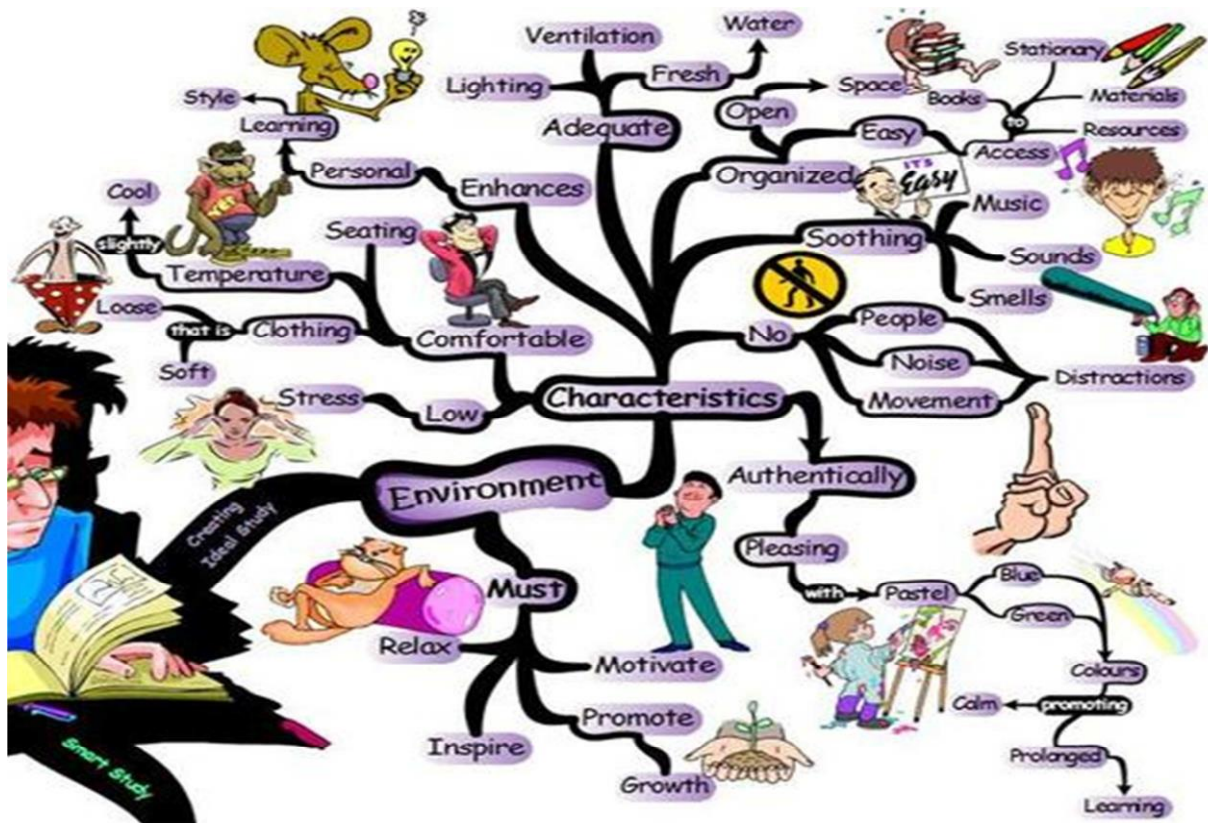


St. Michael's Enniskillen

Learn and Improve - Get Involved - Think of the Consequences

Study Skills



Name:



Real and proven strategies to improve your attainment



➔ What do examiners want me to do?

Learning styles for studying and revision

Unfortunately we don't all have photographic memories so we need to use a variety of techniques to learn. Different people learn in different ways and it's important to work out what type of learner you are. In this section you can learn about different learning methods which might suit you.



Learning Styles

The three most common styles of learning are :

- Visual learning
- Auditory learning
- Learning by reading and writing

1. Visual learning:

If you find it easy to remember visual things like charts and diagrams, you're probably a visual learner. Useful tips for visual learners include :

- Writing down key concepts on little pieces of paper.
- Mind maps, using colour to highlight important things.
- Colour-code notes.
- Drawing diagrams and sketches to help you to remember points.

2. Auditory learning:

If you're an auditory learner, you'll prefer to listen to the topic that you're studying.

- Try reading your notes out loud
- Record yourself reading the key points in your notes then listen back to the recording.
- Revise with parents, members of your family or friends by discussing the topic you're studying. (Be careful though if studying with friends, that you don't get side-tracked and end up holding each other back rather than helping!!)

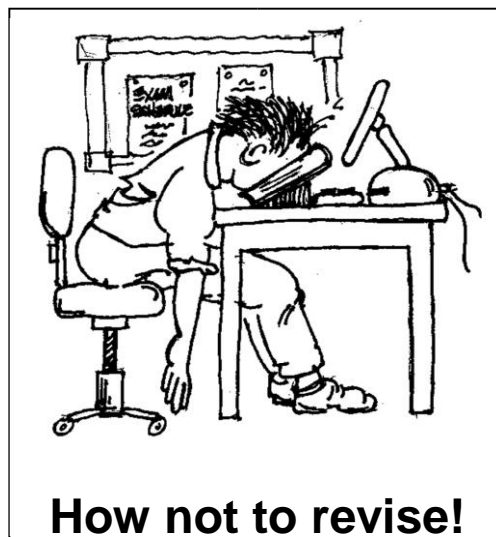
3. Learning by reading and writing:

Some people learn more efficiently through reading and writing.

- Copying work or making up notes
- Reading work or reading notes you have made from the work you have to learn

All these methods are useful **BUT BE CAREFUL!!**

- Always check that you're learning and that you're not just recognising the information.
- There are a variety of ways to check your learning.



Ways of learning

There are lots of different ways you can learn. A list of different methods, many of which you may know, are explained below:

- Mind map or flow chart
- Different colours to highlight different parts of what you are trying to remember
- Different shapes to chunk information – for example in History write the opposition methods to Nazi Germany in triangles and write the terror tactics in circles
- Draw diagrams and charts to help you recall facts – this works well in Science and Geography
- Reduce your notes down to a series of bullet points – if you can remember the bullet points then this will help you to recall the relevant information linked to each point.
- Use revision index cards. Write on the cards a few keywords or phrases that then help you to unlock the facts.
- Use post it notes
- Make a list of key words for a topic and remember to use them in your exams. Subject language can make a whole difference to your overall result.
- Write out formulae, definitions and vocabulary
- Use mnemonics to remember information
- Make study cards with main facts written on them
- Write out a list of words on one side of a page and write out their definition opposite. Cut out the words and the definitions then match them and check you got it right.

It doesn't need to be like this:



The joy of learning

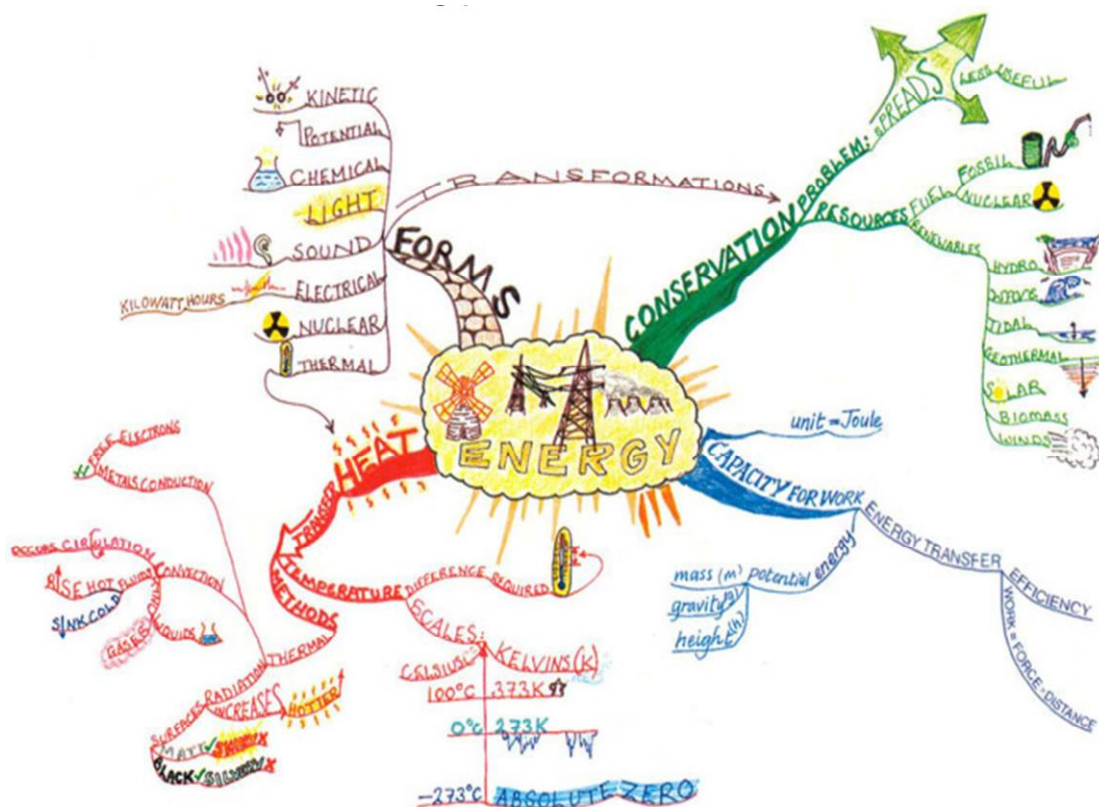
Learning for fitness fanatics!!

- Study as you move!! If you exercise, associate each movement with something you wish to remember. To refresh your memory, go through the exercise in your mind.



Mind Maps/patterned notes

- Make up diagrams similar to the one below.... Just make sure you don't waste too much time making it too elaborate! You want something which is interesting and lively enough for you to want to learn it, but not so detailed, it becomes a work of art, wasting your time!!



Q and A cards

- For question and answer cards, you can either use post it notes or index cards. Write your question on one side and the answer on the other. Lay all the cards on your table (question side up) and test yourself one at a time. If you get the answer correct, leave the card answer side up. If incorrect, leave it question side up so that you can test yourself later on. Once you have completed the process, reverse the process. Leave the cards answer side up and see if you can remember what the question was.

Mnemonics

(Don't be put off by spelling or pronunciation of this.....it's not as bad as it looks!! ... see below the mnemonic to remember it!!)

- If you have a group of keywords to learn, take the first letter of each word and form a mnemonic.

Eg. **My Very Energetic Mother Just Swam Under the North Pole** = Names of planets in order: (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto)

Eg. **Big Gorillas Eat Hotdogs Not Cold Pizza** = countries of Central America: (Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama)

Eg. **My Nanny Eats Mostly Old Noodles In Cans** = spelling of mnemonic!!

Be the teacher!!

- Select a subject, then select a victim (friend or family member would be good). Teach your victim everything you know about a topic – see if they can explain it back to you. This is a great way to identify any gaps in your knowledge.
- A similar activity is getting your victim to ask you questions about a topic.

Post Its

- Stick Post it notes to the wall and write key facts down on them. Use different colour post it notes for different topics or subjects. Your walls will be covered with a selection of brightly covered notes and then you will be able to visualise the information you have written down on them.
- If you like looking at yourself in the mirror.... stick them round the mirror! If you like your cornflakes..... stick them on your cornflake box!

Practice PEE

This is what you need to be able to do when answering many of your exam questions (especially longer questions). It is useful to practise doing this before your exams.

- PEE stands for: **P**oint **E**vidence **E**xplain **P** = you need to remember a certain point

E = you need to provide evidence to support the point
E = you need to explain what it is all about. Example:

- Make your point :
I do agree with a ban on smacking children because it can lead to violence later on in life
- Provide evidence :
The NSPC states that children are 25 times more likely to use violence if they were smacked as a child.
- Explain:
This statistic demonstrates how smacking children can cause a cycle of violence in the community which is an excellent reason to enforce a ban on smacking

Checking your learning

It's really important to check regularly that you **are** in fact learning and not just recognising your work. There are various ways to do this.

1. Mini tests or quizzes

- Break up the topics you have to learn into sections
- Write down the section headings
- Write down the number of points you have to learn in each section
- Try to fill in each of the points – either writing, thinking to yourself or reciting it to someone else
- Check your answers

If you have managed to answer everything, you can move on to the next topic. If not, go back and learn the parts you don't know again.

Below is an example of how to do this taken from the notes on Page **21**:

Question : What are the properties of blood? Blood (4)

- Red Cells - contain haemoglobin which carries oxygen
- White Cells - digest germs and produce antibodies
- Platelets - clot blood when tissue is cut
- Plasma - mainly water, transports all the above and chemicals

2. Past Papers

You can get past papers from your teachers, the library, the internet or bookshops.

If you are studying before you have finished the full course in class, check with your teacher which questions you should be able to do. If you find you are struggling with any questions, ask your teachers for help.

It's also useful to practise answering some past papers in the timings allocated for the papers so that you are comfortable with how much you need to write in the timescales.

3. Using family / friends

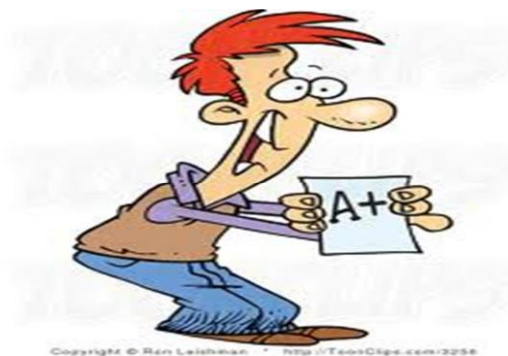
Similar to mini tests but instead of writing down answers, ask family or friends to quiz you.

Organising your revision sessions

Where and when to study can be as important as what you study. Having the wrong environment could mean you are unable to study effectively.

We are all different and study in different ways, some feel that they work best listening to music others prefer silence.

No matter, there are key factors essential for us all for studying effectively.



Establish a routine

- Check your plan for the day and **stick to it**.

Organise yourself

- Decide the best place for you to study
- Organise your study space
- Remove clutter and distractions
- Have pencils, pens and subject materials to hand
- Suitable work surface, chair and lighting



Get friends and family organised

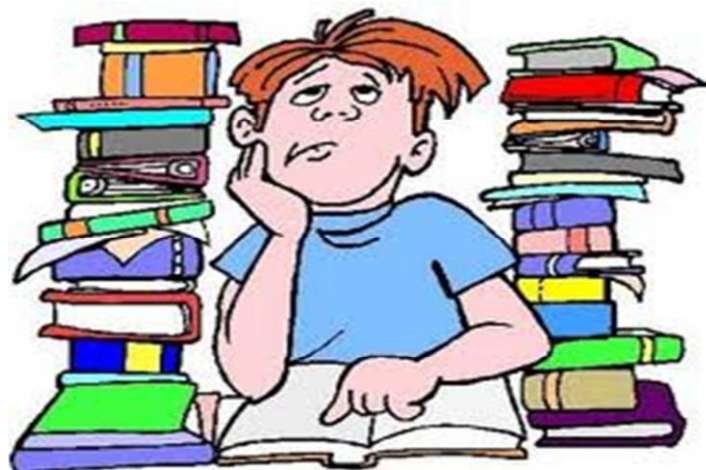
- Make sure your study plan is understood by all
- Agree in advance when you will see / speak to friends
- Agree when you will make or receive calls / texts
- Plan friends and family commitments in advance

Eliminate distractions

- Switch off mobile phone
- Switch off / remove TV from study area
- If using PC to study, make sure you are not logged on to Facebook, MSN etc



PERSONAL ORGANISATION = PERSONAL SUCCESS.

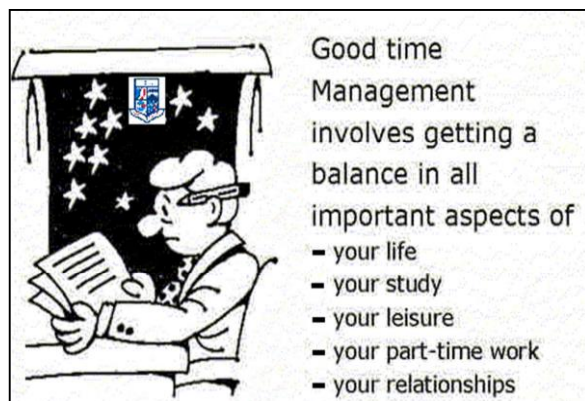


Get the basics right:

- Check your plan for the day and stick to it
- Set a definite start and finish time to each session.
- Keep sessions to a reasonable length; spread your studies to manageable one hour chunks.
- More than 2 to 3 hours in a single stretch, on one subject is usually too much.
- Take a few minutes break every now and then within each study episode.
- Work on difficult topics in the morning when your mind is fresh
- Sleep and eat well, essential to keep the brain cells charged.

Time management

Making time for studying and managing your time well can be a real challenge. There is always something else that you will want to do. Whilst playing sport, working part-time and meeting your friends are all important, they must not be a substitute for studying for your exams. Over the next few months, you should sacrifice some of your social time for study time. Using your time well to study is a proven strategy for raising your attainment but:



- It takes a fair bit of will power and skill to free up the time you need to study.
- You'll need to create a study plan to manage your time well.

Doing both of these things should help you to do significantly better in your exams.

Why make a study plan to help you manage your time better?

- You'll know exactly what's expected of you at different times.
- It makes it easier to work through the topics that will give you the knowledge you need to pass your exams.

How should I plan a study session?

At the start of a study session, set yourself clear goals about what you want to achieve today.

- Make a short list of the tasks you want to complete.
- Tick each one off as you work your way through the list

- It's an amazingly satisfying and effective way to get things done!

What is the best way to organise all my goals and 'to-do' lists?

When you're making your study plan or creating a study session 'to-do' list, you need to set some priorities:

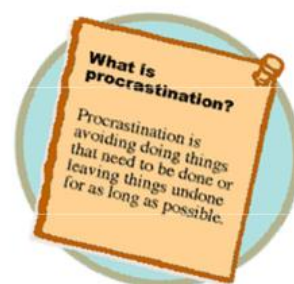
- What's urgent and most important?
- What do you need to spend most time on?
- Don't be afraid to adjust priorities as you go on.

	Urgent	Not urgent
Important	I Looming assignment deadlines Crises Cramming for exams Emergencies Last minute preparations	II Reading lecture notes Personal development Planned study Exercise and health Planning your time/setting goals
Not important	III Some emails and phone calls Many interruptions Some popular activities Some meetings	IV Trivia Some phone calls Excessive TV or surfing the net Time wasters

What might distract me from studying?

Distractions and procrastinating can really prevent you from studying and undermine your chance of exam success.

- Switch off the phone, close down social media sites, switch off the television and concentrate on your studies.
- It's so important to focus in the times you have set aside for study on the important and urgent priorities on your 'to-do' list.
- You'll have a better chance of really understanding the topic that will be covered in your exams by getting on with things and not procrastinating.



How many hours should I be studying in a week to prepare well for success in my exams?

A realistic study timetable should include at least 20 hours of study in the week. If you want to get good grades then you should plan to study for even longer than this. Let's be honest, if you don't manage your time well and study for your exams, then everybody else who does will likely be more successful than you.

MINIMUM
20



Use the grid below to organise your first 'to-do' list and set some priorities for what is urgent and most important for you to study:

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	1	2
Not Important	3	4

Creating a study plan



**FAILING TO
PLAN
is
PLANNING
TO FAIL**



“Preparing for your exams is more like a marathon than a sprint”
Usain Bolt

Preparing for your exams is like preparing for an athletic event. You need to peak at the right time. Don't burn yourself out before your exams. Steadily build up your knowledge and skills. Starting the night or week before the exam is leaving it too late.

Be organised! Having a study plan is far more efficient! Using your time well, you will see gains and you will achieve your goals! It has been shown that students who create study plans get better results than those who don't!

What do you need to think about when creating a study plan?

Here are some things that you will need to think about:

- **Write down** the dates, times and locations of your exams on your examination timetable.
- **Plan** the study periods in advance. Work back from the exam dates that you have and create a study plan that fits the study needed into the time slots that you have available. Remember to focus on what's most important and urgent.
- **Make a checklist** for each subject that you are studying so that you know the topics and that you will not miss out anything.
- **Organise** your revision sessions to make best use of the time you have available.
- **Use a variety of revision techniques** to study: reading notes, doing past papers, viewing powerpoints, watching DVDs, listening to Podcasts, checking out YouTube clips, etc
- **Stay focused and invest the time:** your exams are your ticket to what you want to do in the future and for the rest of your life. Short term pain will give you a long term gain.

Planning your study periods/sessions

- **Plan** the study periods/sessions in advance.
- **Be realistic** about how long you'll be able to study each day.
- **Split up your time** between your subjects. Subjects that you are weaker in or that you really need for that job, University or College place need more time.
- **Use techniques that work best for you** but also remember that a variety of techniques eg do past papers, read notes, listen to podcasts, use utube, use powerpoints is often better than focussing only on one method.
- **Work back** from the exam dates.
- **Fitting the work needed** into the time slots that you have available.
- **Organise your social/ sporting/work life.**
- **Organise what you have to study.** Your subject teachers will be more than happy to help you with this.
- **Organise where you are going to study.** A quiet place free of distractions. A library. A room in the school.
- **Write out your plan.** The sooner the better.
- **Stick to your plan.**
- **Have some good quality leisure time included.**
- **Be realistic** If you slip don't abandon your plan. Like a 'SatNav', if you go off the plan, then re-route. This means that you will still get to your destination.



**WRITE IT
OUT**

&



**STICK
TO IT**



Plan to keep your studying in balance

Weekly study planner

This week's specific targets:

1.		2.		3.	
-----------	--	-----------	--	-----------	--

Day	After School		Early Evening		Late Evening	
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
	Morning		Afternoon		Early Evening	
Saturday						
Sunday						

Holiday & study leave planner

When coming up to your exams, you need to invest your time to do the best you can. Whilst others may be finished their exams and on holiday, for you it is the last chance to make that extra effort and get yourself into peak exam readiness condition. Don't leave all your revision to holiday and study leave time!

Split times up into blocks of not more than an hour at a time.





This week's specific targets:

1.		2.		3.	
-----------	--	-----------	--	-----------	--

Day	Morning		Afternoon		Evening	
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						

Creating a topic checklist





Your subject teacher will help you to create a topic checklist that will focus your study sessions. You may also use study guides, past papers and exam websites to help you create a **topic checklist**. You will need to create a number of topic checklists for each subject that you have an examination for.

Teacher Resources		Resources that I can borrow/ get from my teacher, school library
Study Guide Resources		Study guides that I can borrow from the library or buy or download from the internet
Past paper Resources		Past papers that I can get from my teacher, download for free from the SQA website (www.sqa.org.uk) or buy from a bookshop.
Web Resources		Useful websites: see Help and Support section and jot down specific sites your teacher may provide.

Before creating a topic checklist, it would be a good idea to evaluate what you know already, what you are unsure of and things that you don't know. An example of how you can do this is shown below. Your teacher should be able to help you complete similar for any subject that you are studying:

Subject:	Mathematics				
Topics:	I know this topic well	I know this topic partially ?	I don't know this topic	Action needed	Action completed
Pythagoras				None	
Sine Rule				Go to revision class with Mr Emery Study guide	By end January
SohCahToa		?		Check websites	By Friday
Fractions				None	

Study Skills: Real and proven strategies for raising your attainment

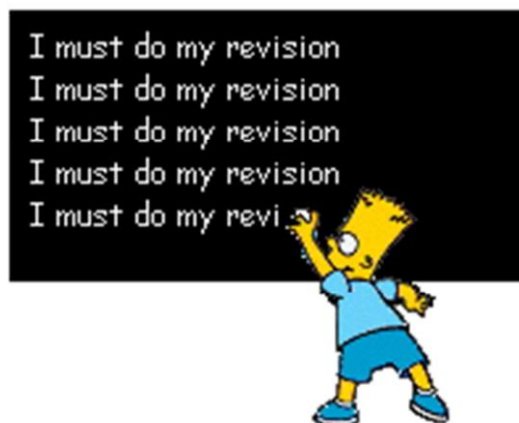
Subject:					
What am I going to use to help me prepare for my examination in this subject:					
	From my teacher:				
	From study guides:				
	From past papers:				
	From the web:				
	From other sources:				
Topics:		?		Action needed: What? How? When? Where? Who?	Action completed

Study Skills: Real and proven strategies for raising your attainment

[illegible]

Actually revising:

- **Start revising as early as possible.** Take time to organise yourself and use efficient revision techniques.
- **Plan your revision.** Planning really helps as uncertainty can lead to stress.
- **Cut down on the unknown.** Revise thoroughly. Use past papers, Internet revision sites and speak with your teachers so that you know what to expect from the exam.
- **Variety.** Monotony is boring. Vary your subjects and revision methods to keep yourself interested.
- **Be flexible.** If you miss a study session don't be guilty. Plan to catch up later. Remember... you are in control of your revision.
- **Look after yourself.** Eat and sleep normally and don't rely on caffeine and junk food to keep you going. Physical activity and fresh air can be great confidence boosters and help with concentration.
- **Organise your breaks.** Revision will be more effective in short sessions. Reward yourself for your study achievements by doing things that you enjoy in your breaks. This will relax you and keep the exams in proportion.
- **See friends.** Use breaks to be with friends to find out that you are not alone. Avoid people that are panicking about revision and exams; stress can be catching.
- **Do YOUR best.** Do not compare your progress or methods with others especially just before an exam. The real contest is always what you've done and what you are capable of doing. Measure yourself against yourself and nobody else. Everyone will study differently. Decide what works for you and stick to it.
- **Get help.** If you get stuck or hit a problem see your teacher. This will help you with good advice. Remember, teachers will have a good idea about the topics that will be covered in the exams.
- **Have faith in yourself.** You will remember more than you think. This guide will give you the edge of effective revision and exam technique. It is extremely difficult to fail an exam, unless you want to! Don't waste time worrying.
- **Keep exams in proportion.** Revision and exams are hard work. They are over soon – and life goes on.



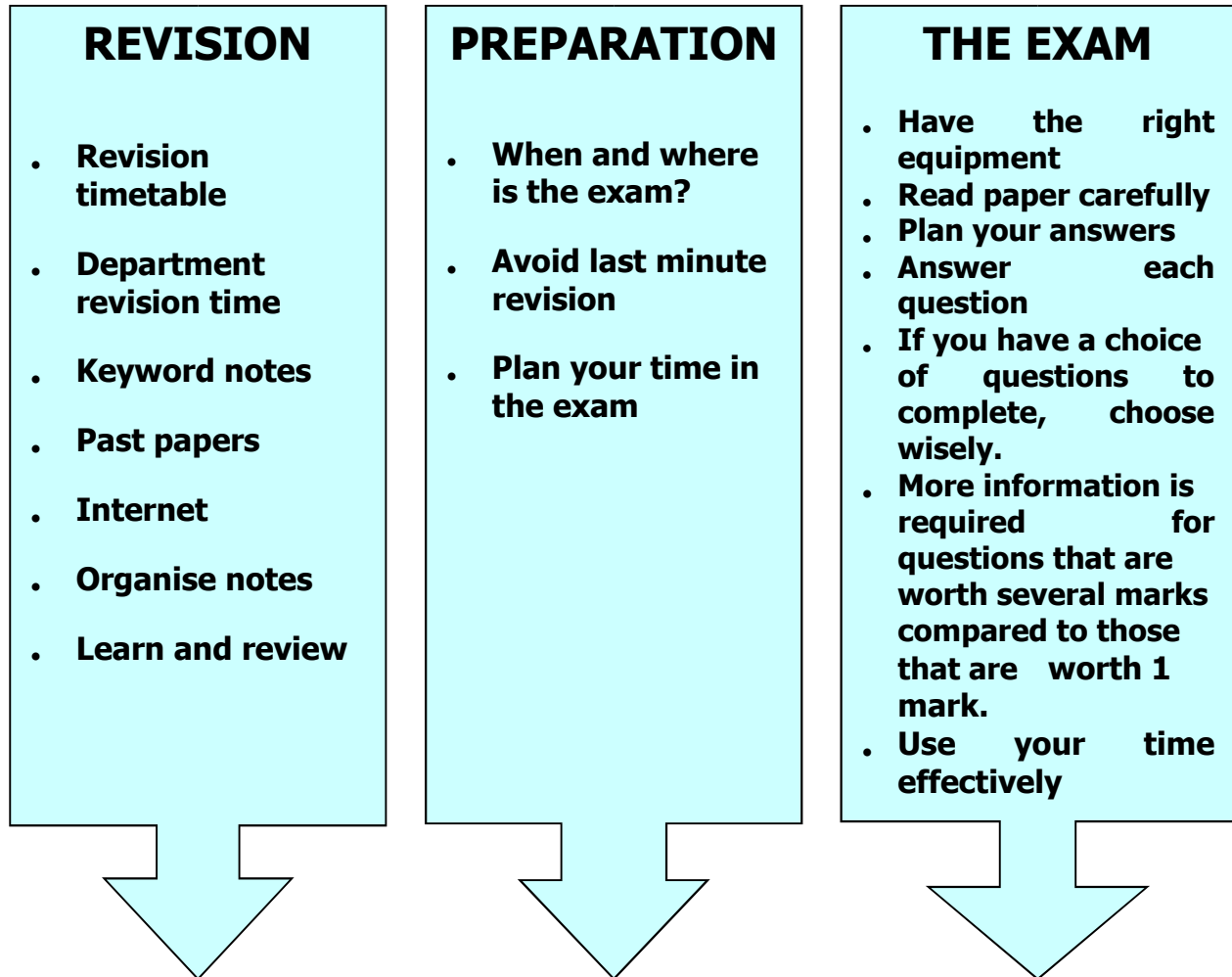
Making your study notes useful

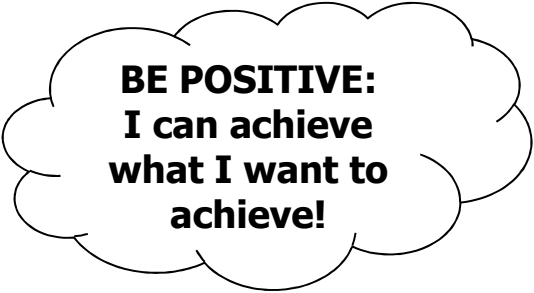
- **Sort out your filing!** If you haven't already done so, organise your subject notes immediately. Consider using ring binders, plastic pockets, dividers, etc. Use a different folder for each subject.
- **Beware of transcribing and highlighting!** Re-writing the text from your notes or highlighting sections is not how to make useful study notes. You should try to put things into your own words to make the material more meaningful.
- **Read!** Read a section of your notes fully. You should be actively looking for answers as you read. Make brief summary notes, look for "topic" sentences that summarise the most important point in a paragraph. Highlight them if necessary. Vary your reading speed so that you are skimming less important material.
- **Review.** Check your understanding of the material by reviewing and testing your recall before putting the text away. Look at your notes to check that they answer your initial questions. Summarise your findings in short concise notes.
- **Visual notes.** Notes should have a memorable appearance so you can recall them easily. Use illustrations, diagrams, graphs, colours etc. **You should be able to close your eyes in an exam and visualise specific pages of your notes.**
- **Condense.** Fit your notes onto one side of paper. This makes them easier to stomach, so rewrite and cut down as you go. Stick to headings and sub-headings.
- **Highlight.** Target key areas using colours and symbols. Visuals help you to remember the facts.
- **Record.** Record yourself saying important points, quotes and formulae. Listen to this and it will be more likely to sink in.
- **Cue cards.** Use these for condensed notes. Write questions on one side and answers on the other. Get others to test you.
- **Past papers.** Time yourself. This is an excellent way of getting up to speed and checking where the gaps in your knowledge are.



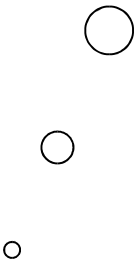
Your exams

The 3 stages of exam success





**BE POSITIVE:
I can achieve
what I want to
achieve!**



**Failing to
prepare is
preparing to**



**Planning ahead is
the first step
towards success!**

SUCCESS!

Exam timetable

Enter your exam details below:

EXAM	SUBJECT / LEVEL	EXAM DATE / TIME	EXAM VENUE
Exam 1			
Exam 2			

Exam 3			
Exam 4			
Exam 5			
Exam 6			
Exam 7			
Exam 8			
Exam 9			
Exam 10			

The exams !!!

The night before

Only do light revision the night before your exams. Get your equipment together, recheck the times of your exams; and ensure you get plenty of rest and a good night's sleep if possible.

The day of the exam

- Get up in plenty of time and have breakfast.
- Check that you have everything you need for the exam.
- Arrive at the exam venue with time to spare

The exam

- Listen to the invigilator's instructions
- Read the instructions on your exam paper slowly. Re-read them and do not start until you know exactly what you have to do.
- Don't worry about others around you frantically scribbling answers.
- Write down anything you are afraid of forgetting.
- Divide up the available time according to the advice given by your teachers as well as the marks allocated.
- Unless you have been advised to follow an order, plan the order in which you are going to answer the questions. Answer the easy questions first. This will help with your confidence and help you settle down to other questions.
- Underline keywords in questions so that you know exactly what is being asked. This also enables you to check your answers to ensure that you have not missed out any parts. Double underline instruction keywords, e.g.
 1. Account for the growth of the renewable energy industry in North East Scotland.
 2. Outline the events leading to World War two.
 3. Describe the safe use of social networking when using the Internet.
- Think carefully about each question before you start writing.
- Make a plan for longer questions so you don't forget important points or digress.
- Attempt every question.
- If you get stuck on a question come back to it later.
- If you are running out of time, make sure you have the key points written down. • Leave time at the end to check your answers, spelling, punctuation, calculations etc. Many marks can be picked up this way.
- Make sure that your writing is legible.

IMPROPER CONDUCT. "All improper conduct and actions that cause a disturbance during the exam will be reported to the SQA and investigated. You may be issued with a warning, lose your right to an assessment appeal, lose marks, have your exam entry in the subject concerned cancelled or, in extreme circumstances, have all your exam entries cancelled".

Essay writing skills

Students often under perform in exams because they fail to interpret the keywords in the questions.

Command words in essay questions:

Account for: explain how a particular event occurred

Analyse: break down an argument into parts and explain how these parts are related.

Assess: make a judgement on the importance of certain aspects of a topic

Clarify: make it simple and clear

Comment on: make opinions about / give your point of view

Compare: describe two or more different factors and identify the similarities and differences

Contrast: find and explain the differences between

Criticise: give evidence to support your opinion on

Define: give the exact meaning of

Demonstrate: show how, using examples

Describe: give a clear and coherent description of an event

Discuss: give the important aspects of, the pros and cons of

Evaluate: discuss the importance or success of. Include your own opinion

Examine / Explore: enquire into, investigate

Explain: interpret the meaning of a concept and use examples to show your understanding

How: in what way

Illustrate: give examples to make your points clear or use a drawing or diagram to explain

Outline: describe without too much detail

Relate: tell a story or show how things are connected or affect each other

Review: give a critical survey of

Summarise: bring together the main points without detail or examples

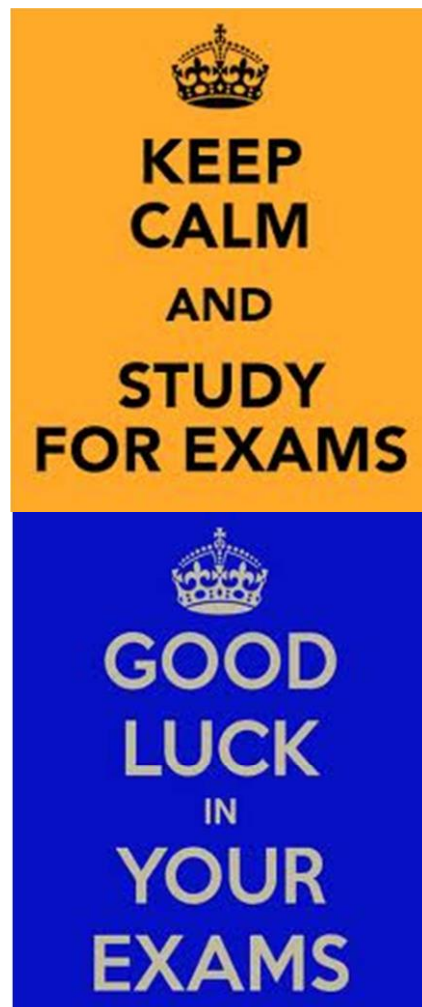
How to improve your general essay technique

Essays need a structure. Jot down a simple plan

Essays must answer the questions. Avoid writing everything you know on a subject. Respond to the keywords in the question.

Remember the essay question. Always refer back to the title at the end of each paragraph. Aim to put one theme in each paragraph. **Demonstrate your knowledge.** Use quotes to support your answers. Make your point, prove it with evidence and then explain and evaluate.

Give the examiners what they want. Use formal language. Be concise and relevant. Leave enough time to write a conclusion.




Help and support

1. In school:

Homework:	Homework is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and crucial for raising your attainment.
Revision classes in school:	See timetable of what is available on the back page of this booklet.
School Library:	The school library is open every day for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessing past papers• A quiet place to study

2. Online:

BBC: 	Revision tips broken down by subject: www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize
	You'll find lots of helpful resources on the BBC website: www.bbc.co.uk/brainsmart
School VLE	https://sme-vle.com/ 