

Helping your child revise



As we enter the exam period families will be wondering what the best methods are to help their children revise. Below are some tips which, based on research, are some of the best ways to help students to revise effectively.

Our mantra for revision is to recap and practise.

1. Get them to self-test, a lot.

Research shows that testing in order to recall content is the best way of getting us to think hard. Thinking about and getting the answer is much better than re-reading notes. The more we recall information the better it sticks in our long term memory. This should be in the form of quizzing themselves where possible.

2. Past Papers

Encourage them to redo any past exam questions; however they must be sure of what the correct answers are, so get the mark scheme and help them with this. Past papers can be found on any exam boards' websites.

3. Talk to them

Get your child to tell you what they have learnt or are revising, then quiz them at random times: at breakfast, at the dinner table, or even in the car. Ask them questions that relate to their studies and get them to think hard about the answer. Their books should be beautiful and hence a good source of quizzing information for you.

Get them to explain their answer. Adding reason to an answer helps to remember. And only accept the right answer – no half marks.

4. Read around the subject

Even if the content is not in the exam, understanding the subject area better helps to build links which may be valuable for those higher grade questions. Recommended documentaries, websites, exam board resources and places of interest to visit can also be beneficial.

5. Space it out

Distribute their practice of different subjects or different areas of a subject. Research shows that spacing out practice aids memory. Cramming will help for a short period and may be useful the night before an exam but this is not the most effective for long-term memory. A revision time table can help with this.

6. Learn keywords and definitions by heart

Learning the correct definitions in some subjects will help gain a few extra marks, so long as they use them correctly. Produce memory cards with the key word and the definition on to test them regularly.

7. Use memory tricks

Mnemonics, such as “Richard of York gave battle in vain” to remember the colours of the rainbow, can be a good trick to remember sequences and lists of information. Get them to invent their own. Making them funny or rude can be a great hook for memory! They can be a good way to helping to store larger chunks of information. Write them on posters and stick them up around their room or the house.

8. Go easy on the highlighters

Rereading and highlighting key points is not the best way to revise. If they are unsure on a subject this may help to learn a topic, but always get them to check with a teacher that they have understood properly what they have read.

9. Sleeping, eating and hydration

Exercise can be beneficial for the mind and body and students should not ignore this. Exercise and revision can lead to tiredness and learning is hard work, so the brain and body need plenty of fuel.

10. Build in breaks

Even splitting up a study day in to small study and rest periods can be beneficial. Remove any distractions to rest such as computers and other media sources, especially mobile phones. These can be a reward for studying hard.

It is useful to have a positive learning environment - a dedicated space that is clear and equipped for revising so there is no procrastinating.

11. Start now

The mock exams are a good indicator of where they are but with a balanced programme of study they can gain those few extra grades between now and the summer.

12. Subject specific is best

The nature of revision varies from subject to subject. The subject content is the most important thing for them to learn. Their job is to remember what we taught them in class. The whole purpose of revision should be to help with that.

Good luck!

REVISION TIPS

If you're one of a thousand teenagers revising for GCSEs, AS and A-levels, here are ten revision tips to help you get prepared:

GO PUBLIC

Make a detailed revision timetable and post it up somewhere so that everyone can see it. Letting other people know about your plans lightens the load and then it's not just down to you to motivate yourself.

Question yourself

Awaken facts through the power of questions. So when you're making notes, don't just write down 'The Battle of Hastings was fought in 1066'; instead, put 'When was the Battle of Hastings?' in one column, and write '1066' in an opposite column. Cover up the answer and each time you get it right give yourself a pat on the back.

SWITCH OFF

Unplug your internet connection as it's too tempting to surf the web and turn off your mobile phone (one distraction too many).

RISE EARLY

Facts are more digestible first thing in the morning. Start at 9am and you can get the bulk of your revision done early.

QUALITY TIME

Ask friends over for a revision session. With things like dates and vocabulary, it's always better if someone else is testing you, rather than you testing yourself.

Clear and legible handwriting

Writing clear, legible notes is a vital tool in the revision process. Use different colours to highlight sub headings, key dates, names etc.

Add variety

You may find it helpful to change from one subject to another at 'break' time, for example doing one or two sessions of maths and then changing to Geography, or alternating a favourite subject with a more difficult one. It helps to build in some variety.

Believe in bananas

Eat sensibly as your brain cells need energy to function well. Bananas are rich in potassium and will raise your energy levels. Make sure you also drink plenty of water to avoid becoming dehydrated. Dehydration makes you tired and reduces concentration.

LOOK AHEAD

IT IS EASY TO FALL IN TO THE TRAP OF WONDERING HOW WELL YOU PERFORMED AND TO DISCUSS THIS WITH YOUR FELLOW STUDENTS. YOUR TIME WOULD BE BETTER SPENT LOOKING AHEAD TO YOUR NEXT EXAMINATION.

Relax

The most important thing to remember is not to panic. The exams are going to happen so you might as well give yourself the best chance of doing well by starting to revise early and keeping calm.

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