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# How to Feel Fully Prepared Come Exam Day

Effective **Revision Techniques**

Psychology of the Brain and How it **Retains Information**

**Time** Management

**Home Set Up** for Exam Prep

Tips for Exams **Motivation**

Managing **Anxiety**

**Stress** Management

# Revision Techniques

## Understand the best way you work

The first thing to realise is that not every revision technique works for every person. So, just because your best friend is using mind maps with great success it doesn't mean you should use this to revise for your exams. Everyone is different in the way they learn and the way their brains retain information. Before you start revising take some time to reflect on how you learn best. To help you, we suggest you use some of these prompts to help you. 😊



## Use Your Learning Style – There Are 4 General Learning Styles:

### Visual:

If you are the type of person that prefers images, diagrams and maps, then this may be your learning style. Here are the ways you could revise using the visual technique:

- Rewrite your notes as mind maps
- Watch short videos and tutorials on the subject
- Use colour to highlight important facts
- Draw diagrams and sketches to help you remember your points



### Auditory:

If you're the type of person that retains information through listening or speaking, then your learning style is auditory. Here are the ways you could revise using the auditory technique:

- Use repetition technique with your revision - a method where the subject is asked to remember a certain fact with the time intervals increasing each time the fact is presented or said.
- Try singing the key points and associate them with a tune
- Read your notes aloud
- Record your voice reading key points aloud to listen back to



## Revision Techniques

### Reader and Writer:

If you are the type of person who benefits from using words and essays to revise, then here are some tips we have for you to revise effectively using this reader and writer technique:

- Doing practice tests- the more you do, the more you become used to the style of exams and answering effectively.
- Try to write key points from memory, and test yourself
- Flashcards for each topic
- Rewrite key points using different phrases



### Active:



If you are the type of person who likes to stay active and moving around, then practical demonstrations or experiments work the best for you. Here are some techniques we have for you:

- Mentally test yourself while you are exercising to see what you can remember
- Set up practical task to test your learning
- Move around the room, perhaps walking or carry out an activity to help test your knowledge
- Explain, discuss and test yourself in a group or teach your sibling/family about your knowledge



**Some people may use a range of techniques to help with revision, so it doesn't mean that you must stick to just one technique.** Whatever works best for you is the one you should go for. Good luck to everyone taking their exams, we hope our revision and exam tips help you to feel as prepared and confident as possible. 😊

# Psychology and How the Brain Retains Information

We try many revision techniques to learn, understand and remember topics and concepts we learnt to ace our exams to show our progress and achieve the grades we need. However, how does the brain store and retain this information so we can remember it later? How can we remember how to solve a maths problem, or the way verbs are conjugated in Spanish or the equation for photosynthesis? With this very brief explanation, I hope you get a clue of what goes down in our brains to help inform your decisions on ways to optimise your revision and study.

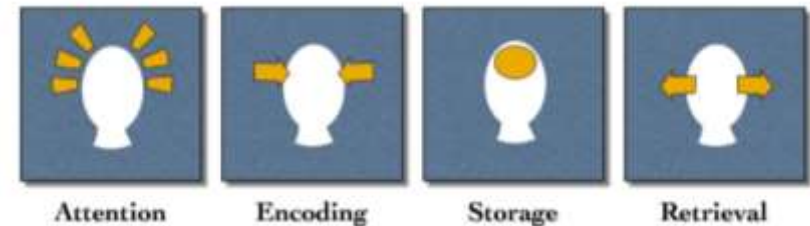
The stages of memory can be broken down into three stages: encoding, storage, and retrieval:

**Encoding** is the process of receiving, processing, and combining information. Encoding allows information from the outside world to reach our senses in the forms of chemical and physical stimuli. In this first stage, we must change the information we receive to put the memory into the encoding process.

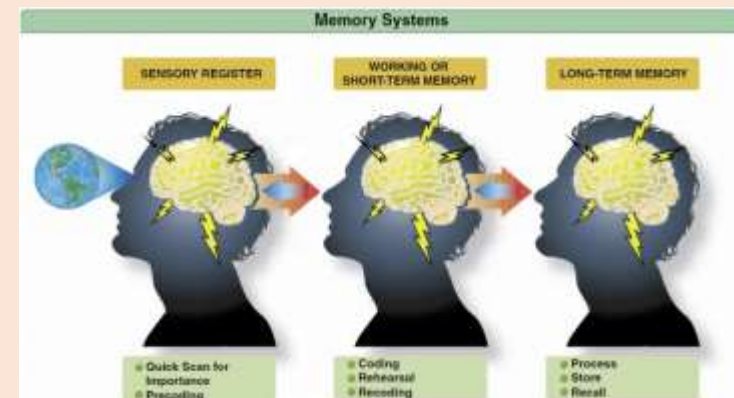
**Storage** is the creation of a permanent record of the encoded information. Storage is the second memory stage or process in which we keep information over time.

**Retrieval** (or recall) is the calling back of stored information in response to some cue for use in a process or activity. The third process is the retrieval of information that we have stored. We must find it and return it to our consciousness so that we can actively remember it.

## How People Learn: Four cognitive processes every teacher should know



The information we keep passes through several types of memory before it gets stored in our brains for long intervals, including sensory memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory.



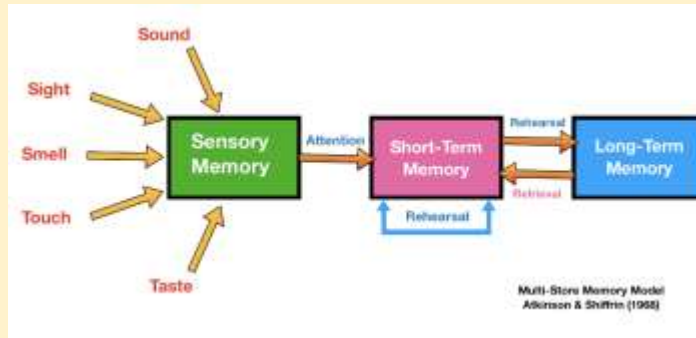


# Psychology and How the Brain Retains Information

**Sensory memory** allows people to keep impressions of sensory information after the original stimulus has ceased.

Sensory memory is not involved in higher cognitive functions

like short and long-term memory because it is not controlled consciously. The role of sensory memory is to supply a detailed image of our sensory experiences, for which relevant pieces of information are extracted by short-term memory and processed.



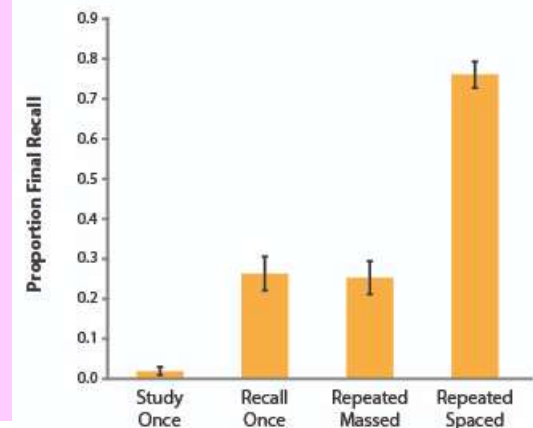
**Short-term memory** helps keep information in our brains for short periods. It holds only a few items and only lasts for about 20 seconds. However, information can be moved from short-term memory to long-term memory through various methods you can practice, for example, repetition.

**Long-term memories** are all the memories we hold for timespans longer than a few seconds. Long-term memory encompasses everything from what we learned in first grade to our old addresses to what we wore to work yesterday. It has an incredibly vast storage ability, and some memories can last from when they were created till death.

**With all of this, let's create a scenario and see how the brain keeps information.**

You learn a new concept in a lesson today. Here encoding occurs: your brain receives the information from either the whiteboard or your teacher's voice. The sensory memory picks up this information for it then to be processed and kept in the short-term memory. During the lesson, you do a few questions on that concept. You may have briefly forgotten the concept as it was only stored in your short-term memory, requiring you to look at your notes or at the board to jog your memory. By processing the information again, more of an impression gets left on your brain. This causes it to be kept for a bit longer. The information now enters your long-term memory. If you keep on revisiting this concept often, it will be remembered more. Therefore, when it comes to the exam, your brain remembers that concept well enough to enable you to answer the questions. This is how, in brief terms, your brain keeps information. Nonetheless, the way you revise any concept you learn

depends on what works best for you. Have a look at some of the revision techniques and according to what type of learner you are, there will be some useful tips and ways to enhance your revision.



## Time Management

Sometimes balancing revision with things like homework and your own free time/activities can be a struggle and overwhelming. Here are some tips on how to manage your time effectively so you feel prepared for your exams as well as having time for your own hobbies and interests.



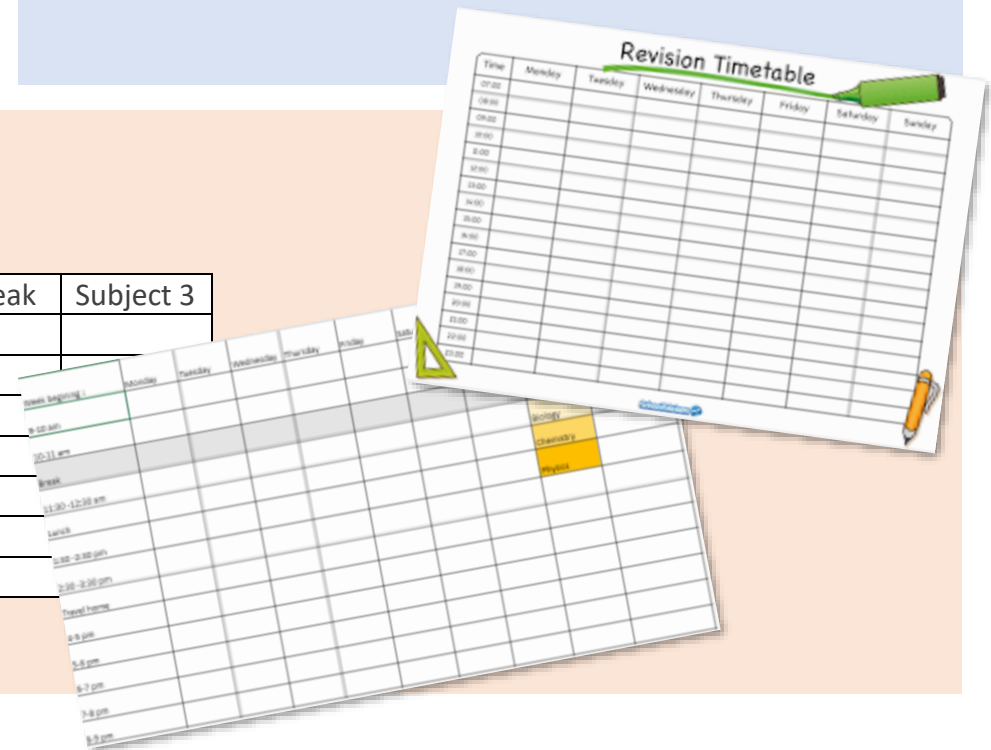
**Create a revision timetable:** if you feel you're having to deal with multiple subjects at once (especially with end of year exams) you may find it helpful to create a revision timetable. This way you will be able to organize your subjects into time slots, so it seems less chaotic and factor in time for hobbies/interests. If you like a digital plan this website offers a free planning tool.

<https://getrevising.co.uk/planner>

**Here is a link to an Excel file** you can use to create one to print. Before study leave begins you can blank out lesson times and travel to and from school plus put in any after school activities you have. Once on study leave you can use it to structure your day and help you maintain a healthy balance of physical and mental activity. [Click here to download the Excel file](#)

### Revision timetable template:

	Homework	Break	Subject 1	Break	Subject 2	Break	Subject 3
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							



## Time Management

**Taking regular breaks:** it's important to step away from your work at regular intervals to reset your concentration and keep you going for longer. It may be helpful to do this between different subjects eg. You may revise for geography for half an hour then take a ten-minute break before you move onto your next subject.



**Prioritizing work:** in terms of homework and revision it may be hard to be able to complete both. Therefore, prioritize the one which is due at an earlier date, eg. If your test is two days away, but the homework is due in two weeks it may be a good idea to revise first and then complete the homework if you have time. Similarly if you find you need to spend more time revising a particular subject and less on another one focus on the one you may need more help with first.

**Little and often:** it's important to not spend hours and hours on one subject or leave all your revision and homework to the last minute. It's much more effective to spend around half an hour a day on a subject than three hours in one evening.



**Setting a timer:** if you feel you're spending too long or too little time on your work, set a timer (30 minutes) and work for that amount of time. When the timer goes off take a 10 minute break.

**Motivation:** lack of motivation can mean you try and avoid doing work and leave it to the last minute (procrastinate) or get easily distracted. A good way of motivating yourself is through rewards after each study session, whether that's with a scroll through your favorite social media or a small snack. Setting goals and treats for yourself can give you the extra push you need to carry on. This may also apply for the weekends - doing work in the mornings could mean you get to spend the rest of the afternoon off, as you've completed your revision/homework for the day.



**Finishing early:** you may feel the need to stay up later if you're behind on work or want more revision time, but it's important to have time to relax and go to sleep in good time. This may differ for different people but stopping work at least an hour or more before bed will help you relax and make sure you get the necessary amount of sleep needed, so you feel more refreshed and ready for the next day. Some people may find it easier to revise in the morning and take time off in the evening - it differs.



# Home Set Up for Exam Preparation

## Try to find a quiet space

where you will not be disturbed. Let your family know what you are doing and ask them not to disturb you.



## Study Aids:

Have all your study aids to hand e.g. for Chemistry have a periodic table, for math's a calculator, for English your book/anthology etc.



## Lighting:

Make sure to have good lighting, do you need a desk lamp if it's dark or a blind to keep out the sun? If possible, it is said to be best to study in natural light.



## Music or Silence?

Some students find listening to quiet music helpful. Others like complete silence. Either is fine when revising but if practicing past papers use silence as this is what it will be most like in the exam.

## Not Too Hot/Cold:

Try to make sure you are not too hot/cold. E.g. set yourself up with a warm blanket if it's chilly or by an open window in the summer time.



## Quality time:

You need to **remove all distractions** e.g put away your mobile phone/tablet or if needed for your revision **turn off ALL the pop-up notifications** for social media, email etc. Make sure you do not have millions of open tabs on your browser or any messy food/drink that can easily cause a spillage.



## Tips for Exam Motivation

Exams are of course an extremely important, yet stressful time of the school year and motivation can be hard to come by. Motivation is integral when it comes to the revision period before exams, and it can start to deplete the closer you get to that exam day.

Here are some tips of how to keep yourself motivated throughout the stressful months and all the way up until exam day:



### Split up your revision into smaller, more manageable sections

Using revision techniques such as spaced repetition, the pomodoro technique or having a revision timetable allows you to break up your revision into small sections. For example, instead of trying to revise for an entire paper, look at only one topic for an hour. This way you can keep yourself motivated by only focusing on the task at hand.

### Take a time limited approach when you schedule your tasks

When you have allocated yourself time for work, ask yourself 'How much can I achieve in this time?' instead of 'Can I complete all the tasks I want to?'. Setting yourself realistic goals to complete stops you from feeling overwhelmed.



### Once your time is up, stop working

Once your allocated time you have set yourself is finished, be strict with yourself and stop working. This can be beneficial as we can often find ourselves getting carried away and end up just wanting to complete a task. But being strict with yourself stops you from wasting your much-needed break time. On the flip side, having only a short amount of time to complete a task can make you feel much motivated and able to complete it.



### Take frequent breaks

Taking breaks is so essential for motivation and productivity. If for example, one day you plan to do 3 hours of work, but you only do 20 minutes and cannot do anymore, take the day off to rest and recharge.



Taking  
A  
Break

# Tips for Exam Motivation

## Understand the best way you work

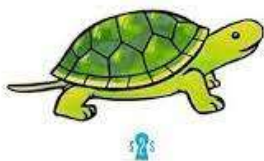


Some people can work for 3 hours straight and not get tired or unmotivated. Others much prefer to do shorter sessions and break up the day. Try to find what works best for you and navigate your timetable around it. You may actually find that having a treat with you while you work can make you more productive, rather than using it as a reward for finishing your work. For example, if you make yourself a nice drink to have while you work, you will enjoy studying much more than if you wait to have it afterwards. However, everyone works differently so if using a reward system benefits you, carry on.

## Do not blame yourself for procrastinating now and then

Procrastinating is completely normal, so do not beat yourself up about it. When

Your speed  
doesn't matter,  
forward is  
forward.



you find yourself procrastinating, notice it and gently make yourself go back into the task sooner rather than later.

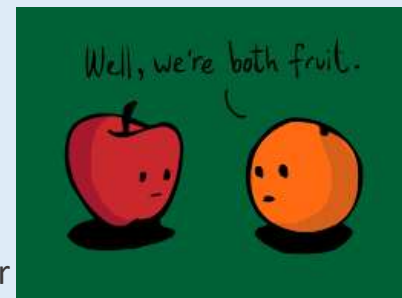
## Remember your outcome

The biggest motivator for a lot of people is to visualise their end goal. Be it a job you want to achieve, a university you want to get into, a grade or set of grades you want, anything. Imagining yourself achieving that goal and the feelings you will get, can really help you to remember why you are revising in the first place.



## Do not compare yourself to others

Comparing your amount of revision to others can cause higher



levels of stress and can sometimes make you feel much more unmotivated. Don't question your abilities and try not to put yourself down by comparing yourself to others. Talking to friends about revision or exams can be comforting as support, but when it becomes comparative or competitive, it is a problem. Remember that for in a lot of cases, someone's supposed 6 hours of 'revision' may not be nearly as productive as your focused 2 hours of work. Revision is different for everyone so try not to compare the time you have spent as it is not always an indication of how well you will do!

# Managing Anxiety

## During the run up to exams:

Remember you are not in this on your own. If you are struggling talk to family, friends or teachers and seek support

### Plan your revision:

- Set out plenty of revision time well in advance of your exams
- Make sure you're revising effectively. Focus on essential materials and be active rather than sitting and reading for hours at a time.
- Ask your teachers for help if you get stuck during your revision.



### Exercise, eat and sleep:

- Exercise can help boost energy levels, clear the mind and relieve stress. It does not matter what it is – walking, cycling, swimming, football and dancing are all effective.
- Activities that involve other people can be particularly helpful
- Eat well – your brain needs energy and fuel to make the most of your revision time.
- Look at your sleep routine – make sure you stop work at least an hour before going to bed and do something to relax your mind and your body e.g. read a book, chat with friends/family, do some yoga/meditation or take a nice hot bath.

### Take proper breaks:

- Studying 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, will make you exhausted – burnt out even – long before the actual exam
- Divide your days into work and rest periods, depending on your learning style 30 min chunks usually works better than sitting for hours at a time.
- Plan to have one day a week completely free from revision.

# Managing Anxiety

## The night before:

### Relaxation:

Learn in advance how to relax e.g. the butterfly technique or .b (from mindfulness). In that way, you will feel confident that, if you start to panic or your mind goes blank, you will be able to regain control. Lots of ideas to try can be found here:

<https://medicine.umich.edu/sites/default/files/content/downloads/Relaxation-Skills-for-Anxiety.pdf>

### Humour:

Try to use humour to help you beat negative thoughts. Read a book or comic, watch an amusing DVD or think of your favourite jokes



### Be Prepared:

- Make sure you're thoroughly prepared for the exam to minimise your worries. Check that you've got the right time and location, pack your pencil case with everything you might need and lay out your clothes for the next day
- Also pack some **light reading** for when you are waiting to get into the exam room – this can help avoid some of those anxiety causing chats and help give a clear signal to people you don't want to talk just now (even if your not actually choosing to read it).



### Avoid working too close to the exam:

However anxious you may feel, try to avoid working too close to the exam like the night before or the morning of the exam. Try to do something relaxing instead. Go for a walk or have a warm bath - A good night's sleep is more valuable than an extra couple of hours of revision.

### Eat:

Eat something even if you feel sick. Bread, crackers and cereals are good for settling your stomach.



# Managing Anxiety

## **Panic during the exam:**

Remember that most people feel tense at this point - it is only natural. However much you have prepared, your task now is to just do your best

## **Make yourself**

**comfortable.** Do you need to go to the toilet before the exam starts? Are you either too hot nor too cold? Adjust your clothing.



**Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.** Repeat this whenever you begin to feel anxious.

**Read through** the instructions and questions slowly and carefully, highlighting key points.

**Plan your answers.** This is important as it helps your writing flow and means you don't end up panicking and going off on tangents.

**Answer the easiest question first** if you feel like this will relax you.

## **During the exam continue to look after yourself.**

Do you need a sip of your drink? Do you need to stop and breath for a minute or two?

**If you start to feel unwell,** have a drink and close your eyes for a few seconds. If it helps, put your head on the desk. Shake your arms a little and move your head from side to side to release the tension. Say something positive and encouraging to yourself. Imagine yourself somewhere else where you feel happy and relaxed. When you feel ready continue with the exam.

**If you need to, let an invigilator know** how you're feeling and ask to step outside for a minute. Fresh air may be just what you need to calm down.



# Stress Management

Stress is a common in most students and can have effects in various ways depending on the individual. Although we cannot control the exams which are often the main source of this stress, it is important to realise that stress is very manageable, with the right methods. Leading up to a period of exams, it is ideal to find little ways of helping yourself, to eliminate the risk of burnout. Here are a couple of ways you can approach this:

**Make good habits:** Here are a list of good habits to get into:



**Sleep:** try to get 8 hours sleep, Sleep is a powerful stress reducer. Following a regular sleep routine calms and restores the body, improves concentration. You are better able to cope with stress when you're well-rested.

**Exercise:** being active, which includes even a short walk, allows you to produce endorphins that will help you feel good, it is one of the most effective ways to de-stress. Go outside and get some fresh air!

**Eat well:** although many people don't consider this as a huge factor, having a good balanced diet can naturally promote stress relief.

## Avoid making bad habits:

Don't set any goals that you know is going to stretch your limit, although it may satisfy you in the planning process, there is a high chance that it will burn you out. For example, giving yourself the task of completing 10 topics a day is not sustainable, and is far from effective. Avoid setting the day up to be a disappointment, as this will add to your stress!



**Get support:** if you are feeling extremely burdened by the exam stress, chat to a good friend, family member or tutors. It helps to get it out of your system and they may well be able to help think about practical strategies to deal with it.

## Give yourself time for

**what you enjoy:** this could be leaving some time at the end of the day to e.g. watch a movie. Anything that allows you to maintain motivation throughout the day, in order for you to be able to relax in the evening. By allowing some time to forget about the source of stress will allow you to relax, and help in the long run leading up to exams.



**Don't panic:** it is crucial to understand that you will need days off, as you can't function optimally every single day. So if you are slightly off schedule with what you have planned, do not panic, tomorrow is another day. Tell yourself that the time you give yourself to unwind, will help you do the same amount of work much faster later on than now.