

EXAMINATION REVISION

Ten Useful Tips

Revision Top Tip 1 - Create a Question and Answer sheet

If you only use one tip, make it this one!

Take an ordinary sheet of A4 paper. Fold it in half lengthways. Now look at the notes you are trying to learn. Turn the notes into questions. Write these questions on the left hand side of the paper.

'When was the French Revolution?'

'What happens when magnesium is added to sulphuric acid?'

and so on.

Then, on the right hand side, jot down the answers to these questions.

Hey presto! You've made your own, personal revision aid.

By turning facts into questions, you are already getting your brain to work. This is active learning. It's much more effective than the passive approach of simply reading through your notes, or copying them out neatly.

Once you've made a sheet, test yourself on the questions you've written down. You'll find that the information sinks in very quickly, and you'll feel reassured that you're really learning.

Now make some more pages in the same way. Organise the pages into sections, and staple them together in the top left-hand corner, so that you can turn them over. Make sure you've always got some revision with you. Keep testing yourself, or get someone else to test

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you. The facts will soon be at your fingertips.

Revision Top Tip 2 - Maintain your motivation

Face up to it - exams are stressful, and it's easy to feel depressed in advance. But success in your exams will give you the future you have chosen for yourself.

Obviously if you don't get the results you want, then life will still go on. It may even be that one day you'll look back and say, 'Well, life would have been very different if I'd actually passed my exams.'

But that's for the future, not for now. Can you imagine an athlete preparing for an important event by saying, 'Well, it's not really that important how I do'? Of course not. They'd go out on to the field or track determined to do their best.

So you do the same. You've put a lot of effort into your work already. It's a shame to waste it. Concentrate on the future you can make for yourself if you do well. Go on, get stuck in!

Revision Top Tip 3 - Make a Mind Map

Break away from the written word and use the visual creative side of your brain to help you remember relationships. It's really easy.

- Get a big piece of paper and some coloured pens or pencils.
- Now write the topic that you are mind-mapping in capital letters in the centre of the paper. Draw a ring around it.
- Select a colour for one of the areas that the topic breaks down into. Draw a large branch in that colour out from the central idea and label it in capitals. Think up a cartoon or symbol that represents that idea to you. Don't worry about being artistic - the more individual the picture, the better you will remember it!

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- Now break down the major branch into smaller ones, sticking with the same main colour, but coming up with new cartoons wherever possible, continue until you feel that you have done justice to your subject.

This is much harder to put into words than to do. Practise for a while, and you will find that you can easily produce picture maps of the subjects you have to learn. Because they use colours and your original art work, your mind will recall them when a page of print has been forgotten

Revision Top Tip 4 - Go for a walk

When your brain is working, your body needs to be working too. It's partly the old chemical link between our minds and our bodies. When we're stressed, our body assumes that it is in danger - it either needs to fight a threat or to run away from it. So once in a while, get your body moving. It will be happier and you'll feel better.

But have some work with you. You can think through problems and jot down ideas on a spiral bound note pad. And if there's something that you're having real trouble learning, then doing it in an unusual setting can make it easier.

'What are the seven characteristics of all living things? I remember! I learnt them by the light of a torch in the bus shelter that night I walked the dog by the new estate and it was raining!'

You'll find that things you learn in this way will really stick with you, and you'll be much less depressed for a bit of exercise.

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Revision Top Tip 5 - Involve other people!

Human beings need each other. We are sociable animals, and work best as part of a team. On our own, we feel lonely and miserable.

And yet, how many of us prepare for an exam by trudging up to our bedroom to work in isolation? Then we wonder why it's hard to concentrate.

Involve other people and your revision will become much easier. Get parents or brothers and sisters to ask you questions about your work, perhaps using the personal revision aids you've made earlier. Work with your friends to think up the sort of questions you might be asked in the exam. Sit together and write essays in the time you'll have in the exam. Then mark each others essays and compare notes. If you have a girlfriend or a boyfriend, get them involved too. Make them work for your company!

Using other people isn't just a soft option, a substitute for real work. Other people will keep you working when left to yourself you'd pack it in because you were bored!

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Revision Top Tip 6 - Analyse your material

When you've had enough straightforward revision, add a bit of variety. Make an analysis of what you have to study.

Try organising it under three headings. These are

Facts, Concepts and Applications.

So ask yourself

- **Facts** - What do I need to know?
- **Concepts** - What do I need to understand?
- **Applications** - What must I be able to do with these facts and principles to show that I understand them?

Look at your material in this way – facts, concepts and applications- and it can lift your eyes from the page and give you a clearer idea of the way ahead.

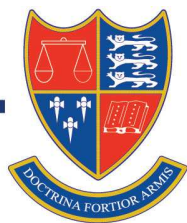
Revision Top Tip 7 - Reduce your stress levels

Are there times when you find it hard to concentrate because you feel anxious and nervous?

Try this quick and easy stress buster.

Sit up straight. Make sure your back is at right angles to your thighs. Put your feet flat on the ground. Take a deep breath. Push your shoulders down as far as they will go. Put your hands in your lap, and close your eyes.

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Now breathe in while counting four. Hold it while counting four. Breathe out while counting four. And hold it again while counting four.

It's easy - try it now!

- In: 2 – 3 – 4
- Hold it: 2 – 3 – 4
- Out: 2 – 3 – 4
- Hold it: 2 – 3 – 4

Do this cycle five times while thinking about something warm and relaxing.

With a bit of practice, you'll even be able to beat sudden panics in the exam itself!

Revision Top Tip 8 - Make a cassette / mp3 recording

Have you ever heard one of those foreign language courses? You play the cassette. A voice then asks you a question in the foreign language. After allowing the time for you to reply, it provides the answer for you.

It's a very effective technique, and one that you can use to provide variety and fun to your revision. Turn your notes into questions and answers. Now get ready to record them on to a cassette or on to your mp3 player.

- Ask the question, such as: 'What is the chemical formula for sulphuric acid?'
- Say the answer in your head to allow time for your reply: (whisper) 'H₂SO₄'.
- Now provide the answer (loudly) 'H₂SO₄'.
- And on to the next question.

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You'll soon have a flexible revision aid that you can slip into a personal stereo and use on the bus or while out walking. Swap them with your friends - you'll be amazed how easily you learn!

Revision Top Tip 9 - Do something now

Planning a revision timetable is very important, so that you don't waste time unnecessarily. However, one of the problems with a revision timetable is that its easy to say to yourself, 'Til take it easy now, I'm revising for four hours on Sunday morning.'

But half an hour now can be better than that four hour stretch. Go for it! Brainstorm an answer to a question. Dream up a question and think how you'd answer it. Describe the person standing next to you in the bus queue in French.

Then record the revision you have done in short bursts. You'll be surprised how it adds up!

Revision Top Tip 10 - Make it fun!

You work best when you're enjoying yourself - so find ways to make your revision enjoyable. Ask yourself questions. Work with friends. Use cartoons and pictures to help you get to grips with your work. Make a Mind Map. Make a cassette. Always have some revision with you. Practise using your foreign language skills while you're out in the real world.

Be creative, and revision will not only be more fun - it will be much more effective!

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