

MR BATES' **REVISION TIPS**

Dear Year 11,

Your exams may feel like they are a long way off, but if you add up everything you need to do between now and then, from re-reading your copy of 'Of Mice and Men' to reminding yourself how to simplify those tricky algebra equations, and suddenly leaving your revision until Easter doesn't seem like such a good idea. So, I've looked through the top research and compiled the 'best of the best' strategies for successful revision.

The Plan

According to research on memory and our ability to recall information, the best way to learn and retain information for exam success is to **revise early** and in **short bursts**. The last thing you should do is leave it too late and start 'cramming' for the exam. If you cram and learn a load of information for one exam, you may feel great when you test yourself that night: of course you'll know it, you've just read everything! But, in only a few days you will begin to forget it and you will have to relearn it again. Plus, you are unlikely to be able to go over everything you need for the exam the next day and on some days you'll have more than one exam. Use your revision planner to revise topics in 30 minute 'chunks' starting from today. Break down each subject into manageable topics and try not to study one topic for longer than 90 minutes. **Be realistic** about how long a topic will take to revise and how much time you have in the evenings and at weekends. Plan it out, put it up somewhere you will really use it, and stick to it. You'll be amazed at how good it feels to cross topics out and how bad it feels when you put it off and create impossible tasks because the topics have piled up!

Have a Break



Leave 5 minutes between each 30 minute session. This is nothing to do with the power of your brain, but your attention span. If you spend your life glued to your mobile, constantly checking updates on who is trending, and posting updates on facebook, you may find it difficult to concentrate. 'The world is going on around you, and you are missing out!' **Take regular breaks** and make sure you're fully focussed on your revision. **Don't** get your phone out or facebook your friends while on your breaks. Your friends will be revising too. Their 5 minute breaks will not be the same as yours and you know that if you get talking, it will take longer than 5 minutes anyway. Remember, this is about your attention and focus. If you find yourself really enjoying what you are revising and you're still focused, don't force yourself to take a break.

Don't Fool Yourself

Find a quiet place to revise.

You are not learning anything if you have one eye on the TV, your text alerts on vibrate, and you're singing along to your iPod! You may have underlined every other word in pink highlighter or copied it out on to lovely revision cards without reading it, but you are not revising. Find your own quiet space. Talk to your family about wanting a place to revise and put a note on your bedroom door. If that fails, you could use the library or school. You might look really cool in Starbucks with a book, but are you really focused?! I shut myself in our old Caravan on the driveway of our house when I did my GCSEs. Not very glamorous I know, but it was my space.



You need to find yours! Plus, research suggests that our memory improves when the environment we revise in is similar to the place in which we need to recall it. The exam hall will be silent and distraction free, so should your revision space!

Do it Your Way

Our brains have an amazing capacity for learning. In fact, we never stop learning. So why is it that someone is famous for being able to recite Pi from memory to 22,514 digits (Daniel Tammet), when I can only manage to remember 3.14159? Believe it or not, this is nothing to do with our natural ability. The key to successful revision is technique and motivation. We are all different and different people have different techniques that work for them. You will also need a mix of strategies, as you'll be more interested in some topics/subjects, so you will find these easier to revise than the ones you are less interested in. Below are some of the best techniques that have been 'tried and tested'. Reading over your notes or the text book is not a bad start, but it rarely means you'll remember it. But, if you find that you **really do know** what you're reading, then don't waste time with extra techniques on this topic, just make sure you test yourself to make sure you are as confident as you think you are. Other strategies to help you revise are explained below.

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Using **Highlighters** and **Underlining** is good to focus your attention on key terms and one idea at a time. Using **Rhymes**, **Acronyms**, and **Mnemonics** can help you to remember facts and sequences.

Animal Classification

My Best Friend's Really Awesome
ammas
birds
iish
eptiles
mphinians

I use **SPICED** to help students remember the impact of exchange rates: **S**trong, **P**ound, **I**mports, **C**heaper, **E**xports, **D**earer. You may find it useful to remember exam technique: **PP CULO** in History: **P**urpose, **P**rovenance, **C**ontent, **U**seful, **L**imitation, **O**mission. Your teachers will have given you some of these already but if you're struggling to remember certain facts or a sequence, try looking for a pattern like the first letters and see if you can make something to help you remember it.

Making Summary Notes is a very good technique for memorising lots of information. By reading and re-writing information you are more likely to take it in. Some students like to **write out information over and over again**, others like to use **post-it-notes** and **flash cards** and put them up around their room.

Why not stick topics that you're struggling with to the fridge, the back of the bathroom door and other places around the house and revise key content when you do everyday things like getting the milk for your breakfast?



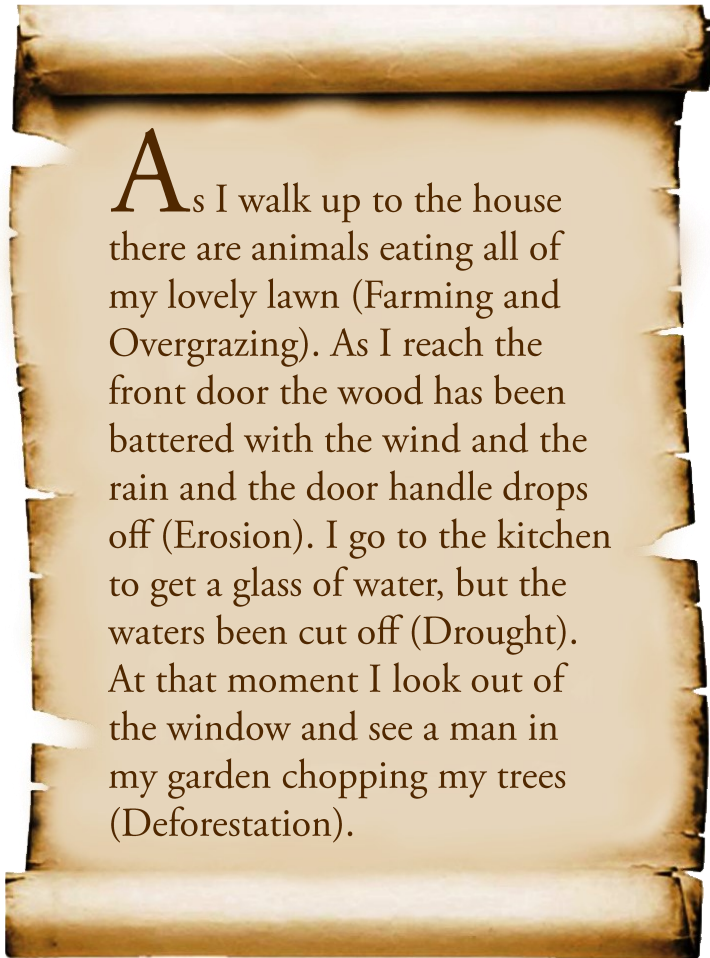
'Mind Map' or 'Brain Dump' using a plain sheet of paper after a revision session. Try and put down everything you know about a topic, making links and connections with different information. This helps consolidate your revision and helps you remember to bring in other points and factors. Once you've done it, check back to see if you missed anything out. You can repeat this if it helps.

Complete **Past Papers** and make **Essay Plans**. Use ones provided by your teachers and make use of the exam board website. There are only so many ways that a question can be asked. Do enough preparation and you will find questions in the summer that look very familiar. Of course, you can't prepare for every question, but it's a real confidence boost in the exam when you see a question you've prepared for. For that topic or crucial piece of information that you just can't seem to make stick in your brain, you need to connect the information to something else that will make you remember it.

If I needed to remember that a certain painting was by **Caravaggio**, I would tell myself that this painting was the view from the window of a **caravan**. Then when I see the painting, I think caravan, so I remember that it's by Caravaggio. You can link things to everyday objects, places, or where you are and what you're doing when you revised it. It's not realistic to do this for everything you need to know, but it does help with those difficult bits.



A **Story** or **Journey** might help you recall a sequence of events or factors. I use coming home to my house to remember the desertification process and how to improve it in Geography:



Like it or not, repeated testing works. It's because you are practising retrieving information from your memory, which you will need to do in the exam. This process helps secure the information in your memory. **Don't** test yourself straight after you've revised a topic. Study something for 30 minutes and then test yourself an hour later, then again a day later, then a week later, and so on. Give a copy of your notes and your revision schedule to someone who will test you. Use your friends and family to help you.

Relax

Make sure you make time to have a life. Yes, your exams are really important and we want you to do your best, but if you do everything above, you will be doing your very best and no one can ask more than that. Don't interrupt your revision and your friends by texting and calling them, but do arrange times to see your friends and take part in other activities. Go to the cinema, exercise and play sport. Your physical and mental wellbeing is just as important as the hours you've spent revising, and it will make sure that you are better prepared to do your best.

Good Luck,
Mr Bates
Assistant Headteacher

