGIES

- Copying chunks and phrases
- Copying out notes over and over again to make them neater – this is not revising!

USING ABBREVIATIONS – THIS SAVES YOU TIME!

- Work out a system you will remember and stick to it
- Introduce just a few at a time and keep a key so you can always refer back to if you forget

Examples of Symbols and abbreviations that can speed up your note taking:

& (+)	and
+	plus
>	greater/more than/ better than
<	Smaller/less than
=	is the same/equal to
≠	Is not the same as
∴	Therefore
∵	Because
w/	with
e.g.	example
i.e.	that is, that means
etc.	and the rest
NB	important, notice this
p.	page (pp = pages)
para.	Paragraph
Ch.	Chapter
edn	Edition
Info.	Information
cd	could
wd	would
Govt.	Government
Educ.	Education
impt	important
devt	development
C19	19th Century

HOW CAN YOU TAKE EVEN BETTER NOTES?

- Note-taking is NOT about copying the words somebody else has written on to a page you are writing.
- Note-taking is about reducing the material, so it can be understood and recalled more easily.
- Some students find it very difficult to reduce material to a series of key points e.g. bullet points.
- Bullet points are more easily recalled than entire paragraphs.
- Creating bullet points is an intellectual skill as the KEY POINT has to be identified, which is not always very easy. If the key point cannot be identified then it is unlikely the paragraph will be recalled, as it hasn't been clearly understood.

Practice your note taking techniques by reading the familiar story below, then look at the examples underneath:

THE STORY OF GOLDBLOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS

Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Goldilocks. She went for a walk in the forest. Pretty soon, she came upon a house. She knocked and, when no one answered, she walked right in.

At the table in the kitchen, there were three bowls of porridge. Goldilocks was hungry. She tasted the porridge from the first bowl.

"This porridge is too hot!" she exclaimed.

So, she tasted the porridge from the second bowl.

"This porridge is too cold," she said

So, she tasted the last bowl of porridge.

"Ahhh, this porridge is just right," she said happily and she ate it all up.

After she'd eaten the three bears' breakfasts she decided she was feeling a little tired. So, she walked into the living room where she saw three chairs. Goldilocks sat in the first chair to rest her feet.

"This chair is too big!" she exclaimed.

So she sat in the second chair.

"This chair is too big, too!" she whined.

So she tried the last and smallest chair.

"Ahhh, this chair is just right," she sighed. But just as she settled down into the chair to rest, it broke into pieces!

Goldilocks was very tired by this time, so she went upstairs to the bedroom. She lay down in the first bed, but it was too hard. Then she lay in the second bed, but it was too soft. Then she lay down in the third bed and it was just right. Goldilocks fell asleep.

As she was sleeping, the three bears came home.

"Someone's been eating my porridge," growled the Papa bear.

"Someone's been eating my porridge," said the Mama bear.

"Someone's been eating my porridge and they ate it all up!" cried the Baby bear.

"Someone's been sitting in my chair," growled the Papa bear.

"Someone's been sitting in my chair," said the Mama bear.

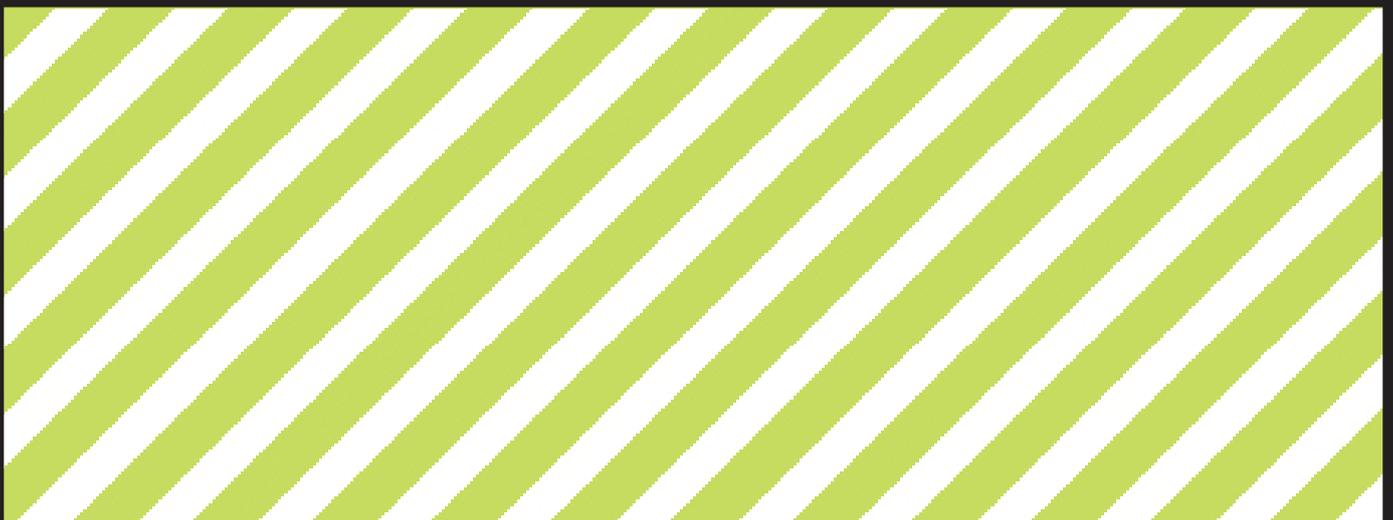
"Someone's been sitting in my chair and they've broken it all to pieces," cried the Baby bear.

They decided to look around some more and when they got upstairs to the bedroom, Papa bear growled, "Someone's been sleeping in my bed,"

"Someone's been sleeping in my bed, too" said the Mama bear.

"Someone's been sleeping in my bed and she's still there!" exclaimed Baby bear.

Just then, Goldilocks woke up and saw the three bears. She screamed, "Help!" And she jumped up and ran out of the room. Goldilocks ran down the stairs, opened the door, and ran away into the forest. And she never returned to the home of the three bears.



TOP TIPS FOR IDENTIFYING BULLET POINTS USING GOLDILOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS AS AN EXAMPLE!

1. Understand the **BIG PICTURE** about the story / explanation / theory.

A girl called Goldilocks enters the house of a family of three bears without permission.

2. **Underline** or **highlight** the key points as you read – leave out detail, capture the key points only.

For example, Goldilocks enters the house, tests out three chairs for size, tastes three bowls of porridge, tries out three beds for comfort, falls asleep. The details about porridge being too hot and chairs breaking is extra detail

3. Follow a **logical order** to aid your understanding.

Place the following in order of sequence that they appear in the story by writing a number next to each point in the order it comes. So, to get you started, place a '1' next to 'Goldilocks enters the house'.

- Goldilocks runs out of the house
- Goldilocks falls asleep on a bed
- Goldilocks is woken up by the three bears - daddy, mummy and baby bear
- Goldilocks tests out three chairs for size
- Goldilocks tastes three bowls of porridge
- Goldilocks enters the house
- Goldilocks tries out three beds for comfort

4. **Avoid highlighting too much** – the idea is not to create a page of notes in luminous yellow so it can be read in the dark! Avoid underlining/highlighting words that **simply connect ideas** e.g. and, of, which, as, that, if, of, off, then, what. None of these words is crucial to understanding a key point.

Try drawing a line through all the words in the following sentence that add no value to the key point.

Goldilocks entered the house cautiously, calling out, "Is anybody there?" and then she stepped inside the hallway looking around the house with wide open eyes.

TASK 1:

TEST YOUR NOTE TAKING ABILITY

- (a) Read the following account of a true situation that occurred in California in the 1970s.
- (b) As you read, underline or highlight the key points.
- (c) Write out the big picture in the space provided as soon as you finish reading the passage.
- (d) Write out the bullet points that identify the key aspects of the story. Remember the four points about making better notes - Understand the big picture, Highlight key points, Be logical, Be selective.

In April 1998 news broke of a 73 year old Austrian father, Josef Fritzl, who, when police arrested him, confessed to having imprisoned his daughter in a cellar for 24 years and fathered her seven children. The case has been described as one of the worst in Austria's criminal history. This is not the only case of its kind. A Californian girl was locked away by her father from the age of two until she was thirteen years old. The girl's father claimed he thought the girl had brain damage and this was the reason he locked her away. The mother was nearly blind and was restricted to moving around in a wheelchair. The girl stayed in the room with the curtains closed and the door shut. Her food was given to her in the room and she had access to an infant's potty throughout her entire time in the room. For some reason, her father barked at her instead of talking to her and beat her if she even made a noise. In 1970, the mother 'escaped' and called the police who rescued the girl. Psychologists at a nearby university looked after her while studying her progress. They called the girl Genie, as she appeared to emerge into the world, as in the story Aladdin. Genie was described initially as, "unsocialised, primitive, hardly human." She underwent several tests and it was concluded she was not suffering from brain damage. Eventually she learned to dress like other children, but she was silent most of the time and her language never progressed beyond that of a three year old. Some people argue that there is a critical period when children must learn speech and if a child misses this time slot, it is very difficult to develop 'normal' speech. If children are neglected, as Genie certainly was, during this critical period, they might never learn all the patterns of behaviour usually expected of children and adults.

THE BIG PICTURE IS....

THE BULLET KEY POINTS IN ORDER ARE:

LEARNING ABOUT CREATING SPIDER DIAGRAMS FROM BULLET POINTS

How to use bullet points to design a spider diagram that adds more detail to each of your key points? Below is a shopping list. The spider diagram has been started for you using the key TYPES of food as MAIN bullet points such as dairy, bakery, fruit, vegetables, canned food. For each type of food add EXAMPLES or MINOR points. EXAMPLES for bakery would be bread. MINOR point for fruit would be APPLES followed by an EXAMPLE such as Granny Smiths.

TASK: COMPLETE THE SPIDER DIAGRAM OF THE BELOW LIST:

Brown bread
Carrots
Croissants
Bakery
Cheese
Milk

Dairy
Tinned food
Butter
Apples
Fruit and vegetables
White rolls

White cabbage
Red cabbage
Granny Smith apples
Pink Lady apples
Tin of Tuna fish
Tin of Baked beans



ACADEMIC WRITING

WHAT ARE THE RULES?...

GETTING THE BEST OUT OF A PIECE OF WRITTEN WORK:

It is important that you do not just settle for a first attempt at writing something. You will need to check it through carefully before submitting it and quite often you will need to re-draft things. Here are a few things you could try (you can do this for your next piece of written work or a previous piece to try and improve it).

After reading through the piece of work you could:

CHANGE THE ORDER/STRUCTURE:

- Underlining each major idea in a different colour. For each change of subject, change the colour. If a subject comes up again, use the same colour as before.
- When you have finished, check how often the colour changes
- Re-write the work so that all the underlined parts in a given colour are grouped together.

ENHANCE YOUR WRITING:

- Use alternative words (use a thesaurus)
- Use more examples
- Change the order of the paragraphs
- Include more information from the opposite point of view.

There is no single style that can be used in all academic writing. Each discipline has developed its own particular styles, and in some subject areas you may find that even various branches of the discipline use quite distinct writing styles.

The following conventions apply to *most* academic writing. Nevertheless, if your tutors offer specific guidance, follow their directions.

Use formal English

Academic English is more formal than the language used in everyday conversation, emails, letters, magazines and most newspapers. It shouldn't sound 'chatty'. It also avoids slang and colloquialisms such as these:

- 'The writer is *out of order* when he suggests ...'
- 'The new plans were *just the stuff*.'
- 'These findings need to be *taken with a pinch of salt*.'
- 'The argument was *a bit over the top*.'

Aim for clarity

Write so that your reader can easily follow what you are trying to say. Do not use long words and technical jargon simply in order to sound impressive. Check whether your sentences are so long and complicated that they are hard to follow. Avoid antiquated language, convoluted sentences

or mannerisms – as well as using up your word limit and obscuring your argument, these could be off-putting to your readers.

Learn how to use specialist vocabulary

It is important to learn the specialist styles and technical terms used for your subject, and also to extend your vocabulary.

- If you are not familiar with specialist terms, look for explanations of these terms in introductory textbooks or glossaries.
- Pay attention to how such terms are introduced in books and articles – note the different forms used, such as noun and verb forms, and past tenses.
- Do not litter your writing with terms that you yourself do not understand – it is better to write in your own words than to sound as though you do not understand the words you are using.



Browse through several articles for your own subject, looking just at the writing style.

- What features do each of the pieces share?
- Are these features of your own writing?

ACADEMIC WRITING

WHAT ARE THE RULES? CONT...

Write words out in full:

- 'dept.' as 'department'
- 'e.g.' as 'for example'
- 'didn't' as 'did not'
- 'they're' as 'they are'
- 'isn't' as 'is not'

Be impersonal

Most courses prefer you to avoid personal pronouns such as 'I', 'we' and 'you'. Instead, sentences begin in impersonal ways such as:

- It can be seen that ...
- There are a number of ...
- It has been found that ...

Be cautious

Academic writing generally sounds cautious. Writers indicate that they are aware that nothing is completely certain. They use words that express this lack of certainty, such as:

- appears to; seems to; tends to; may; might; possibly; probably; apparently; generally; seemingly.

They may use phrases such as:

- in some cases, this ...
- the evidence suggests that ...

Avoid misplaced conjunctions

The following words are not used at the start of sentences: *or, and, but, yet*.

Numbers

Numbers below a hundred are often written out in full, such as:

- thirty-one per cent
- nineteen members.

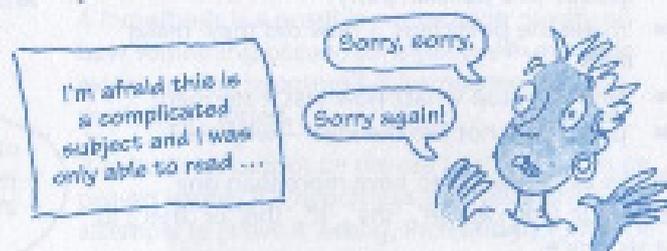
However, figures are retained in statistical and scientific work:

- 31 per cent
- 15°C
- 7.3 newtons.

Academic writing avoids personal, subjective words such as 'nice', 'wonderful', 'worthwhile', 'usual' or 'natural', because the reader's understanding of these words may be very different from your own.

Avoid apologies

Don't apologise to the reader for any weaknesses you think there may be in your research or writing, such as that you found the subject difficult or that you had no time to write a conclusion. Write as if you are confident of what you are saying – even if you don't feel it!



Addressing the reader

Avoid asking readers questions or telling them what to think.



Be concise

Edit out unnecessary words:

- A ~~man-called~~ Jay Singh invented ...
- In ~~a-book-called~~ *Scottish Pathways*, ...

Use continuous prose

Write in full sentences, grouped together into paragraphs (see page 192). For essays and dissertations, avoid lists of points: incorporate the points into sentences. Lists and headings may be acceptable in reports and projects.

GENERAL WRITING REQUIREMENTS

Although the wording of essay or other assignment titles may differ, almost all academic writing requires you to do certain things.

Use source materials

Do not simply state your personal opinion or say what is in your head. Instead, use material from reading, lecture notes and other sources to give reasons, evidence, examples and case studies.

Compare and contrast

Most assignments require some element of comparing and contrasting, especially of theories, models or research findings. You will probably have to read different opinions and weigh them against each other.

Use criteria to evaluate

State which criteria you use to evaluate evidence: for example, that you are using the most up-to-date figures, or figures drawn from the largest survey, or a well-known expert's opinion for a particular reason (such as that he uses evidence from twenty well-conducted experiments). See Chapter 12, *Critical analytical thinking*.

Show awareness of complexities

Demonstrate that you are aware that answers are not always clear-cut. For example, although the expert you quote seems to have the best argument, his twenty experiments may all have used small children whereas the question set refers to teenagers. Acknowledge weaknesses in your own argument and strengths in opposing arguments. State clearly why there are difficulties coming to a firm conclusion one way or another.

Follow an argument

In your writing, show a line of reasoning which gives direction to the writing, so that one point follows logically from another. (See Chapters 9 and 12.)

Make a decision

Show which side of the argument, or which model or theory, is best in the final analysis. Even though the case may be fairly evenly weighted, show that you are able to make a decision on the basis of the evidence.

Follow a set structure

There is likely to be a set structure for the type of writing and a particular style for your subject area. (Different styles are considered in the next chapter.) All academic writing requires that you group similar points together in one paragraph or section, rather than scattering them through the text.

Be 'discursive'

Link your points so that they feed into sentences and paragraphs, and so that each paragraph follows naturally from the previous one. All should contribute to a central guiding line of reasoning. (This is different from presenting a random set of points, for example, or headings with bullet points under them.)

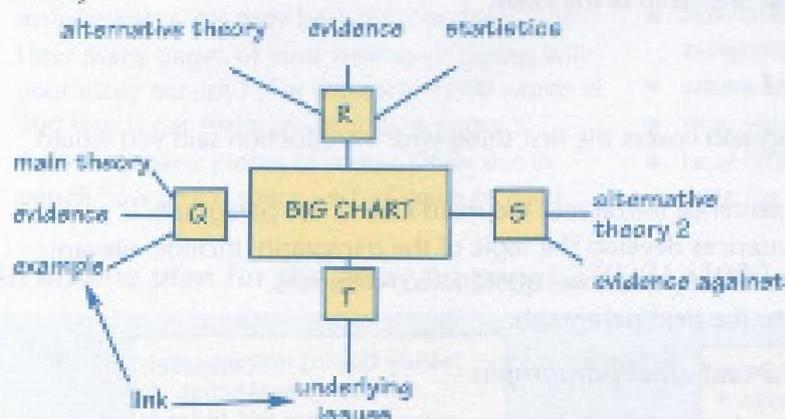
Be emotionally neutral

Most academic writing requires you to stand back and analyse dispassionately, as an objective onlooker.

SIMPLE STEPS TO WRITING COURSEWORK AND HOMEWORK

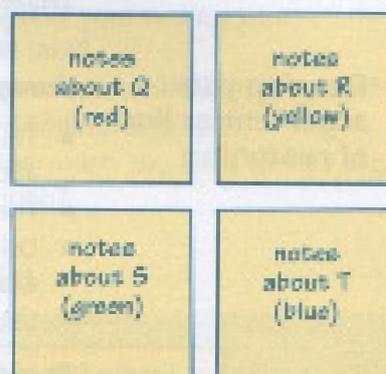
1 Divide the work into topics

When making notes, it may be easiest to use a separate sheet for each main point or topic. Or you may like to use a large sheet of paper, writing out points so you can see them all clearly.



2 Rearrange your notes

- Spread your notes out so that you can see them.
- Look at what you have.
- Group related information.
- Arrange the material in the best order.



3 Write an outline plan

Write your first outline before you have done any research. Often you will find that you know more than you thought. The outline helps to shape your ideas and focus your reading. You can adapt it as you go along.

- 1 Title
- 2 Introduction
- 3 Main argument – notes Q (red)
evidence for – notes Q, p. 3–4
evidence against Q, p. 5 (orange)
evaluation of evidence
- 4 Alternative theory: notes R (yellow)
example of application
evidence for
evidence against (orange)
why not convincing
- 5 Alternative theory 2: notes S (green)
evaluation of evidence
why not convincing
- 6 Underlying issues – notes T (blue)
- 7 Conclusions
a
b
c

4 Organise information into paragraphs

Colour-code each pile of notes. The plan shown uses the sequence of colours of the rainbow, to assist memory. Divide your notes with coloured dividers. Give each paragraph a colour: underline main points in this colour. Maintain this colour-coding onto pattern notes, outline plans, and rough drafts.

Having grouped the information and formed the plan, you can start writing. Each paragraph should have one main idea – with supporting detail or evidence. Each paragraph should relate to one set (or page) of notes.

WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR VOCABULARY?

TASK 1:

Identifying the meaning of lesser used words

Try matching the following words with their definition by drawing a line between the word and the correct definition:

WORDS

Formication

Guddle

Bellicose

Claver

DEFINITIONS

Idle talk or gossip

Argumentative

A terrible feeling like bugs are crawling all over you

To catch fish barehanded

It is not lesser known words like the ones above that are required for success, as these words are not likely to be known by many. Actually, there are many words that we could use that would make our written work and our spoken conversations more accurate, academic and impressive – thus scoring more marks in examinations. These are the words we need to learn for examinations as well as for life in the future.

TASK 2:

Defining commonly used words

Write out the definitions of words selected below. See what definition you come up with and then compare it to the dictionary definition.

Appease

Arbitrary

Callous

Chronicle

Disinterested

Laborious

SIX SIMPLE STEPS TO WIDEN YOUR VOCABULARY:

- 1. Read an enjoyable but slightly stretching book. Classic novels are often full of rich vocabulary.
- 2. As you read a word that you do not know, look it up and write down the definition.
- 3. Every day, look over your list and test yourself.
- 4. Try to use two new words a day in your conversations – you need to know how and when to use the words as well.
- 5. Try to write the words down in the right context of your work
- 6. Tick off the words that you now seem to know and are able to use on your list every week

MY NEW VOCABULARY RECORD

Try to write down and learn three new words a week. You could write these in your planner or diary.

Write out at least three new words a week, if possible. Remember to write out the definition. You will need a dictionary or use your computer / internet.

- Remember to use the new words, in the right context, in conversation and in your written work, as often as you can, to learn them.
- By learning 3 words a week, over 24 weeks of trying out the strategy you will have learned over 72 new words over one year and 144 new words over a two - year course – that is more of a challenge than many might think!

Remember, it is not just knowing of the word, it is using it as well. You will have made a huge impact on your word power for the rest of your life just by learning three words a week. But to do this, it takes regular reading, listening and learning – determination and discipline – have you got it?

REVISION STRATEGIES: ENVIRONMENT

WHAT SORT OF ENVIRONMENT DO YOU CREATE WHEN YOU REVISE?

Do you:	Yes	No
Tidy your desk in a way it has never been tidied before?		
Place highlighter pens neatly side by side in order of the colours of the rainbow or involve yourself in a similar distracting task?		
Go on-line to research colours of the rainbow to check if pens are in the correct order or go on-line for other useless bits of information?		
Put revision off until later when you might feel more motivated?		
Ponder which has more caffeine in it – tea or coffee?		
Spend too long choosing music to play during revision?		
Go on MSN Messenger / Facebook and similar to keep informed about what everyone else is up to?		
Settle down to revision and then decide the key to revision is a snack?		
Check your mobile is on?		
Respond to a newly arrived text message...rude not to reply...		

What other things distract you?

1

2

3

Many students create a leisure environment for revision (distracting choice of music, phones, TV., internet) when they should be creating a learning environment (comfortable seating position, no distractions)

CREATING A REVISION ENVIRONMENT

RATE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

- Try and set aside an area that's just for revision. Avoid your bedroom if possible – you want to create a space you associate only with revision.
- Make sure your desk is lit well (with natural light, if possible) and in a quiet spot, away from distractions like the TV.
- Most people revise most effectively in a quiet environment.
- However, at certain times playing music may motivate and inspire you.
- Turn your phone off, move away from the TV and shut down your internet connection
- Have everything to hand before starting. That means pens, pencils, paper, textbooks, exam papers – anything you need to revise.
- Sometimes it's helpful to revise in the local library or coffee shop as you won't be distracted by your things/ family/ friends.

FINALLY.....

- Keep the end goal in sight! You won't be revising forever! Some people suggest putting sun cream on your wrist to smell the summer holidays!
- Reward yourself! E.g. say I am going to work for 45 minutes and then have a 15 minute break where I can go on my phone/ get some fresh air/ have a snack.



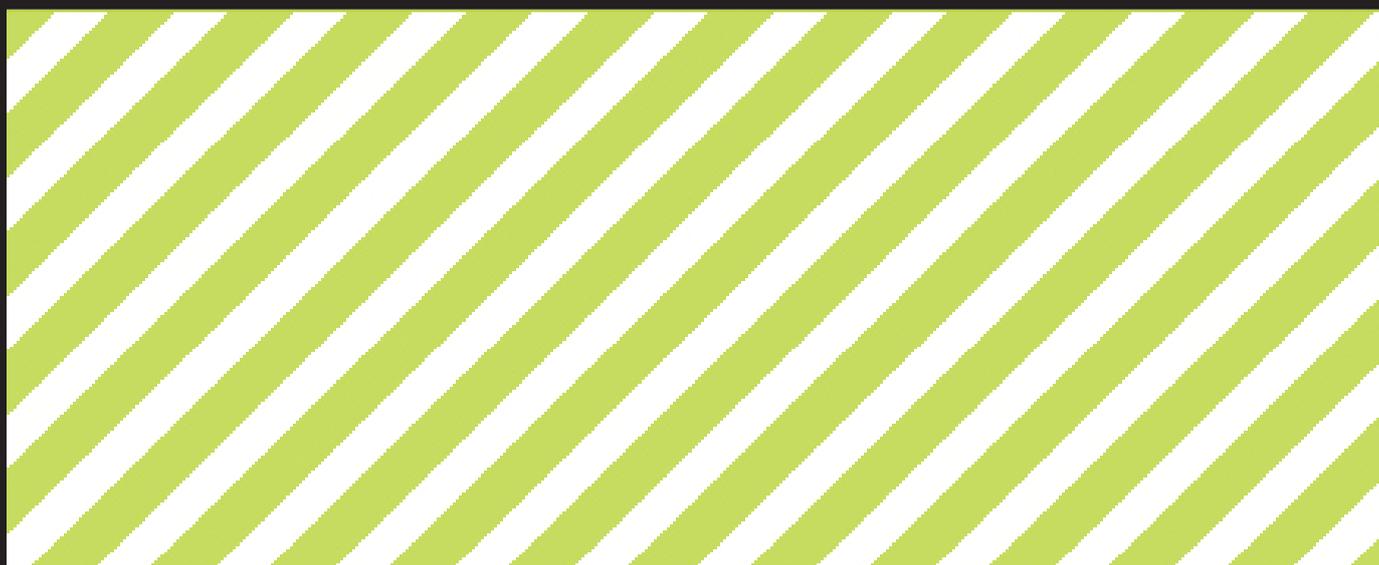
MOVING FORWARD REVISION ENVIRONMENT

Three things I intend to do in future to make my revision environment more effective are:

1.

2.

3.



REVISION: PREPARATION

STEP 1: PREPARE THE RAW MATERIAL

You cannot revise without having all the raw material in place first so...
read below and tick what you have done for each subject and cross what you are still to do:

FIND THE SPECIFICATIONS/SYLLABUS

Make sure you have a copy of the specification for each of your subjects so you know what you need to cover for the examination.

EXAMINERS' REPORTS AND MARK SCHEMES

Gather examiners' reports and some examples of mark schemes for different types of question.

ORGANISE YOUR FILES

Place your notes into sections that relate to the specification – then you know that you have covered all the key areas

FIND MISSING WORK

Check somebody else's file to see if you are missing work – choose that person wisely!

GATHER REVISION GUIDES AND OTHER TEXT BOOKS

Make sure they are for your syllabus. Ask your teacher what they recommend.

DON'T WASTE TOO MUCH TIME GATHERING TOO MANY RESOURCES!

You could spend forever searching the internet etc.
Find what is relevant and suggested and get revising!

PREPARE YOUR WORKING AREA

Make sure it is tidy, comfortable and well lit.

REVISION: STREAMLINE

Tips for streamlining – try the following as many students find these useful:

READ AND MAKE NOTES

Make notes from any hand outs or resources that you have been given if you haven't already done so.

WRITE KEY POINTS Reduce your lengthy notes to bullet points, making specific note of key words and phrases. Use the 'CHUG' method to emphasise these:

Coloured pens

Highlighters

Underlining

Gaps (leave larger spaces between points)

PREPARE REVISION CARDS

Use card or folded A4 paper to force you to reduce notes to a set of bullet points – make sure you include the key points

DIAGRAMS that force you to organise material – you will probably remember a diagram more than a full page of notes

HAVE YOU GOT ANY OTHER METHODS THAT WORK?

REVISION: HOW TO REMEMBER

Once you have reduced your notes to a set of revision points then it is time to commit them to memory.

Psychologists have explored memory and suggest that in the examination you will only recall information from long term memory (LTM). Revision the night before is still part of LTM!

Short term memory (STM) only lasts for about 1-30 seconds - enough to remember a phone number from the operator while you dial. So do not rely on STM!

LONG TERM MEMORY

THE GOOD NEWS

Not much information is lost from long term memory, once it has gone in!

THE BAD NEWS

The problem is not whether the information is there (availability) but rather how the information that is in LTM can be located (accessibility). The following strategies help you get the information INTO long term memory and locate it afterwards.

8 CORE PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBERING

Imagination and association help you to remember things. If you link a piece of information that is already known to you it is easier to remember.

SENSES – Visualise, hear, taste, smell, sense things

EXAGGERATION – think large, absurd images

MOVEMENT – Make images move

COLOUR – Brings memories alive!
Visual senses are heightened

NUMBERS – List things using numbers – this adds order

SYMBOLS – Help prompt memory, for example a logo automatically makes you think of something. Use mnemonics, e.g.

ORDER + PATTERNS – Group and sequence information, sort by colour, size, weight, age, etc.

LAUGHTER – make things funny, rude etc. Anything to help you remember!

GROUPING INFORMATION

Being able to group information is a skill and information that is well grouped and has a pattern to it is more memorable.

Group the words below into at least three categories.

Then try to re-group all of the words into a different set of categories.

India

Dog

Busy

White

Sandy

Sun

Greenland

Tarantula

Cold

Holiday

Turkey

Sea

Ice

Yellow

Pet

Elephant

Spain

Cat

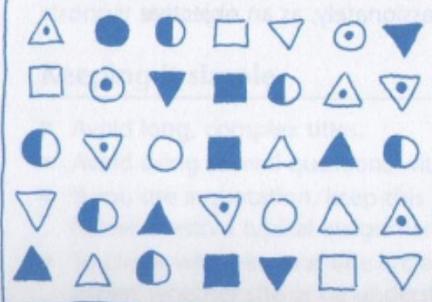
Organising information: grouping things together

First try this ...

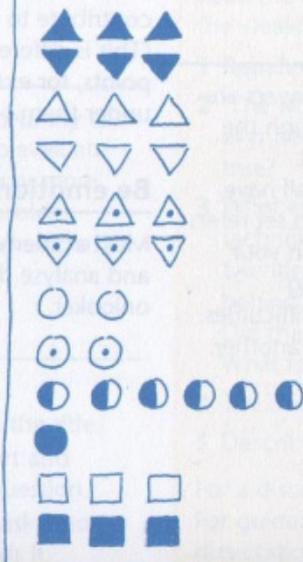
For each box, work out:

- How many circles are there?
- How many triangles?
- How many *types* of triangle?

Box A



Box B



Comment

You probably found it quicker and easier to find the answers for Box B. If so, why was this the case?

Why group information?

Grouping ideas and points has several advantages.

- You will be able to find things more easily.
- You will find it easier to draw up your writing plan and follow it.
- Your thinking will be clearer.
- Your readers will be able to follow your argument more easily.
- You will get in a mess if you don't.

See pages 127 and 183.

STRATEGIES TO GET INFORMATION INTO LONG TERM MEMORY

REHEARSAL – Re-reading your notes is a very basic way to improve recall, but be very careful, because if this is the only method that is used you will struggle to retain the information. This is really a starting point.

PLAYBACK – You could record yourself reading through key notes, so that you can listen to them at various times throughout the day.

UNDERSTAND YOUR NOTES – Information that you understand tends to be recalled easily – this is known as semantic processing. Write key definitions next to words and summarise key processes/theories etc.

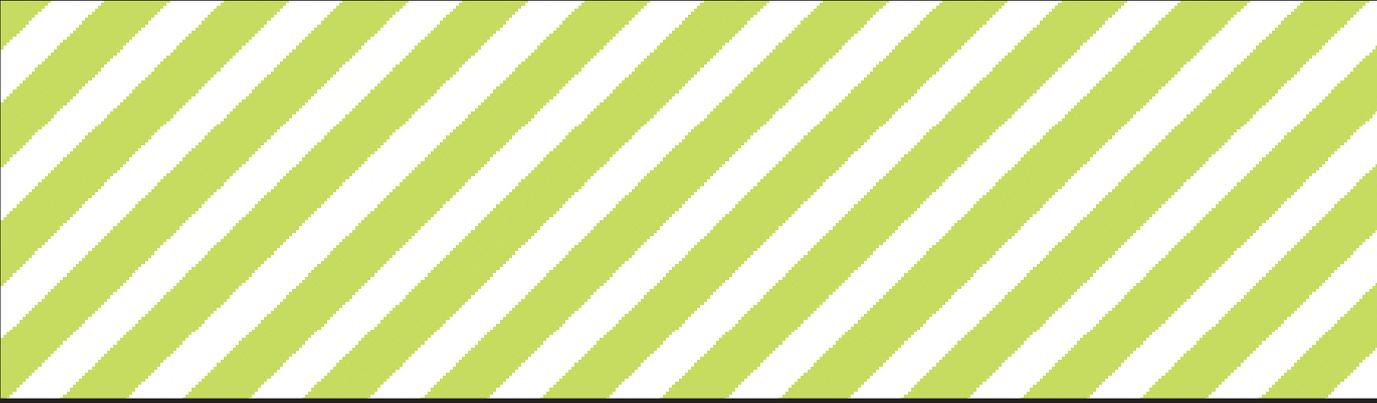
CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING - Ask your teachers if you are unsure about certain areas. This will keep you engaged in lessons, help your concentration and therefore make your brain more susceptible to understanding and remembering.

USE DIAGRAMS – Visually represented information is a powerful tool. If you can draw a diagram to summarise a point, process, theory, then you clearly understand the information. Mind maps are one of the best ways. See student study skills booklet for further information about these. Even the use of tables to show advantages vs disadvantages etc. can be very useful

REDUCE YOUR NOTES – It is difficult to revise from large volumes of writing, therefore convert lots of paragraphs into succinct points and key facts. The process of doing this is part of getting the information into your long term memory – to summarise your notes shows that you have an understanding and in turn this will help recall at a later date.

HIGHLIGHT KEY POINTS – Making key parts of your notes stand out immediately draws your attention to them. This will also help you link key information together and associate certain words with other key phrases and points that will gain you most marks in exam questions.

ORGANISE YOUR NOTES – Keeping notes in order aids understanding. It is hard to revise atopic if it is incomplete. You may wish to bring notes from the previous lesson to the next lesson so you can use the same piece of paper to continue. If you miss a lesson – catch up with the notes. Make sure you put all notes into sections (relating to the syllabus). Then use lots of subheadings and dividers. Date your work!



What other methods of learning information do you use that have not been listed?

Choose **THREE** methods of learning information you intend to try using in future.

1.

2.

3.

STRATEGIES FOR RETRIEVING INFORMATION FROM LONG TERM MEMORY

The trick is to develop retrieval cues – triggers that jog your memory for specific pieces of information. You can do this by using some of the following methods:

METHOD OF LOCI – ‘Loci’ means places: Place key points you need to remember in an imaginary room (or place) and then try to remember the layout of the room. E.g To remember a shopping list – a picture of a carrot on a wall peas scattered on the floor, glass of milk on a table. The more obscure the better!

ASSOCIATIONS – Associate facts/ideas etc. with an odd or bizarre image to help trigger the correct recall. Again, make these bizarre.

MNEMONICS – Think of the first letter of a series of key points then make a word from them to help you remember all the points. E.g. SMART for Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time framed for target setting.

ORGANISATION – Sorting notes into categories can help provide retrieval cues – triggers that jog your memory. Mark schemes often reward a range of issues rather than lots of points from a similar point of view so thinking of different categories is useful. Organising notes into categories will help you recall the range of points.

MAKE YOUR OWN FLASH CARDS – Place a key theory/explanation/period in history on one side of the card and on the other write down the key points. Carry the card with you and test yourself.

USE FRIENDS TO TEST YOU – Small revision groups can make revision more varied and less of a lonely exercise.



What other methods of recalling yourself do you use that have not been listed?

Choose **THREE** methods of recalling information you intend to try using in future.

1.

2.

3.

REVISION: HOW TO TEST YOURSELF

The best students test themselves along the way so they know that they can recall the information – this tends to reduce nerves on the day of the exam as the students feels confident they know the information compared to someone that has no evidence that they can recall the information.

To test yourself throughout your revision process consider the following strategies:

LOOK, COVER, WRITE, CHECK

Write out a number of key points from a page, cover the page and then write out the points again – then check whether you have remembered all of the points. Those points you forget, write down and then try the process again. If you cannot recall the information now, you will not be able to in an exam. Keep using this process along the way!

RECALL A DIAGRAM

If you have a chart or diagram, draw a blank version and try to complete it without looking at your notes. Use the method above until you get it right.

ASK YOURSELF SIMPLE EXAM STYLE QUESTIONS

Look up some past paper questions or create your own, using the correct terminology. E.g. Describe and explain... You should also write your own mini mark scheme.

ASK YOURSELF THE TOUGHEST OF QUESTION

Find some challenging past paper questions, using your notes and the mark scheme, write a model answer. Then try and answer the question again without the model. See how you got on and keep trying. This can give you confidence before the big day!

PQRST METHOD

PREVIEW – get an overview (the big picture) by reading the outline at the beginning of the chapter. There may even be a summary section. Get an idea of the main topics.

QUESTION YOURSELF – Make questions from each of the topics/subheadings etc. So for example one section might be 'The Big Bang Theory'. You would turn this into – Describe and explain the Big Bang Theory. So you should have a short list of questions that you want to find the answers to.

READ THE CHAPTER – look for the answers to the questions you have made e.g. search for the explanation of the Big Bang Theory.

SELF-RECITATION – Try to remember the key/main points of each section – either say them out loud or write them down.

TEST YOURSELF – After you have finished the entire chapter – how many of the main ideas can you remember? Can you remember the answers to your questions?

TIMED ANSWERS

You must test yourself under timed conditions! Make it as realistic as possible to the exam.



What other methods of testing yourself do you use that have not been listed?

Choose THREE methods of testing yourself you intend to try using in future.

1.

2.

3.

EXAMS – HOW TO PREPARE?

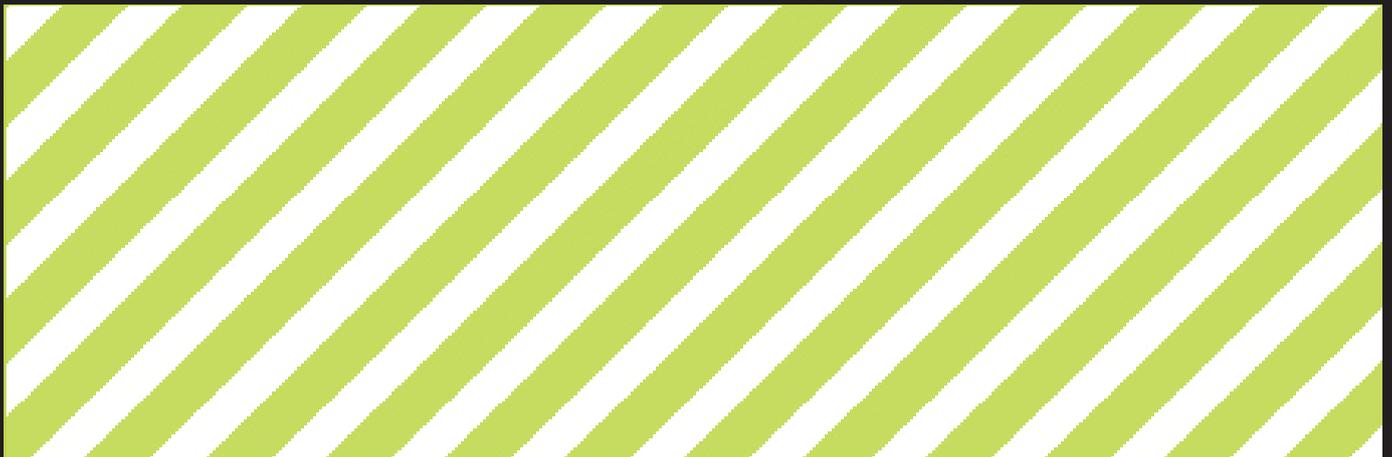
- Complete past paper questions under exam conditions.
- Go over mark schemes and re-do questions you get incorrect.
- Reduce amount of notes – you could fit information for each topic on an index card each.
- Handwrite answers and notes as this will improve your writing speed and relieve pressure during the exam.

Start revision early – every time you re-visit something you will make connections with other topics/knowledge. Revising over time will massively improve your recall, rather than trying to cram it all in at the end.

KEY WORDS USED IN QUESTIONS AND TITLES

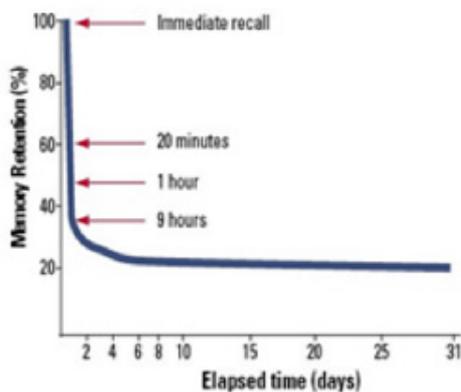
ACCOUNT FOR	Give reasons for; explain why something happens.
ANALYSE	Examine in very close detail; identify important points and chief features.
COMMENT ON	Identify and write about the main issues, giving your reactions based upon what you have read, avoid purely personal opinion.
COMPARE	Show how two or more things are similar. Indicate relevance or consequences of similarities.
CONTRAST	Set two or more items or arguments in opposition so as to draw out differences.
INDICATE WHETHER THE DIFFERENCES ARE SIGNIFICANT.	If appropriate, give reasons why one argument may be preferable.
CRITICALLY EVALUATE	Weigh arguments for and against something, assessing the strength of the evidence on both sides. Use criteria to guide your assessment of which opinions, theories, models or items are preferable.
DEFINE	Give the exact meaning of. Where relevant, show that you understand why the definition may be problematic.
DESCRIBE	Give the main characteristics of features of something, or outline the main events.

DISCUSS	Write about the most important aspects of (probably including criticism); give arguments for and against; consider the implications of.
DISTINGUISH	Bring out the differences between two (possibly confusable) items.
EVALUATE	Assess the worth, importance or usefulness of something, using evidence. There will probably be causes to make cases both for and against.
EXAMINE	Put subject 'under the microscope' looking at it in detail. If appropriate, also 'critically evaluate' it.
EXPLAIN	Make clear why something happens, or why something is the way it is.
ILLUSTRATE	Make something clear and explicit, giving examples or evidence.
INTERPRET	Give the meaning and relevance of data or other material presented.
JUSTIFY	Give evidence which supports an argument or idea; show why decisions or conclusions were made, considering objections that others might make.
NARRATE	Concentrate on saying what happened, telling it as a story.
OUTLINE	Give only the main points, showing the main structure.
RELATE	Show similarities and connections between two or more things.
STATE	Give the main features, written very clearly.
SUMMARISE	Draw out the main points and key features.
TO WHAT EXTENT	Consider how far something is true, or contributes to a final outcome. Consider also ways in which the proposition is not true.



Why is it best to revise regularly from now until May and not cram at the end?

The forgetting curve



In 1885, a German Psychologist called Ebbinghaus conducted an experiment and discovered that students forget about 80% of what they have learnt within 24 hours if it is not gone over.



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What can we learn from Ebbinghaus?

- Review knowledge regularly so it goes from the part of your brain storing short-term memories to the part storing long-term memories
- Ideally you should revisit information at spaced intervals at least 4 times
- Cramming is not effective revision – especially at A-level where there is so much to learn

