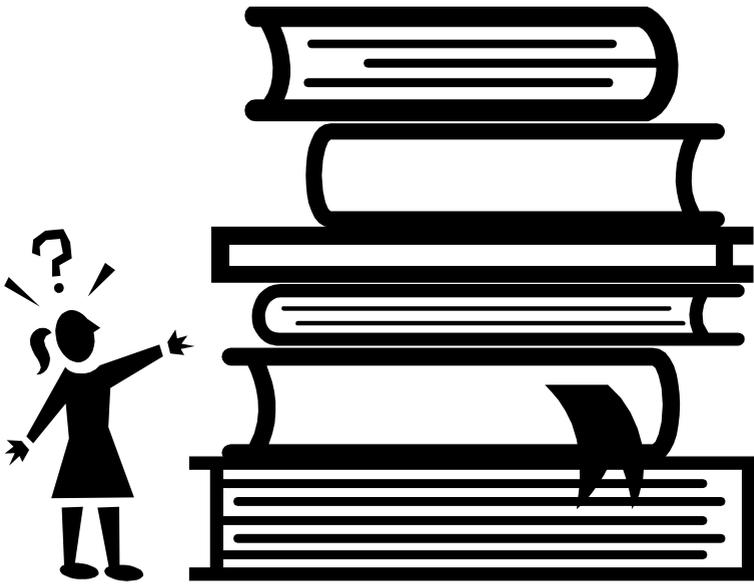


ReViSiON



A guide For the beWILdered

A PERTH GRAMMAR SCHOOL PRODUCTION

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Introduction

Revision? Study?

What exactly do we mean by these terms? Does study just mean opening a book and reading? Or does it involve something more? And does it actually make a difference to your final exam results?

I'm afraid it does.

Perhaps you may know someone who has the same ability as you in class but who keeps turning up after exams with better grades than you. The difference may be that they were willing to put themselves through the revision process.

It was hard, maybe boring, time consuming and meant they missed out on some more enjoyable activities but despite being no more intelligent than you they have ended up better off.

Some pupils instinctively know how to study and get the best out of themselves and the resources they have for revision. For the rest of us though, the concepts of revision and study can be difficult to grasp – where do I begin? What activities help? How does everyone else do it?

This guide hopes to provide the answer to such questions, for both pupils and parents alike. It has a wealth of handy tips and ideas that you can use to make revision and study work for you. Revision involves **DOING SOMETHING** with the information we are trying to learn and all.

You don't necessarily have to use or follow all the advice given here – just use those tips which work for you – but remember these are the study and revision skills that thousands of pupils use every year to improve their chances and perform better in their exams. So why not give some of them a go.



General tips

Here are some tips which are pretty obvious but are worth thinking about.

- ⊙ Recognise that you will have to give up some things. Mostly time. Time online, time on your console, time away from your friends. But remember this is only for a short time in your life. The benefits of improved results far outweigh the loss of some of your leisure time.
- ⊙ Don't keep revising things you are already very confident about. Whilst it is nice to comfort yourself with knowing something really well it is unlikely that the exam or test is only going to include exactly those things you know.
- ⊙ Don't leave revision to the last minute. We all know someone with the talent to be able to recall information without doing any work but let's face it, most of us are not in that category!
- ⊙ Find the right place to do your studying. If you're lucky that may be at home. For others the best place may be your local library which has fewer distractions, or at a friend's house where you know you'll challenge rather than distract each other.
- ⊙ Make sure you have the tools – the pens, the paper, the highlighters etc – don't waste time stopping every FIVE minutes to look for this or that.
- ⊙ Study leave – it's called that for a reason. At Easter or in official study leave make use of the time you are given. Many pupils set themselves a timetable for each day set up like their school day with breaks and lunch hour. They give themselves the night off if they have completed a school days worth of study.
- ⊙ Reward yourself when you've made progress. Recognise that you are putting in a lot of effort to improve your grades and when you see that you are improving give yourself a pat on the back – a trip to the cinema, an hour on the Xbox etc.
- ⊙ Always have a goal for each session e.g. "By the end of this session I'll have listed the key points for the Computer Applications unit" or "We'll have worked through the first 3 questions of the 2007 past paper"
- ⊙ Stuck? – get help! Your teachers are always at hand to help you out so there is no need to suffer in silence, and don't forget about your friends who may be able to help you out. Or even your parents!

MAKING a PLAN

Planning can feel like an alien concept to many students. Being organised may not be a habit that you have had up till now but it really can make a difference to how well your revision goes.

One of the things that really helps a lot of students is to make a plan for their week or at the very least their weekend. If you genuinely want to do well in your exams then you are going to have to give up time that you would normally spend on your hobbies and interests. Set up a timetable in much the same way you see your school timetable. As you get closer to your exam leave you'll need to plan for which exams come up first so that they receive more attention.

	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Mon	School							Free!	Eat!	Maths	English	TV	Free!
Tue	School							Free!	Eat!	French	Xbox	Tech	Free!
Wed	School							Free!	Eat!	Football		Free!	
Thur	School							Free!	Eat!	Tech	Maths	Art	Free!
Fri	School							Free!	Eat!	Geog	IT	Chem	Free!
Sat	Cycling	Free!	Art	English	Football			Eat!	Physics	TV	DVD	Free!	
Sun	Free!		English	Free!	Physics	Free!	Art	Eat!	Geog	Free!			

Some pupils like to create their plan on computer – try Google Calendar or a spreadsheet program.

During study leave you can be more flexible with your time in much the same way as you are at the weekend.

If you have a part time job that may have an impact on your weekend or your evenings you have to bear this in mind when planning your timetable – is the job more important than the revision which could improve your future? That will be for you and your parents to decide.

How to Use the time

Your learning efficiency drops over time. It's a fact. But by organising that time effectively you can maintain your learning efficiency at the same or near to your peak. Here's how to do it.



Try to keep to timings and build in PLANNED breaks. So for example, revise for 25 minutes, take a ten minute break, go back for another 25 etc. The break helps your learning efficiency.

When you have visited a subject, take 10 minutes the next day to go back over what you did and what you learned. Three or four days later give another 10 minutes to review it. Revisiting will help to keep the knowledge and understanding in your skull!



It is important that as you go through your revision program you stop and ask yourself how you are getting on. Are some techniques working for you and other not? Do you need to look again at your timetable? Don't be a slave to the plan if it is not working for you. Remember, if you are struggling, to seek help from your parents, friends and teachers.

Past Papers

Teachers up and down the land recommend that pupils buy themselves some past papers to prepare them for the format and range of questions that they are likely to meet when they go into the exam hall on the day of their exam. This is sensible advice – you wouldn't sit your driving test without first having plenty of practice in your car would you?



But how to use them? Here is the best advice.

- ☑ Papers can usually be bought from bookstores such as Waterstones or WHSmiths **BUT** the Scottish Qualifications Authority offer many question papers (with answers), usually for the last three years at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/pastpapers>
- ☑ Use the practice papers against the clock, giving yourself the same time as will be available in the real exam.
- ☑ Use the marking scheme to mark your own paper – incorrect answers help you figure out where your knowledge is weak. Make a note of these areas and revise those more closely – it's easy to revise the stuff we already know!
- ☑ Work with a friend or a group of friends and answer questions together. Each of you writes their own answer and then you discuss everyone's solution before checking the marking scheme. Stay focused here – it is easy to just chat and gossip which won't help. If that is all your friends want to do then they are the wrong people to study with.
- ☑ You can complete the same paper several times. When you do, if you have been noting your weak areas from last time and have been revising these, you'll notice your mark gets better.
- ☑ Don't forget to look and see how many marks are given for each question. The more marks available, the more points your examiners want you to make.
- ☑ Questions that begin with the words "Describe" or "Explain" mean that the examiner wants more than just one word answers!

MAKING NOTES

Gather all your material for a topic. You need to convert notes that you have (either in your jotter or textbook) into brief, clear notes.

Begin by trying to condense the information into key facts. Some pupils use a highlighter to highlight the key words or phrases that are important to remember. You're trying to make shorter versions of your main notes. These will be easier to remember and for many pupils, the process of writing and thinking about what they are writing helps them with their understanding.

Shorter notes are more manageable and can be used in connection with other techniques.

e.g. Using your shorter notes . . .

- Create a mindmap of that topic
- Highlight key words in the notes and then create a bullet point list
- Read the notes out loud and record them - play them back on your mp3 player or phone



When you are using a class textbook or revision guide try to rewrite some of the material using your own words and in your own way – after all, when you are in the exam you'll be writing answers using your own words because there won't be a textbook to copy from! So get into this habit early

It can be a satisfying feeling knowing that you have condensed 5 or 6 pages of information into a single page or less - a single page is much more manageable.

FLASH CARDS.

Many students use flashcards when they have a lot of facts to remember that they want to be able to recall quickly in an exam situation. Flash cards are really simple. You can pick up blank **Record Cards** up at most stationary stores and supermarkets – WH Smith, Tesco, Asda, Danscot. The cards are blank on each side. Simply write a statement or question on one side of the card with the answer or fact on the other side.



Create a pile of these cards for a subject and use them to test yourself

1. Begin by going through the cards several times, reading the question and the answer on the opposite side.
2. Now take each card and read the question on the first side.
3. Try to answer the question in your head.
4. Check the answer on the other side – were you correct?
5. If you were right, put the card on your desk – we'll call this the correct pile.
6. If you were incorrect, put the card into a different pile – the incorrect pile.
7. Once you have gone through all the cards you'll have a correct pile and an incorrect pile:
8. Re-read the pile of incorrect cards both front and back.
9. Take a break
10. Go back to step 2 and keep repeating the process until you have no cards in the incorrect pile

This works wonders for many students. Going through this process several times you will find you may get to a stage where you get every card correct.

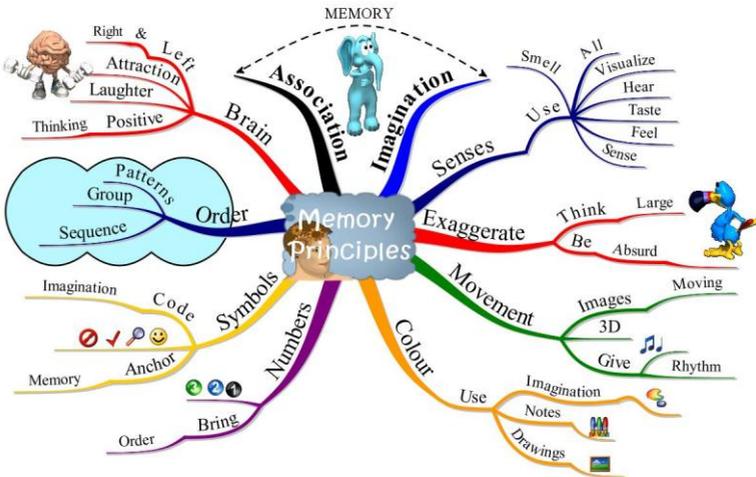
Many students use the cards to write important bullet points which summarise a topic or your revision notes. Looking at them often helps to keep the important concepts and ideas fresh in your mind. An even better use of flash cards is working with your friends to test teach other. They may have created their own set too. Using flash cards to test with your friends is a pretty powerful study tool.

MIND MAPS

A mind map is a graphical way of making notes by organising topics using keywords, abbreviations, lines, drawings, symbols, colours and numbers. Because it is a much more visual way of linking and organising how a topic is structured many pupils prefer it to re-writing notes.

You may want to begin by using your notes or textbook to select a topic at the centre. From there you use branches and lines to organise the information for that topic, giving each important section its own branch. From there you can keep adding branches off the main branches to further expand and categorize the knowledge.

This is active learning – being engaged in creating work which will help you understand and remember information. You can be as creative and colourful as you want.



IMPROVING YOUR VOCABULARY

Your standard of English and your understanding of what words mean could make all the difference in many exams. For example if the Modern Studies exam asked you to

“Describe how key staff infiltrated management negotiations”

and you do not know the meaning of “infiltrated” or “negotiations” then , chances are, answering that question is going to be difficult.



If you are more confident about your vocabulary you'll feel more confident about answering questions or understanding the text you have to read in an exam. The best way of improving our vocabulary is to read more. **AAAAARGHHHHH!** Yes, sorry. More reading. It gets worse.

Reading a tabloid newspaper is unlikely to contain a range of vocabulary that will improve yours. All the words will be familiar and will not challenge you. You need to read a newspaper or book that will.

We advise you to ask your parents to buy you a quality newspaper – The Times, Guardian, etc – either every other day or at the very least the Saturday or Sunday editions.

Read the paper or a decent book with a Thesaurus. As you read and come across an unfamiliar word, look that word up in the Thesaurus and find a word that you DO understand. Re-read the sentence with that new word in your head. Hopefully the sentence will make more sense.

What will happen is that you will begin to learn new words and what they mean. You will also be exposed to better writing and how good arguments are made. You benefit in many ways. The reports and stories you read may not always be super interesting but it is the process that is important for you – trying to improve your capabilities with English in order to benefit your potential in ALL of your subjects.

There is an online Thesaurus at www.thesaurus.com

WHAT KIND OF LEARNER ARE YOU

Tips for Visual Learners – you're not the greatest fan of reading and prefer diagrams, sketches, charts and colourful information.

- Rewrite your notes as mind-maps
- Use colour to highlight important things
- Draw diagrams and sketches to help you remember points.



Tips for Auditory Learners – you always get the best out of lessons that involve discussion, listening and talking.

- Read your notes aloud
- Record yourself reading key points of your notes aloud, then listen to the recording afterwards
- Revise with other students if you can
- Teach what you know to an imaginary or real audience



Tips for learners who are readers and writers – you get a lot of understanding by reading textbooks, using websites and writing notes.

- Copy out your notes
- Read your notes silently
- Rewrite the key points using different words
- Write down key points from memory



Of course none of us are just one kind of learner – try using all of the techniques listed here and in the rest of the booklet.

Other PUPIL'S ideas

We've collected a few other ideas from pupils in the school. Some of these sound a bit daft but they seemed to work for the person involved so we thought we'd add them.



- * I open up the revision book, look at it for 2 minutes and then close it. I then jot down everything I can remember.
- * My four friends and I make a presentation each and then we kind of use the PowerPoint to teach each other a topic.
- * I tape myself reading out some notes and play it on my Ipod.
- * I scour the internet for other people's revision!
- * I put post-it notes around the house in different places and go for a walk round the house reading them
- * I used the BBC Bitesize Scotland website for Standard Grade and Higher, and Scholar for Highers as well
- * My teacher has stuck stuff on the school website for my subject
- * I try to make everything I learn mean something to me. So for Modern Studies I try to imagine myself as an elderly person or as a politician or whatever. In Chemistry I imagine myself as a particular chemical and what happens to me in a reaction. I know, it sounds ridiculous!!
- * I try to create pictures in my mind as I'm reading. So I'm visualising and almost making a movie in my head of what I'm learning.
- * I talk to myself when I'm out running
- * I just type in Standard Grade History into Google and see what comes up.
- * My friends and I meet for two hours every day to go over a paper. We've done the past paper the night before and then we discuss the answers.

You'll perhaps already have your own ideas which work for you. Talk to your friends about how they study.

SITTING AN EXAM

- ☑ The night before the exam go to bed at a reasonable hour. Cramming into the wee small hours is unlikely to get you extra marks. Feeling well rested as you sit the exam usually will.
- ☑ Relax – remember you have done everything in your power to prepare for the exam and today will be the day you will be able to demonstrate your knowledge and hard work.
- ☑ Nervousness is absolutely normal – the extra adrenaline helps you concentrate.
- ☑ Make sure you have everything you need. Bring along a pen you like writing with.
- ☑ Don't panic or give yourself a hard time. Think positively – even if you are finding the exam difficult remind yourself that others are probably feeling the same way.
- ☑ At the beginning of the exam you could take the opportunity to write down any formula, facts or quotes you may need.
- ☑ If a question is causing you difficulty you can move on and come back to it later.
- ☑ Keep an eye on the clock – if you have practiced past papers at home you'll be able to manage your time better.
- ☑ A few minutes from the end of the exam take a quick review through the paper and make any changes – many pupils have picked up a mark or two just by doing this.
- ☑ At the end of the exam give yourself a pat on the back – you've done it!



