

Revision Tips for Students and Parents / Carers

How to Revise

Be active – Just reading through notes or textbooks has limited impact. Effective revision requires you to engage your brain. Good strategies for this include making notes, creating diagrams and flash cards. Using podcasts and videos are more helpful when you make notes or mindmaps as you listen.

Create mindmaps – Mindmapping builds new neural pathways that helps you recall information and they can lead to improved learning and creative thinking. For more see: <http://www.tonybuzan.com/about/mind-mapping/>

Use past papers – using past papers and markschemes helps you to get used to the exam format, question styles and time limits. Testing yourself improves your ability to recall information and also shows you the gaps in your knowledge.

Variety – Using a variety of revision methods is important. This not only keeps revision interesting but different methods work better for different subjects.

Repetition – Don't just go over a topic once. Repeating revision of a topic with a couple of days break in between helps you to memorise information.

Where to Revise

A quiet area – revision is most effective in a quiet environment. Music is more of a distraction to some people than others but rarely helps. Certainly, loud music or music with lots of lyrics should be avoided.

No distractions – Smartphones and tablets can sometimes be useful for revision but can often be a huge barrier to concentration. Students should be brave enough to switch their phones off or leave them in another room. The brain can't handle the distraction of social media whilst revising. Even having a phone in sight affects the ability to concentrate. Revision in front of the TV does not work!

A separate area – Having an area where there is a table or desk big enough to spread out and leave out resources can be very helpful.

When to Revise

Revision timetable – Having a revision plan ensures that you have everything covered. It also allows you to build in breaks to switch off and relax. As well as being important for wellbeing, these planned breaks also help the brain to process what has been covered during revision. There are various websites that will help you create revision timetables, for example getrevising.co.uk.

Short bursts – Working for 35 – 45 minutes and then having a short break of 15 minutes helps the brain to take in information. Short bursts of revision can also be far more productive than working for hours on end where it is hard to maintain focus.

Time of day – The most effective time of day to revise will vary from person to person and depend on other commitments you have. Try revision at different times of day and see what works best but stick to a regular bedtime.

Don't put it off – Revision should be spread out over many weeks. This helps avoid a sense of panic and allows you to repeat revision of key information to get it into your long term memory.

Routine – Get yourself into a good weekly revision routine.

Looking After Yourself

Sleep – Getting enough good quality sleep is crucial. 8-10 hours a night is recommended. A regular bedtime, a Sunday morning lie-in and no screen time in bed all help with this.

Healthy food, including breakfast – It is important to maintain a healthy diet during revision. Not skipping breakfast will boost concentration and memory.

Exercise and Fresh Air – Regular exercise will help to reduce stress and anxiety as well as boosting self-esteem.

Reduce hours at work – If you have a part-time job, talk to your employer about your studies. They should understand the importance of your revision. Ask for a break from your job for a few weeks or to reduce your hours.

How Parents/Carers can Support

Praise – Praising the effort that your child is putting in is very important. Make the praise meaningful by being specific and praising when it is really deserved.

Perspective – Help your child keep a sense of perspective. The weeks leading up to exams are tough but will pass quickly. Remind them why they are working hard and what they will gain from their efforts. At the same time reassure them that you will be proud of their efforts whatever the final outcome.

Listen – Talk to your child about their revision. Listen to them. Encourage them to be resilient and keep a positive attitude. Reassure them that hard work will pay off.

Get the family on board – Ensure that everyone at home realises the importance of your child's revision and is able to support and not distract them.

Get your child to explain to you what they know - Explaining to you what they know, even if it is not a topic you know about yourself, will require your child to think and structure their knowledge.