



Gordano School

Ways to Learning

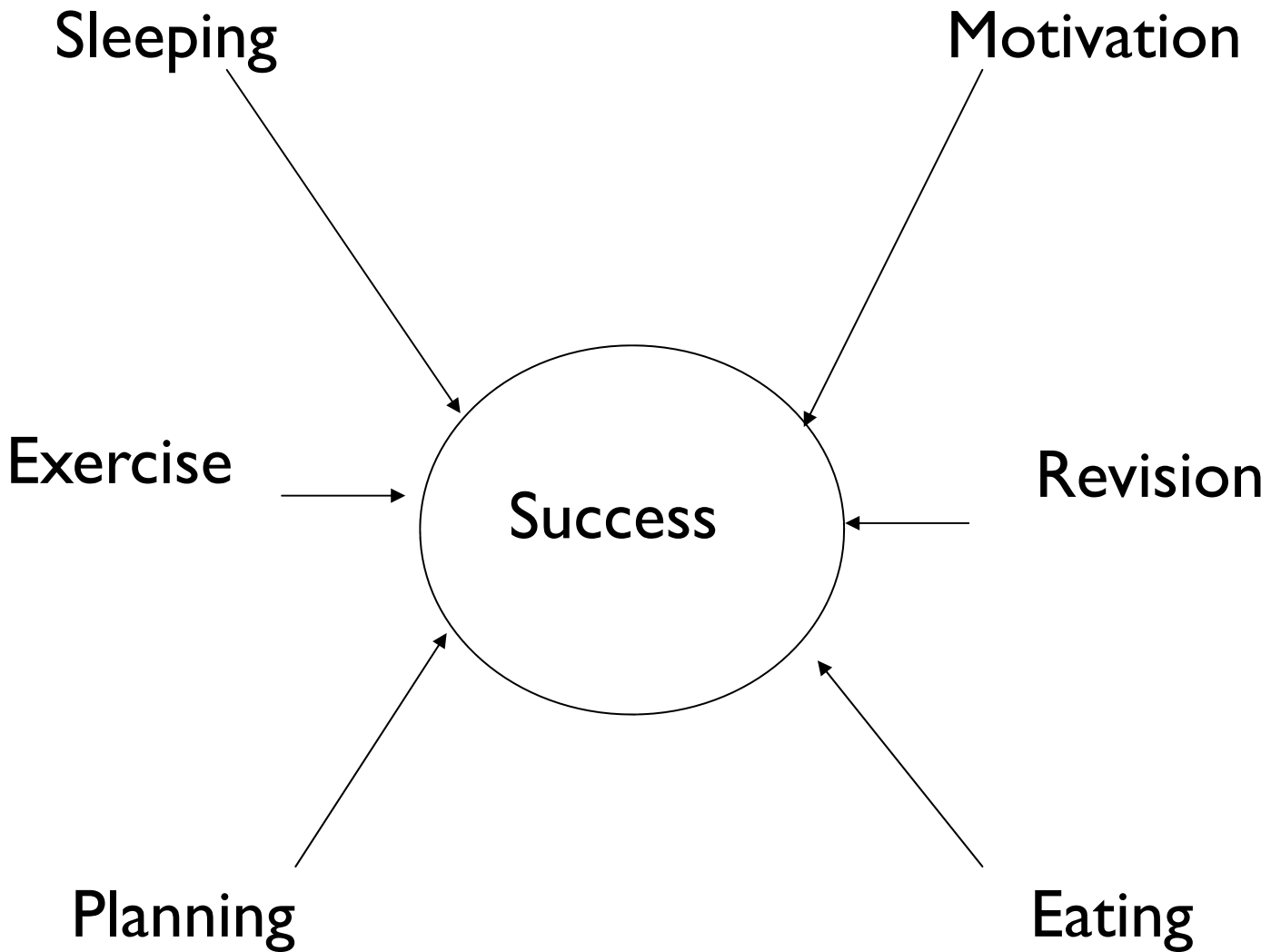
A Guide to Busting Exam & Study Stress

**Believing in your
success**

Contents



Page 3	The Ingredients of success
Page 4	The tripartite approach to revision
Page 5	That moment in August—the vision
Page 6	Setting targets
Page 7	What makes me work ?
Page 8	How do you spend your time ?
Page 9	Action Planning
Page 10	How do I learn ? / Revision Techniques
Page 11/12/13/14	Revision Techniques
Page 15	Some Don'ts and some more tips
Page 16	Where I Learn
Page 17	How do I organise myself ?
Page 18	Time planning
Page 19	On exam day
Page 20	Looking after yourself / undress stress
Page 21	Symptoms of stress
Page 22	Stress Busting
Page 23	Be Positive



The ingredients of exam success

How hungry are you for success ?

What have you got to lose ?

What are you doing now to make it happen for you ?

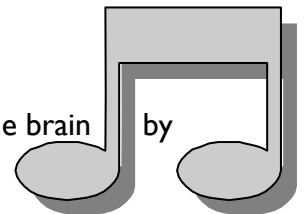
Where I Learn

Essential Checklist

- Comfortable place to work & revise
- Desk/table
- Comfortable chair to support your back
- Good level of lighting
- Good level of ventilation and warmth
- Quiet
- Family understands your needs
- No TV, CD player noise
- All the resources that you need, including notes, books, pens, pencils, paper, card, colours
- Organise your space and remove distractions
- Keep a tidy room (untidy rooms lead to low self-esteem !)
- A 'do not disturb' sign !

Music

- Some people work better with a low level of musical background.
- Some classical music has been shown to improve the concentration of the brain by stimulating it.
- Avoid fast beat music (stops learning)
- Slow and quiet music can be relaxing
- Some Mozart and parts of Vivaldi's Four Seasons plays at about 60 beats per minute, the same as the heart
- Instrumental music often more beneficial than singing/talking



Aromatherapy Oils

- Burning essential oils can be beneficial to concentration and others for relaxation
- Rosemary is said to help concentration



Looking After Yourself

Understanding Stress



Stress can make your brain stop working

Different things stress different people

Stress can be positive—where you feel stretched and rise to the challenge

OR negative, when your thinking brain closes down

Undress Stress

- Being in control reduces stress
- Make a plan and stick to it
- Establish a routine and stick to it
- Eat properly
- Get enough sleep
- Take regular breaks as part of your plan
- When on planned leisure forget work
- When revising Subject 'A' forget Subject 'B', 'C' and 'D'
- Build variety into your revision and beat boredom
- Talk to people, talk to everyone. This is a natural way of relieving tension—don't bottle it all up
- Don't worry what other people are doing—keep your eye on your future not their's
- Listen to good advice but be aware that some people SAY a lot and do NOTHING. You need to get on with what you need to do.
- Organise a stress free work zone where you can really focus on what you need to do and when you need to do it

Symptoms of Stress

- Bad tempered/irritable
- Persistent headaches
- Persistent backache
- Lack of concentration (worse than normal !)
- Feelings of panic
- Feelings that you can't get your breath properly
- Feelings of unhappiness or despair
- Feelings of pointlessness
- Stomach ache
- Dizziness



You will probably experience some or all of these things over the revision period

If they start to get in the way, seek help and tell somebody

Negative stress stops learning and is unhealthy

Stress Tip

Nearly every single symptom on this list is caused by disruption to your breathing patterns. If your brain takes in 20% of all oxygen you absorb, stress makes you breathe at only a fraction of your proper capacity—what effect is this going to have on the way you learn ?

Caffeine Conscious

Fluids are important for your body, but do not overload on caffeine.

Caffeine can greatly exaggerate the feelings of stress.

Too much coffee, tea and coke can wind you up—drink de-caff.

Too much sugar will make you sleepy and make it harder to concentrate

Cereals and fruit are better snacks while you are working. Avoid lots of sweets

Stress Busting

Suggested Actions

- Share the problem/talk it out with someone else
- Be active. Do something physical to take your mind off the problem. Feel good about being fit or try some relaxation classes
- Be logical. Make a list of possibilities, consider all of the options. Nothing is as bad as it seems
- Relax. Tighten your muscles and then drop your shoulders and let the tension go.
- Write about it. Seeing things on paper can make some fears look smaller than they seem in your head
- Concentrate on your breathing.

Try ten repetitions like this:

Breathe in deeply for a slow count of four.

Hold the breath for a slow count of twelve

Release the breath slowly for a slow count of eight

Force yourself to delay worrying.

Do something else for 15 minutes and then come back to the problem.

Positive Attitudes

- Think positively and don't think about the negative alternative—just don't think about it.
- Control it. Make yourself stop, pause, think and take a fresh look.
- What is the worst that could happen ?
- Imagine the worst possible scenario—is it really going to be like this ? Has it happened to anybody else you know personally ? If so, what was it ?
- Focus on something pleasant—try your own virtual reality experience. Where will you be spending the summer months ?
- See the funny side. Smile at everybody—they will smile back ! How does it make you feel ? Smile at yourself in the mirror !
- Imagine looking back at the problem a few years on from now. How important do you think it will be then ?
- Set some goals to get through it. Break the problem down. Tackle it one step at a time and keep thinking how good you will feel when the problem is behind you.
- You are NOT alone. This feeling is experienced by thousands of students every year. It is normal. You are not alone and very soon you will be through it.

And Finally.....

Be positive

Climbing the ladder to success is not meant to be easy

Exams are meant to challenge you

They are hard work

Exams need a great deal of prep work

You can do your best

You can focus on your own learning

You can avoid *distractions* from friends

You can use friends for *support*

You can plan

You can find your way of effectively revising

Keep saying it and you will believe it



Falling back on failure is no excuse and is often too comfortable as the way out.

Say no to:

I could have done better

I am not very good at..

I can't do..

I haven't got time to...

I am too thick to...

I never eat breakfast because..

I get too tired to...

I get really stressed out by exams..

I don't know how to do a revision timetable..

I don't know how to revise...

I can't do exams....

Keep saying it and you will believe it

Be proud of your achievements

Take charge of your learning

Be pro-active

Believe in your success

You CAN DO it !

What is Stress ?

Stress is not necessarily something bad – it all depends on how you take it. The stress of exhilarating, creative successful work is beneficial, while that of failure, humiliation or infection is detrimental. The biochemical effects of stress would be experienced irrespective of whether the situation was positive or negative.

Further research has been conducted, and ideas have moved on. Stress is now viewed as a "bad thing", with a range of harmful biochemical and long-term effects. These effects have rarely been observed in positive situations.

The most commonly accepted definition of stress is that **stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that “demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilise.”**

Fight-or-Flight

Some of the early research on stress established the existence of the well-known “fight-or-flight” response. When a person experiences a shock or perceives a threat, they quickly release hormones that help the person to survive.

In humans, as in other animals, these hormones help us to run faster and fight harder. They increase heart rate and blood pressure, delivering more oxygen and blood sugar to power important muscles. They increase sweating in an effort to cool these muscles, and help them stay efficient. They divert blood away from the skin to the core of our bodies, reducing blood loss if we are damaged. As well as this, these hormones focus our attention on the threat, to the exclusion of everything else. All of this significantly improves our ability to survive life-threatening events.

Not only life-threatening events trigger this reaction: We experience it almost any time we come across something unexpected or something that frustrates our goals. When the threat is small, our response is small and we often do not notice it among the many other distractions of a stressful situation.

Unfortunately, this mobilisation of the body for survival also has negative consequences. In this state, we are excitable, anxious, jumpy and irritable. This actually reduces our ability to work effectively with other people. With trembling and a pounding heart, we can find it difficult to execute precise, controlled skills. The intensity of our focus on survival interferes with our ability to make fine judgments by drawing information from many sources and hinders the learning (and revision) process. We find ourselves more accident-prone and less able to make good decisions.

In the short term, we need to keep this fight-or-flight response under control to be effective in our studyings. In the long term we need to keep it under control to avoid problems of poor health and burnout.

Introducing Stress Management

There are very many proven skills that we can use to manage stress. These help us to remain calm and effective in high pressure situations, and help us avoid the problems of long term stress.

These skills fall into three main groups:

- **Action-oriented skills:** In which we seek to confront the problem causing the stress, often changing the environment or the situation;
- **Emotionally-oriented skills:** In which we do not have the power to change the situation, but we can manage stress by changing our interpretation of the situation and the way we feel about it; and
- **Acceptance-oriented skills:** Where something has happened over which we have no power and no emotional control, and where our focus must be on surviving the stress.

Stress Diaries

Stress Diaries are important for understanding the causes of short-term stress in your life. They also give you an important insight into how you react to stress, and help you to identify the level of stress at which you prefer to operate.

The idea behind Stress Diaries is that, on a regular basis, you record information about the stresses you are experiencing, so that you can analyse these stresses and then manage them. This is important because often these stresses flit in and out of our minds without getting the attention and focus that they deserve.

As well as helping you capture and analyse the most common sources of stress in your life, Stress Diaries help you to understand:

- The causes of stress in more detail;
- The levels of stress at which you operate most efficiently; and

How you react to stress, and whether your reactions are appropriate and useful.

Stress Diaries, therefore, give you the important information that you need to manage stress.

Using the Stress Diary Tool:

Stress Diaries are useful in that they gather information regularly and routinely, over a period of time. This helps you to separate the common, routine stresses from those that only occur occasionally. They establish a pattern that you can analyse to extract the information that you need.

Make regular entries in your Stress Diary (for example, every hour). If you have any difficulty remembering to do this, set an alarm to remind you to make your next diary entry.

Also make an entry in your diary after each incident that is stressful enough for you to feel that it is significant.

Every time you make an entry, record the following information:

- The date and time of the entry.
- How happy you feel now, using a subjective assessment on a scale of -10 (the most unhappy you have ever been) to +10 (the happiest you have been). As well as this, write down the mood you are feeling.

- How efficiently you are working now (a subjective assessment, on a scale of 0 to 10). A 0 here would show complete inefficiency, while a 10 would show the greatest efficiency you have ever achieved.
- How stressed you feel now, again on a subjective scale of 0 to 10. As before, 0 here would be the most relaxed you have ever been, while 10 would show the greatest stress you have ever experienced.
- The most recent stressful event you have experienced.
- The symptom did you feel (e.g. “butterflies in your stomach”, anger, headache, raised pulse rate, sweaty palms, etc.).
- The fundamental cause of the stress (being as honest and objective as possible).

How well you handled the event: Did your reaction help solve the problem, or did it inflame it?

You will reap the real benefits of having a stress diary in the first few weeks. After this, the benefit you get will reduce each additional day. If, however, your lifestyle changes, or you begin to suffer from stress again in the future, then it may be worth using the diary approach again. You will probably find that the stresses you face have changed. If this is the case, then keeping a diary again will help you to develop a different approach to deal with them.

Analyse the diary at the end of this period.

Analysing the Diary

Analyse the diary in the following ways:

- First, look at the different stresses you experienced during the time you kept your diary. List the types of stress that you experienced by frequency, with the most frequent stresses at the top of the list.
- Next, prepare a second list with the most unpleasant stresses at the top of the list and the least unpleasant at the bottom.

Looking at your lists of stresses, those at the top of each list are the most important for you to learn to control.

Working through the stresses, look at your assessments of their underlying causes, and your appraisal of how well you handled the stressful event. Do these show you areas where you handled stress poorly, and could improve your stress management skills? If so, list these.

- Second, compare the values you entered for “Happiness” and “Efficiency” against the values for “Feeling of Stress”. You may find, for example, that you are most efficient when you are moderately stressed.
- Next, look through your diary at the situations that cause you stress. List these.
- Finally, look at how you felt when you were under stress. Look at how it affected your happiness and your efficiency, understand how you behaved, and think about how you felt.
- Having analysed your diary, you should fully understand what the most important and frequent sources of stress are in your life. You should appreciate the levels of stress at which you are happiest. You should also know the sort of situations that cause you stress so that you can prepare for them and manage them well.

As well as this, you should now understand how you react to stress, and the symptoms that you show when you are stressed. When you experience these symptoms in the future, especially in your learning and revision, this should be a trigger for you to use appropriate stress management techniques.

Summary

Stress Diaries help you to get a good understanding of the routine, short-term stresses that you experience in your life. They help you to identify the most important, and most frequent, stresses that you experience, so that you can concentrate your efforts on these. They also help you to identify areas where you need to improve your stress management skills, and help you to understand the levels of stress at which you are happiest, and most efficient.

To keep a stress diary, make a regular diary entry with the headings above. For example, you may do this every hour. Also make entries after stressful events.

Analyse the diary to identify the most frequent and most serious stresses that you experience. Use it also to identify areas where you can improve your management of stress.

The first of the action-oriented skills that we look at is Study analysis. Study analysis is a key technique for managing studying overload – an important source of stress.

To do an excellent job, you need to fully understand what is expected of you. While this may seem obvious, in the hurly-burly of a new, fast-moving, high-pressure role, it is oftentimes something that is easy to overlook.

By understanding the priorities in your studying, and what constitutes success within it, you can focus on these activities and minimize work on other tasks as much as possible. This helps you get the greatest return from the work you do, and keep your workload under control.

Study Analysis

Study analysis is a useful technique for getting a firm grip on what really is important for you to complete. It helps you to cut through clutter and distraction to get to the heart of what you need to do.

Using the Tool:

To conduct a study analysis, go through the following steps:

1. Review your current study habits:

- Identify the key objectives and priorities within your daily schedule.
- Look at your current progress at school, are you performing to your maximum ?

2. Find out who the top achievers are, and understand why they are successful:

There may be people in a similar role to you who are seen as highly successful. Find out how they work, and what they do to generate this success. Look at what they do, and learn from them. Understand what skills make them successful, and learn those skills.

3. Check that you have the notes and study resources to do the job:

The next step is to check that you have the right notes, resources and school support to achieve your best. If you do not, start work on obtaining them !

4. Confirm priorities with your boss:

By this stage, you should have a thorough understanding of what you need to achieve, and what your key objectives are. You should also have a good idea of the resources that you need, and any additional support you may need to do the best you can.

5. Take Action:

You should now know what you have to do to be successful at school. You should have a good idea of the most important things that you have to do, and also the least important.

Where you can drop the less-important tasks, do so. Where you can de-prioritize them, do so.

Where you need more resources or support to do your studying, negotiate for this.

Summary:

Study analysis is a five-step technique for:

- Understanding and agreeing how to achieve peak performance in Gordano School;
- Ensuring that you, your teachers, your parents, and your friends agree on the areas you should concentrate on when time gets tight; and the areas that can be de-emphasized during this time; and making sure that you have the study resources and support needed to do a good job.

By using the Study analysis technique, you should gain a good understanding of how you can excel at Gordano. You should also understand your study and lifestyle priorities.

Performance Planning

We all know the feeling of sickness in our stomach before an important exam. We have all experienced the sweaty palms, the raised heart rate, and the sense of agitation that we feel as exams and tests approach. We have probably all also experienced how much worse this becomes when things go wrong in the run up to an exam.

How to use tool:

The Thought Awareness, Rational Thinking and Positive Thinking technique that we look at later may be enough to help you manage the fears, anxieties and negative thoughts that may arise in an exam or test or in completing coursework or homework.

For larger events, such as an exam series, it is worth preparing a Performance Plan. This is a pre-prepared plan that helps you to deal effectively with any problems or distractions that may occur, and perform in a positive and focused frame of mind.

Using the Tool:

To prepare your Performance Plan, begin by making a list all of the steps that you need to do from getting prepared for a performance, such as an exam series, through to its conclusion.

Start far enough in advance to sort out any study problems. List all of the physical and mental steps that you need to take to:

- Prepare and check your notes, and plug any gaps
- Prepare revision plan, allowing plenty of time
- Prepare revision materials, such as mind maps, cards, posters
- Test yourself with past papers and by testing yourself with your friends
- Check that you have your exam equipment (stationery etc)
- Wait and prepare for your performance; and

Deliver your performance.

Next, work through each of these steps. Think though:

- Everything that could reasonably go wrong at each step with equipment and arrangements; and
- Any distractions and negative thinking that could undermine your confidence or stop you having a positive, focused frame of mind at the start of and during your performance.

Work through all of the things that could go wrong. Look at the likelihood of the problem occurring. Many of the things you have listed may be extremely unlikely. Where appropriate, strike these out and ignore them from your planning.

Look at each of the remaining contingencies. These will fall into three categories:

1. Things you can eliminate by appropriate preparation, including making back-up arrangements and acquiring appropriate additional study materials;
2. Things you can manage by avoiding unnecessary risk; and things you can manage with a pre-prepared action or with an appropriate stress management technique

Also, prepare the positive thinking you will use to counter fears and negative thoughts both before the event and during it. Use stress anticipation skills to ensure that you are properly prepared to manage stress. Then use thought awareness, rational thinking and positive thinking skills to prepare the positive thoughts that you will use to protect and build your confidence.

Write your plan down on paper in a form that is easy to read and easy to refer to. Keep it with you as you prepare for, and deliver, your performance. Refer to it whenever you need it in the time leading up to the event, and during it.

Summary

Performance Plans help you to prepare for an important performance. They bring together practical contingency planning with mental preparation to ensure that you are fully prepared to handle any situations and eventualities that may realistically occur. This gives you the confidence that comes from knowing you are as well prepared for an event as is practically possible to be. It also helps you to avoid the unpleasant stresses that

come from poor preparation, meaning that you can deliver your performance in a relaxed, positive and focused frame of mind, whatever problems or upsets may have occurred.

Imagery – Mental stress management

Sometimes we are not able to change our environment to manage stress – this may be the case where we do not have the power to change a situation, or where we are about to give an important performance. Imagery is a useful skill for relaxing in these situations.

Introduction:

Imagery is a potent method of stress reduction, especially when combined with physical relaxation methods such as deep breathing.

You will be aware of how particular environments can be very relaxing, while others can be intensely stressful. The principle behind the use of imagery in stress reduction is that you can use your imagination to recreate, and enjoy, a situation that is very relaxing. The more intensely you imagine the situation, the more relaxing the experience will be.

Imagery

Sometimes we are not able to change our environment to manage stress – this may be the case where we do not have the power to change a situation, or where we are about to give an important performance. Imagery is a useful skill for relaxing in these situations.

Introduction:

Imagery is a potent method of stress reduction, especially when combined with physical relaxation methods such as deep breathing.

You will be aware of how particular environments can be very relaxing, while others can be intensely stressful. The principle behind the use of imagery in stress reduction is that you can use your imagination to recreate, and enjoy, a situation that is very relaxing. The more intensely you imagine the situation, the more relaxing the experience will be.

By imagining a pleasant and relaxing scene (which reduces stress) you can objectively see the measured stress in your body reduce. By imagining an unpleasant and stressful situation, you can see the stress in your body increase. This very real effect can be quite alarming when you see it happen the first time!

Using the Tool:

Imagery in Relaxation

One common use of imagery in relaxation is to imagine a scene, place or event that you remember as safe, peaceful, restful, beautiful and happy. You can bring all your senses into the image with, for example, sounds of running water and birds, the smell of cut grass, the taste of cool white wine, the warmth of the sun, etc. Use the imagined place as a retreat from stress and pressure.



Visit our new dedicated stress management website Stress.MindTools.Com. With more than 100 stress-management tools, this is your complete guide to stress management.

Scenes can involve complex images such as lying on a beach in a deserted cove. You may “see” cliffs, sea and sand around you, “hear” the waves crashing against rocks, “smell” the salt in the air, and “feel” the warmth of the sun and a gentle breeze on your body. Other images might include looking at a mountain view, swimming in a tropical pool, or whatever you want. You will be able to come up with the most effective images for yourself.

Other uses of imagery in relaxation involve creating mental pictures of stress flowing out of your body, or of stress, distractions and everyday concerns being folded away and locked into a padlocked chest.

Imagery in Preparation and Rehearsal for exams, tests, coursework, homework

You can also use imagery in rehearsal before a big event, allowing you to run through the event in your mind.

Aside from allowing you to rehearse mentally, imagery also allows you to practice in advance for anything unusual that might occur, so that you are prepared and already practiced in handling it. This is a technique used very commonly by top sports people, who learn good performance habits by repeatedly rehearsing performances in their imagination. When the unusual eventualities they have rehearsed using imagery occur, they have good, pre-prepared, habitual responses to them.

Imagery also allows you to pre-experience achievement of your goals, helping to give you the self-confidence you need to do something well. This is another technique used by successful athletes.

Summary:

With imagery, you substitute actual experience with scenes from your imagination. Your body reacts to these imagined scenes almost as if they were real, calming you down and letting adrenaline disperse.

To relax with imagery, imagine a warm, comfortable, safe and pleasant place, and enjoy it in your imagination.

By imagining pleasant and unpleasant scenes, you can actually see or hear the changing levels of stress in your body diminish.

Physical Relaxation Techniques

Deep Breathing, PMR and 'The Relaxation Response'

Physical relaxation techniques are as effective as mental techniques in reducing stress. In fact, the best relaxation is achieved by using physical and mental techniques together.

This tool introduces three useful physical relaxation techniques that can help you reduce muscle tension and manage the effects of the fight-or-flight response on your body. This is particularly important if you need to think clearly and perform precisely when you are under pressure.

The techniques we will look at are Deep Breathing, Progressive Muscular Relaxation and “The Relaxation Response”.

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a simple, but very effective, method of relaxation. It is a core component of everything from the "take ten deep breaths" approach to calming someone down, right through to yoga relaxation and Zen meditation. It works well in conjunction with other relaxation techniques such as Progressive Muscular Relaxation, relaxation imagery and meditation to reduce stress.

To use the technique, take a number of deep breaths and relax your body further with each breath. That's all there is to it!

Progressive Muscular Relaxation

Progressive Muscular Relaxation is useful for relaxing your body when your muscles are tense.

The idea behind PMR is that you tense up a group of muscles so that they are as tightly contracted as possible. Hold them in a state of extreme tension for a few seconds. Then, relax the muscles normally. Then, consciously relax the muscles even further so that you are as relaxed as possible.

By tensing your muscles first, you will find that you are able to relax your muscles more than would be the case if you tried to relax your muscles directly.

Experiment with PMR by forming a fist, and clenching your hand as tight as you can for a few seconds. Relax your hand to its previous tension, and then consciously relax it again so that it is as loose as possible. You should feel deep relaxation in your hand muscles.

The Relaxation Response

'The Relaxation Response' is the name of a book published by Dr Herbert Benson of Harvard University in 1968. In a series of experiments into various popular meditation techniques, Dr. Benson established that these techniques had a very real effect on reducing stress and controlling the fight-or-flight response. Direct effects included deep relaxation, slowed heartbeat and breathing, reduced oxygen consumption and increased skin resistance.

This is something that you can do for yourself by following these steps:

- Sit quietly and comfortably.
- Close your eyes.
- Start by relaxing the muscles of your feet and work up your body relaxing muscles.
- Focus your attention on your breathing.

Breathe in deeply and then let your breath out. Count your breaths, and say the number of the breath as you let it out (this gives you something to do with your mind, helping you to avoid distraction).

Do this for ten or twenty minutes.

An even more potent alternative approach is to follow these steps, but to use relaxation imagery instead of counting breaths in step 5. Again, you can prove to yourself that this works using the biofeedback equipment.

Summary

“Deep Breathing,” “Progressive Muscular Relaxation,” and the steps leading to the “Relaxation Response” are three good techniques that can help you to relax your body and manage the symptoms of the fight-or-flight response.

These are particularly helpful for both handling nerves prior to an important performance, and reducing stress generally.

Thought Awareness, Rational Thinking, Positive Thinking

Quite often, our experience of stress comes from our perception of the situation. Often that perception is right, but sometimes it is not.

We have already mentioned that the most common accepted definition of stress is that it occurs when a person perceives that “demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilise.” In becoming stressed, people must make two main judgments: First, they must feel threatened by the situation, and second, they must judge whether their capabilities and resources are sufficient to meet the threat. How stressed someone feels depends on how much damage they think the situation can do them, and how closely their resources meet the demands of the situation.

Perception is key to this as situations are not stressful in their own right. Rather it is our interpretation of the situation that drives the level of stress that we feel.

We are overly harsh and unjust to ourselves in a way that we would never be with friends or co-workers. This, along with other negative thinking, can cause intense stress and unhappiness and can severely undermine self-confidence.

Using the Tool: Thought Awareness

You are thinking negatively when you fear the future, put yourself down, criticise yourself for errors, doubt your abilities, or expect failure. Negative thinking damages confidence, harms performance and paralyses mental skills.

A major problem with this is that negative thoughts tend to flit into our consciousness, do their damage and flit back out again with their significance, having barely been noticed. Since we do not challenge them, they can be completely incorrect and wrong. Yet, this does not diminish their harmful affect.

Thought Awareness is the process by which you observe your thoughts and become aware of what is going through your head.

One approach to it is to observe your stream of consciousness as you think about a stressful situation. Do not suppress any thoughts: Instead, you just let them run their course while you watch them, and write them down as they occur.

Another more general approach to Thought Awareness comes with logging stress in your Stress Diary. One of the benefits of using the Stress Diary is that you log all of the unpleasant things in your life that cause you stress for one or two weeks. This will include negative thoughts and anxieties, and can also include difficult or unpleasant memories and situations that you perceive as negative. All of these can be looked at using the techniques in this module. By logging your negative thoughts for a reasonable period of time, you will quickly see patterns in your negative thinking. When you analyze your diary at the end of the period, you should be able to see the most common and the most damaging thoughts. Tackle these as a priority.

Thought awareness is the first step in the process of managing negative thoughts, as you cannot manage thoughts that you are unaware of.

Rational Thinking

The next step in dealing with negative thinking is to challenge the negative thoughts that you identified using the Thought Awareness technique. Look at every thought you wrote down and rationally challenge it. Ask yourself whether the thought is reasonable: Does it stand up to fair scrutiny?

As an example, by analysing your Stress Diary you might identify that you have frequently had the following negative thoughts:

- Feelings of inadequacy
- Worries that your performance in school will not be good enough
- An anxiety that things outside your control will undermine your efforts
- Worries about other people's reactions to your work

Starting with these, you might challenge these negative thoughts in the ways shown:

- **Feelings of inadequacy:** Have you trained and educated yourself as well as you reasonably should to study? Do you have the experience and resources you need to do it? Have you planned, prepared and rehearsed appropriately? If you have done all of these, are you setting yourself unattainably high standards for studying?
- **Worries about performance:** Do you have the training that a reasonable person would think is needed to study? Have you planned appropriately? Do you have the information and resources you need? Have you cleared the time you need and cued up your support team appropriately? Have you prepared appropriately? If you have not, then you need to do these things quickly. If you have, then you are well positioned to give the best performance that you can.
- **Problems with issues outside your control:** Have you conducted appropriate contingency planning? Have you thought through and managed all likely risks and contingencies appropriately? If so, you will be well prepared to handle potential problems.

Worry about other people's reactions: If you have put in good preparation, and you do the best you can, then that is all that you need to know. If you perform as well as you reasonably can, then fair people are likely to respond well. If people are not fair, then this is something outside your control.

Often, the best thing to do is to rise above unfair comments.

When you challenge negative thoughts rationally, you should be able to see quickly whether the thoughts are wrong or whether they have some substance to them. Where there is some substance, take appropriate action. In these cases, negative thinking has been an early warning system showing where you need to direct your attention.

Positive Thinking & Opportunity Seeking

Where you have used Rational Thinking to identify incorrect negative thinking, it can often be useful to prepare rational positive thoughts and affirmations to counter them. It can also be useful to look at the situation and see if there are any useful opportunities that are offered by it.

Affirmations help you to build self-confidence. By basing your affirmations on the clear, rational assessments of facts that you made using Rational Thinking, you can use them to undo the damage that negative thinking may have done to your self-confidence.

Continuing the examples above, positive affirmations might be:

- **Feelings of inadequacy:** “I am well trained for this. I have the experience, the tools and the resources I need. I have thought through and prepared for all possible issues. I can do a superb job.”
- **Worries about performance:** “I have researched and planned well for this, and I thoroughly understand the problem. I have the time, resources and help I need. I am well prepared to do an excellent job.”
- **Problems issues outside your control:** “We have thought through everything that might reasonably happen and have planned how we can handle all likely contingencies. Everyone is ready to help where necessary. We are very well placed to react flexibly and effectively to unusual events.”

Worry about other people’s reaction: “I am well-prepared and am doing the best I can. Fair people will respect this. I will rise above any unfair criticism in a mature and professional way.”

If appropriate, write these affirmations down so that you can use them when you need them.

As well as allowing you to structure useful affirmations, part of Positive Thinking is to look at opportunities that the situation might offer to you. In the examples above, successfully overcoming the situations causing the original negative thinking will open up opportunities. You will acquire new skills, you will be seen as someone who can handle difficult challenges, and you may open up new career opportunities.

Make sure that identifying these opportunities and focusing on them is part of your positive thinking.

Summary:

This set of tools helps you to manage and counter the stress of negative thinking.

Thought Awareness helps you to understand the negative thinking, unpleasant memories and misinterpretation of situations that may interfere with your performance and damage your self-confidence.

Rational Thinking is the technique that helps you to challenge these negative thoughts and either learn from them or refute them as incorrect.

Rest, Relaxation and Sleep

Positive thinking is then used to create positive affirmations that you can use to counter negative thoughts. **Rest and Relaxation** These affirmations neutralize negative thoughts and build your self-confidence. It is also used to find the opportunities that are almost always present to some degree in a difficult situation. Rest is what we do to let stress subside. Rest at the end of a day, and at the end of a week, helps us to calm down.

Doing fun things that we enjoy in our leisure time compensates us for the unpleasant stress we experience at school/studying, bringing some balance back into life. This is particularly important if we routinely experience unpleasant levels of stress.

A good way of getting rest and reducing long-term stress is to take up an enjoyable, non-rushed sport or hobby. If you spend all your working day competing, then can be very pleasant to be completely noncompetitive for some of your free time. Slow physical activities such as sailing or walking are good for this, as are others where there is little or no pressure for performance. Reading novels, watching television or socializing can also be very restful.

Holidays are particularly important. A common observation that people make is that they really do not start to relax properly until the end of their first week of the holiday.

Make sure that you use them to relax. Also, make sure that you get enough good quality rest during the week to keep on enjoying life to its fullest.

Sleep

The average person needs approximately eight hours sleep a night (although this can vary between three hours and eleven hours, depending on the person and his or her age).

If we are regularly short of sleep, then our concentration and our effectiveness suffer and our energy levels decline. We have all experienced this.

This diminishes our effectiveness in our studying, and can therefore increase stress. As our concentration wanders, we start to make mistakes. As our energy declines, we become less proactive in what we do, reducing our control over events. This means that a situation that is already difficult and stressful can become worse, needing even more sacrifice to bring it back under control.

Make sure that you get enough sleep. If you have become used to being tired all the time, you will be amazed by how sharp and energetic you will feel once you start sleeping normally.



Gordano School

**Ways to
Learning**

Revision Techniques for GCSE

**Believing in your
success**

How do I Learn ?

- We all learn in different ways
- There are at least 8 different types of 'intelligence' that we know of, so nobody is actually not intelligent, people are simply intelligent in different ways.
- You must formulate your own ways of learning and decide what is best for you, which will differ in many ways to your friends and colleagues.
- You do not have to revise the same way for each GCSE. What works best for what subject ?

Possible Revision Techniques

1. Highlight Key Points

- Underline in various colours (colour coding) important aspects of work. Use to chunk down work, giving you information to process later
- Very effective to visually draw out key points for revision

2. Make a Mind Map

- Like a spider diagram using colours so that each leg of the spider is a different colour and is a related aspect. Use pictures as well as words. This could be used as a summary from highlighting key points and is a good way to visually remember things

3. The Shrinking Mind Map

- The aim in revision is to shrink as much of the key points down into a small space. The process of this actually helps you learn the information.
- The result is that you have a portable device that you can carry around and learn from. Chunk down your mind map further.
- Cut off the outside legs and use the main stems to stimulate your brain to remember the other parts. This is useful to take into the exam.

4. **Cassette Tapes**

- Take some of the key points from your lists/notes and condense them onto a cassette tape
- Variety is important. Get other people to record bits so that you have variety of voice (family)
- Using background music may help, as some people have found that a particular piece reminds them of an associated topic.
- Use the tape for playback during 'dead time', i.e. on the bus, walking etc
- Record a bit each day and your tape will soon fill up nicely

5. **Song & Rhyme**

- Making up catch phrases or rhymes can help with crucial bits of information.
Example: to help you sort out which is the x and the y axis on a graph you could remember 'x below y because y goes up high', cringe-worthy yes, scoring points in an exam, who cares about naff!
- Making up song and rhyme can be fun, sharing it with others even funnier

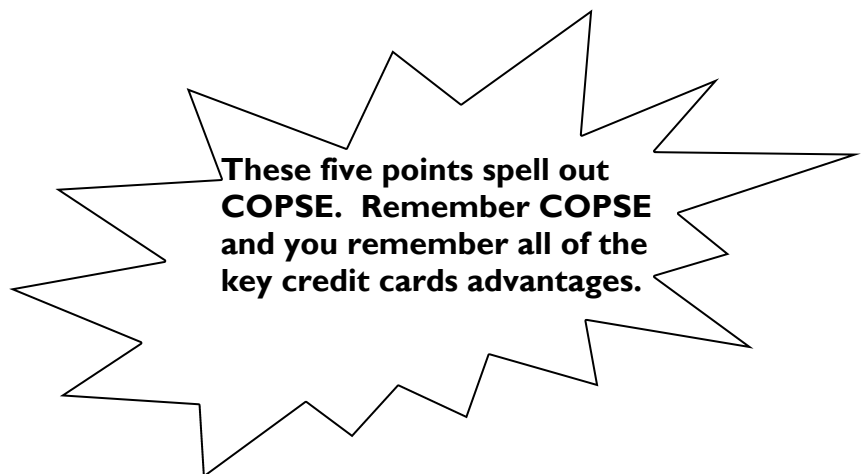
6. **Mnemonics and Acronyms**

- A mnemonic is a word or abbreviation that helps you remember.
- An acronym is a word made up using the first letters of a series of other words, or the first word of a series of sentences. An example—to remember the advantages of carrying credit cards (for a business studies question):

Convenient to carry
Outlets for use everywhere
Pay later
Security
Extras, insurance, air miles

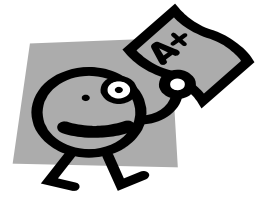
REMEMBER

- If you have remembered your mnemonics and mind maps, it is not cheating to write them down on paper as soon as you get in the exam room.
- Make acronyms funny, personal or even rude if it helps. It is an excellent way of reducing a great deal of information into manageable chunks.



7. Flash Cards

- Research shows that when our brain is storing information our eyes are often angled upwards to the right or to the left (depending on how your brain is set up)
- Flash cards can be a big help in remembering important information
- Why not make some brightly coloured lists or just write down key words that you want to remember
- Try different colours for different topics/subjects



8. Wall Posters (large scale flash cards)

- Use the flash card idea to condense information onto large scale posters to put up in your bedroom or around your house. You will sub-consciously remember key points as you look at these each day.
- Ask your family if you can use different rooms for different topic areas and put up posters. You could colour code each room ! The dining room could become maths, the kitchen science, the living room English and so on. As you move around the house you move through and open the different subject files !



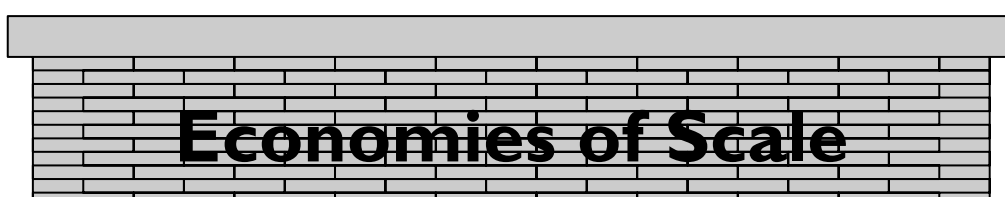
9. Word Walls

- Following on from above, using the key terms and the language used in subjects is essential at GCSE. Why not have some of these scattered around the house/bedroom or on walls around the house (see number 8).

Clusters of key words for each topic area/subject are a great way to learn the language for your GCSE courses. Cover your walls with the phrases (and meanings) used in your courses.

Remember that using the right terminology will earn you more marks in the examination.

Use the right language !



10. Lists, charts and notes

- More traditional methods still work !
- Bullet pointed lists are a good way to summarise information
- Visual methods including charts are excellent ways to memorise information, especially if they are large (big enough for your wall !)
- Concentrate on shrinking the information down as far as possible
- Eliminate excessive words from lists, focus on key terms

11. Visual & Pattern Notes

- Use more graphic images to help you revise and make things stick in your mind. This is a form of mind map with more images that will suit students that are more visual learners. Look at the picture below to get an idea of how you could summarise a process to revise from.

12. Fact Sheets

- Keep fact sheets of key information, dates, formulas etc to hand. You could use clipboards, ring binders or cards. This is like making revision cards but just for key bits of information that are essential.

13. List of Exam key words in courses

- Have a list of the key action words used in examination questions in your subject and have examples of how you could use them.
- Know critical words such as: analyse, compare, contrast, describe, justify, evaluate, account for, examine, outline, summarise, explain. Pay the same attention to these words as you would do for learning the content. Put on wall posters to familiarise yourself.

14. Study Buddy—Sharing Learning

- One of the most effective ways to learn is to teach someone else
- This helps you process information yourself as you explain it to others
- Use friends and family to test you—how do you know if you know it (move quickly away from the idea that if you have read something that you must know it—you probably don't !) You may be wasting your valuable revision time. A study buddy can help you here.
- Build in a testing EACH DAY to see how well you are learning/revising something

15. Practising Previous Exam Questions

- Test yourself against the real goal posts by doing past papers !
- These give you a great idea of the style of questions, how many questions in each section and timing
- It gives you an excellent experience of decoding the trigger words—what exactly are they asking you to do rather than answering a question as you want to. Understand the language !

Over 60% of all errors in exams are caused by not reading the question properly.



16. Show You Know

- Show yourself that you know your stuff !
- Don't fool yourself that you know something because you spent 2 hours reading it !
- How effective was that time spent ?
- Recite things out loud
- Write down lists after revising to see if you can recall things
- Stop yourself from eating that chocolate biscuit until you can provide that answer to yourself

You know something if you recall it whenever you want

You cannot be sure that you know something because you can recall it 30 seconds after reading it—that is fooling yourself.

Learn and re-learn

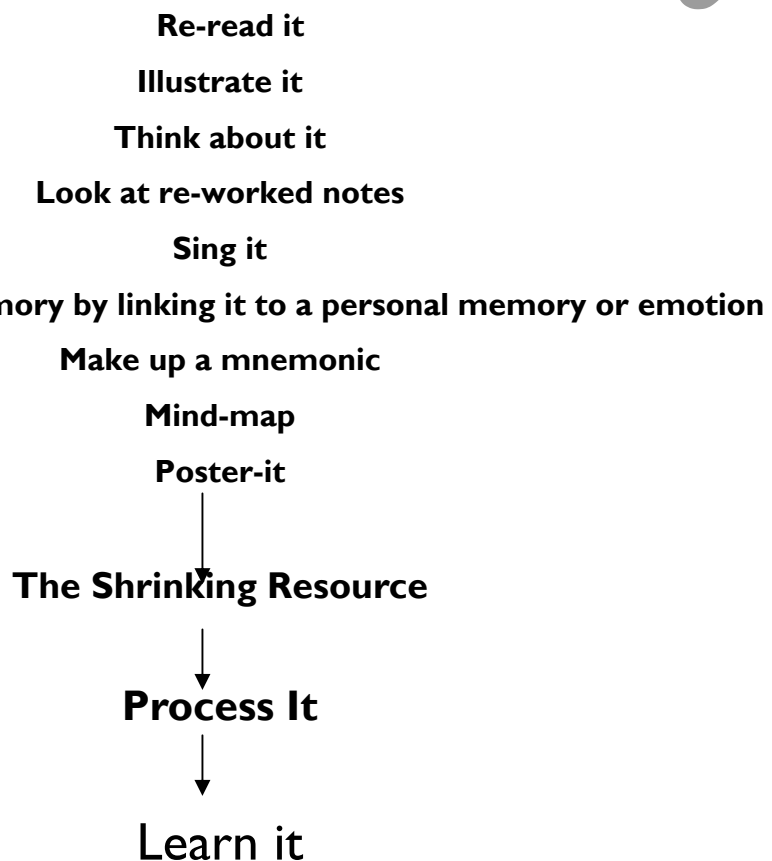
14. Revision Cards

- Some people like to condense information onto small revision cards
- These are portable and can be carried around
- Keep words to a minimum, key points only, don't over-crowd the card, it becomes difficult to read and visualise
- Have some organisation, i.e. one card per topic
- Use colour, use pictures, use bullet points
- Make it fun and use mnemonics to make it fun
- The process of carding up a topic is as important as reading the card later as it will help you revise



15. Take a break

- People learn best at the start and finish of each revision session, so have lots of starts and ends !
- The maximum time that you can concentrate is 40 minutes
- Reward yourself by finishing something and then taking 5 minutes out for a coffee—then back to it!





And some don'ts



- Don't kid yourself that you know something just because it seems familiar
- Don't revise with friends if you won't concentrate on work. If you are revising with friends make sure that it is the revising and testing that you are doing—you are only fooling yourself if you are not working. Friends are for life, GCSEs happen just once
- Don't fool yourself that you know something just because you have read it. Process it, learn it, test yourself against it
- Don't go on revising if you are tired. This is not profitable time and it will be better spent sleeping and picking up that time later. Give yourself a break, especially before bedtime and work to a plan, **not** adhoc (make it up as you go)
- Don't necessarily measure yourself against your friends—they learn in different ways, they may revise quicker or may not be telling you everything about the quantity of work.. If your friend hasn't done much either then feeling more confident is very short sighted—you both will fall short of your potential !

And Finally, some more tips

- Get your notes up to scratch and plug any gaps NOW
- Divide your work into sections/chunk down ready for revision (topic based) using file dividers
- Think about more than one subject at a time
- Revise several topics in one day/evening
- Chunk down
- Plan your time & stick to it
- Give yourself rewards
- Think of the long term benefits and not the short term !
- Believe in yourself

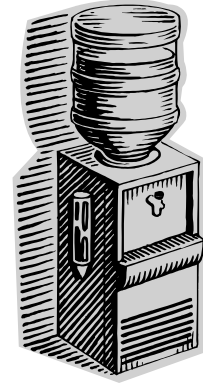


Gordano Learning To Learn

Revision Techniques

The key *elements* to revision & learning are:

- i) Chunking down, topic by topic
- ii) A little often, regularly, on-going
- iii) Effective forward planning
- iv) Eating healthy food, avoiding salt & de-hydrants
- v) Drinking plenty of water, especially during learning and exams
- vi) Exercise—healthy body, healthy mind
- vii) Regular and sufficient sleep patterns
- viii) Motivation to succeed—self belief



Revision Strategies for students to use:

1. Highlight Key Points

- Underline in various colours (colour coding) important aspects of work. Use to chunk down work, giving you information to process later
- Very effective to visually draw out key points for revision

2. Make a Mind Map

- Like a spider diagram using colours so that each leg of the spider is a different colour and is a related aspect. Use pictures as well as words. This could be used as a summary from highlighting key points and is a good way to visually remember things

3. The Shrinking Mind Map

- The aim in revision is to shrink as much of the key points down into a small space. The process of this actually helps you learn the information.
- The result is that you have a portable device that you can carry around and learn from. Chunk down your mind map further.
- Cut off the outside legs and use the main stems to stimulate your brain to remember the other parts. This is useful to take into the exam.

4. **Cassette Tapes**

- Take some of the key points from your lists/notes and condense them onto a cassette tape
- Variety is important. Get other people to record bits so that you have variety of voice (family)
- Using background music may help, as some people have found that a particular piece reminds them of an associated topic.
- Use the tape for playback during 'dead time', i.e. on the bus, walking etc
- Record a bit each day and your tape will soon fill up nicely

5. **Song & Rhyme**

- Making up catch phrases or rhymes can help with crucial bits of information.
Example: to help you sort out which is the x and the y axis on a graph you could remember ' x below y because y goes up high', cringe-worthy yes, scoring points in an exam, who cares about naff !
- Making up song and rhyme can be fun, sharing it with others even funnier

6. **Mnemonics and Acronyms**

- A mnemonic is a word or abbreviation that helps you remember.
- An acronym is a word made up using the first letters of a series of other words, or the first word of a series of sentences. An example—to remember the advantages of carrying credit cards (for a business studies question):

Convenient to carry

Outlets for use everywhere

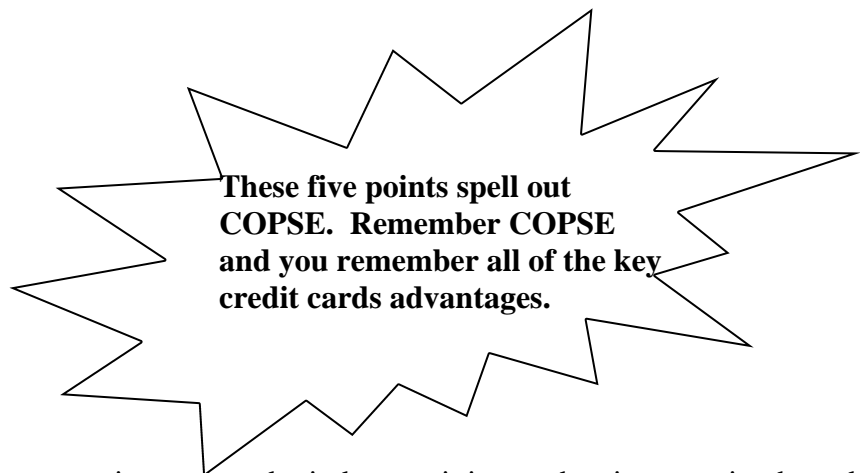
Pay later

Security

Extras, insurance, air miles

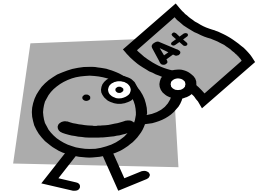
REMEMBER

- If you have remembered your mnemonics and mind maps, it is not cheating to write them down on paper as soon as you get in the exam room.
- Make acronyms funny, personal or even rude if it helps. It is an excellent way of reducing a great deal of information into manageable chunks.



7. Flash Cards

- Research shows that when our brain is storing information our eyes are often angled upwards to the right or to the left (depending on how your brain is set up)
- Flash cards can be a big help in remembering important information
- Why not make some brightly coloured lists or just write down key words that you want to remember
- Try different colours for different topics/subjects



8. Wall Posters (large scale flash cards)

- Use the flash card idea to condense information onto large scale posters to put up in your bedroom or around your house. You will subconsciously remember key points as you look at these each day.
- Ask your family if you can use different rooms for different topic areas and put up posters. You could colour code each room ! The dining room could become maths, the kitchen science, the living room English and so on. As you move around the house you move through and open the different subject files !

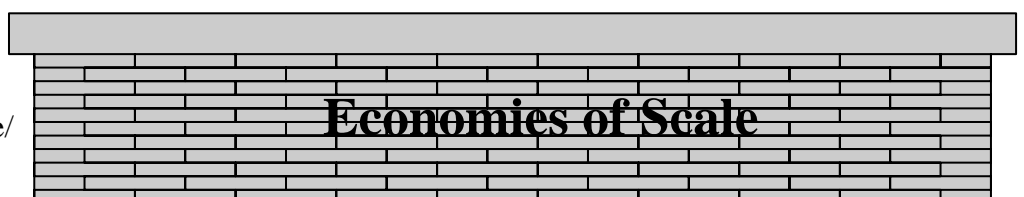


9. Lists, charts and notes

- More traditional methods still work !
- Bullet pointed lists are a good way to summarise information
- Visual methods including charts are excellent ways to memorise information, especially if they are large (big enough for your wall !)
- Concentrate on shrinking the information down as far as possible
- Eliminate excessive words from lists, focus on key terms

10. Word Walls

- Following on from above, using the key terms and the language used in subjects will earn you marks. Why not have some of these scattered around the house/ bedroom or on walls



11. Study Buddy—Sharing Learning

- One of the most effective ways to learn is to teach someone else
- This helps you process information yourself as you explain it to others
- Use friends and family to test you—how do you know if you know it (move quickly away from the idea that if you have read something that you must know it—you probably don't!) You may be wasting your valuable revision time. A study buddy can help you here.
- Build in a testing EACH DAY to see how well you are learning/revising something

12. Practising Previous Exam Questions

- Test yourself against the real goal posts by doing past papers !
- These give you a great idea of the style of questions, how many questions in each section and timing
- It gives you an excellent experience of decoding the trigger words—what exactly are they asking you to do rather than answering a question as you want to. Understand the language !

Over 60% of all errors in exams are caused by not reading the question properly.



13. Show You Know

- Show yourself that you know your stuff !
- Don't fool yourself that you know something because you spent 2 hours reading it !
- How effective was that time spent ?
- Recite things out loud
- Write down lists after revising to see if you can recall things
- Stop yourself from eating that chocolate biscuit until you can provide that answer to yourself

You know something if you recall it whenever you want

You cannot be sure that you know something because you can recall it 30 seconds after reading it—that is fooling yourself.

Learn and re-learn

14. Revision Cards

- Some people like to condense information onto small revision cards
- These are portable and can be carried around
- Keep words to a minimum, key points only, don't over-crowd the card, it becomes difficult to read and visualise
- Have some organisation, i.e. one card per topic
- Use colour, use pictures, use bullet points
- Make it fun and use mnemonics to make it fun
- The process of carding up a topic is as important as reading the card later as it will help you revise



15. Take a break

- People learn best at the start and finish of each revision session, so have lots of starts and ends !
- The maximum time that you can concentrate is 40 minutes
- Reward yourself by finishing something and then taking 5 minutes out for a coffee—then back to it!



Re-read it

Illustrate it

Think about it

Look at re-worked notes

Sing it

Attach it to your memory by linking it to a personal memory or emotion

Make up a mnemonic

Mind-map

Poster-it

The Shrinking Resource

Process It

Learn it



Gordano School

Keys to Learning

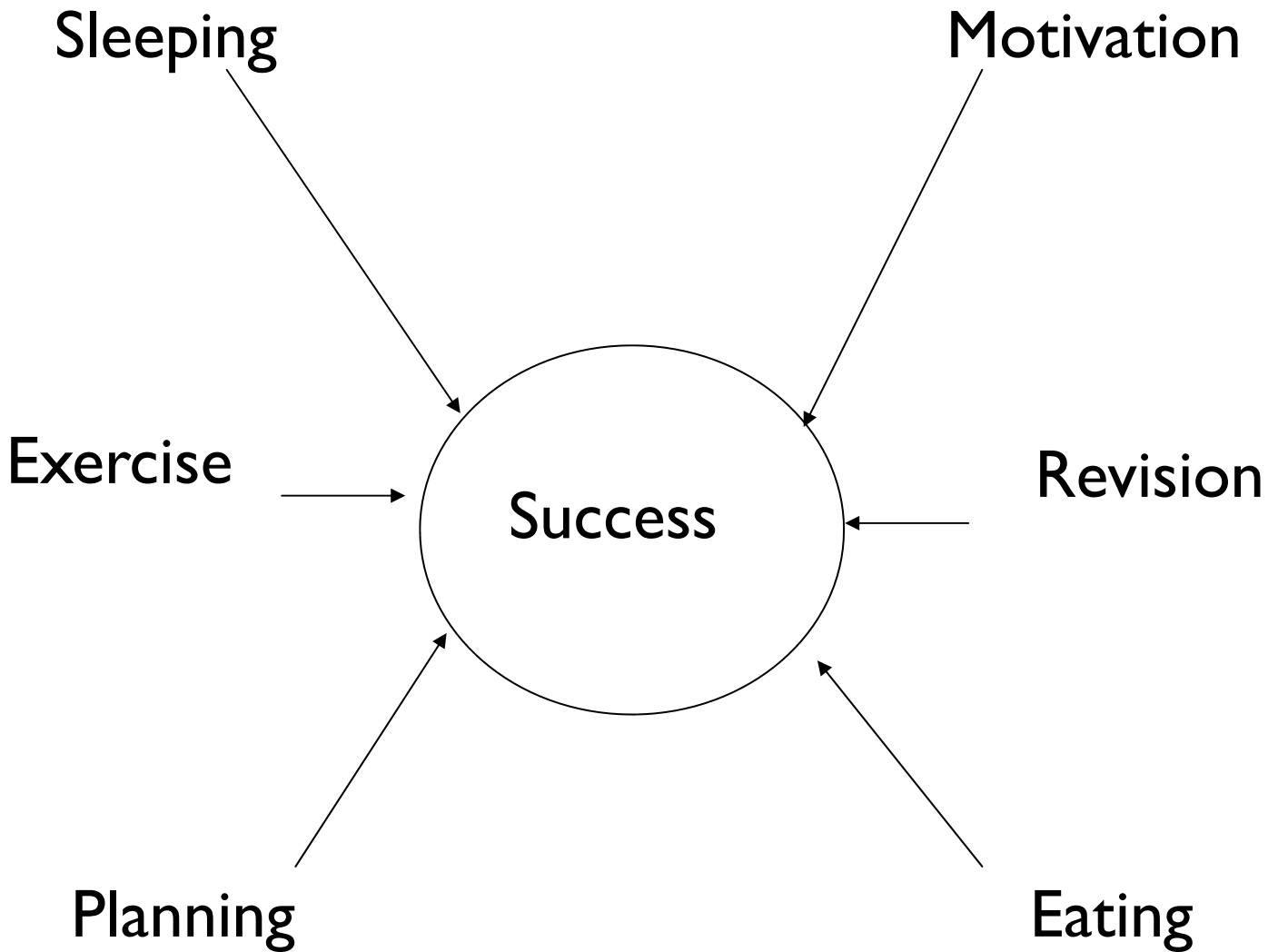
A Guide to helping you achieve your best in
GCSE exams

Believing in your
success

Contents



Page 3	The Ingredients of success
Page 4	The tripartite approach to revision
Page 5	That moment in August—the vision
Page 6	Setting targets
Page 7	What makes me work ?
Page 8	How do you spend your time ?
Page 9	Action Planning
Page 10	How do I learn ? / Revision Techniques
Page 11/12/13/14	Revision Techniques
Page 15	Some Don'ts and some more tips
Page 16	Where I Learn
Page 17	How do I organise myself ?
Page 18	Time planning
Page 19	On exam day
Page 20	Looking after yourself / undress stress
Page 21	Symptoms of stress
Page 22	Stress Busting
Page 23	Be Positive



The ingredients of exam success

How hungry are you for success ?

What have you got to lose ?

What are you doing now to make it happen for you ?

You the GCSE Student

You will be judged for years to come on your GCSE results, like it or not.

You may say that you have the ability to do better than what you achieve, but hard results are what you are judged by.

- Be hungry to succeed
- Be positive
- Don't put limits on what you can do
- Be pro-active (not reactive)
- Start now ! Don't put off revision

Your Family

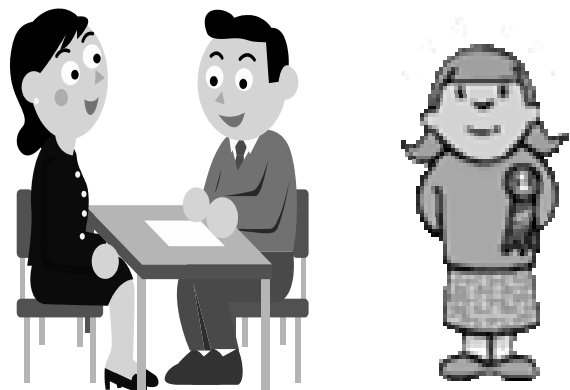
Revision is very much a solo activity—done on your own and very much at home.

- Ask your parents to be patient and tolerate your revision needs
- Make sure you have a quiet, clean working space
- Ask brothers and sisters to respect your need for concentration
- Use your parents for testing knowledge
- Ask your family to keep an eye on your stress levels (more later)
- Ask your parents to read this booklet

Your Teachers

- Your teachers will want you to do your best.
- Always ask questions if there are things that you don't understand
- Seek out teachers after the lesson if you feel that you need to talk one-to-one
- Talk to a teacher, tutor or househead if you feel stressed or in need of a chat
- Make an appointment to see somebody if you are worried about something. Don't bottle it all up and keep it to yourself, you will make yourself ill.

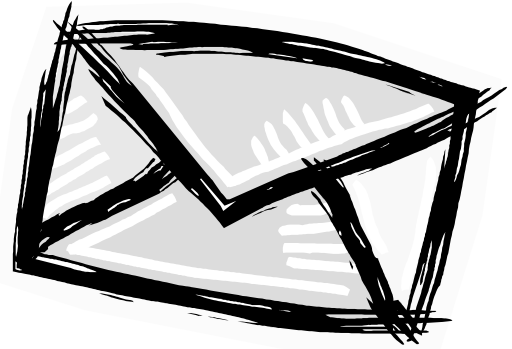
The tripartite approach to revision



That Moment in August

Picture the scene:

It is a hot summer's morning. You are standing outside of the library with a large group of friends waiting to pick up your results. There is a lot of laughing and screaming and nervous conversation. It is the first time you have been back in school since your last exam in June. You walk through the doors and see your Househead. You are given an envelope which you open with trembling hands. When you finally get the envelope open you read the contents several times before your brain can take in what it says.



- What can you see ?
- How do you feel ?
- What are you saying to yourself ?
- What is the first thing you want to do ?



So, what was the result ?

- Did you put in the necessary effort ?
- Was it a positive vision ?
- What do you need to do to make sure it is a positive result ?

Make a list of all the GCSEs that you will be taking and write down the grades that you **WANT** to see when you open that envelope.

Subject

Grade

Subject

Grade

Setting Targets

Now that you have a picture in your mind of what success could look like, how are you going to get there ?

What is it that you want to do after GCSE ?

Are there any subjects/number of subjects in which you must do well in to achieve this ambition ?

If you took these exams today, what grade would you honestly get ?

For each subject that you have identified in your answer to question 2 write down exactly what you need to do between now and the exams in order that you hit your target. Avoid comments like 'work harder' and be specific.



What makes me work ?

- We often limit our achievements
- Believe in your ability to succeed
- You can reach the highest goals if you believe in yourself
- If you tell yourself that you can't do something you won't be able to do it

**To achieve
success you
must be
positive**

- If you want to achieve something-
you will motivate yourself to do
it
- Master your time to make time
to succeed
- Make exam success one of your
priorities
- Successful people plan their time

Motivation

Time is life

It is irreversible and irreplaceable

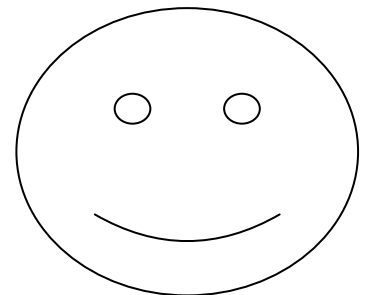
To waste your time is to waste your life.

But to master your time is to master your life and to
make the most of it.

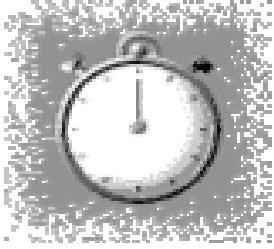
Lakein



**Planning
time is
never
wasted
time**



**Believe in
yourself**



How do you spend your time at the moment ?

Look back on last week...

	Yes	No	Comment
1. Did you spend time planning your week ?			
2. Did you decide in advance what you had to achieve ?			
3. Did you set any priorities ?			
4. Did you set any deadlines and meet them ?			
5. Did you meet deadlines set by other people ?			
6. Did you arrange any special activities ?			
7. Did you find time to relax ?			
8. Did you write down your goals ?			
9. Did you spend any time reflecting on how effective your learning was ?			
10. Did you put off anything you needed to do/waste time ?			

Time Management Task

That was last week..

STEP 1: Now write down what I have to do next week:

Next week tasks I have to do:



Step 2: What would I like to do next week ?

Step 3: Now look at both of your lists and number each one, separately, in priority order. Put a number 1 beside the most important thing that you have to do next week and then number the rest of the items in that box. Then move to the next box and repeat the process.

Step 4: Action Plan for next week

Things to do next week

When I will do them

Tick when done

How do I Learn ?

- We all learn in different ways
- There are at least 8 different types of 'intelligence' that we know of, so nobody is actually not intelligent, people are simply intelligent in different ways.
- You must formulate your own ways of learning and decide what is best for you, which will differ in many ways to your friends and colleagues.
- You do not have to revise the same way for each GCSE. What works best for what subject ?

Possible Revision Techniques

1. Highlight Key Points

- Underline in various colours (colour coding) important aspects of work. Use to chunk down work, giving you information to process later
- Very effective to visually draw out key points for revision

2. Make a Mind Map

- Like a spider diagram using colours so that each leg of the spider is a different colour and is a related aspect. Use pictures as well as words. This could be used as a summary from highlighting key points and is a good way to visually remember things

3. The Shrinking Mind Map

- The aim in revision is to shrink as much of the key points down into a small space. The process of this actually helps you learn the information.
- The result is that you have a portable device that you can carry around and learn from. Chunk down your mind map further.
- Cut off the outside legs and use the main stems to stimulate your brain to remember the other parts. This is useful to take into the exam.

4. **Cassette Tapes**

- Take some of the key points from your lists/notes and condense them onto a cassette tape
- Variety is important. Get other people to record bits so that you have variety of voice (family)
- Using background music may help, as some people have found that a particular piece reminds them of an associated topic.
- Use the tape for playback during 'dead time', i.e. on the bus, walking etc
- Record a bit each day and your tape will soon fill up nicely

5. **Song & Rhyme**

- Making up catch phrases or rhymes can help with crucial bits of information.
Example: to help you sort out which is the x and the y axis on a graph you could remember 'x below y because y goes up high', cringe-worthy yes, scoring points in an exam, who cares about naff!
- Making up song and rhyme can be fun, sharing it with others even funnier

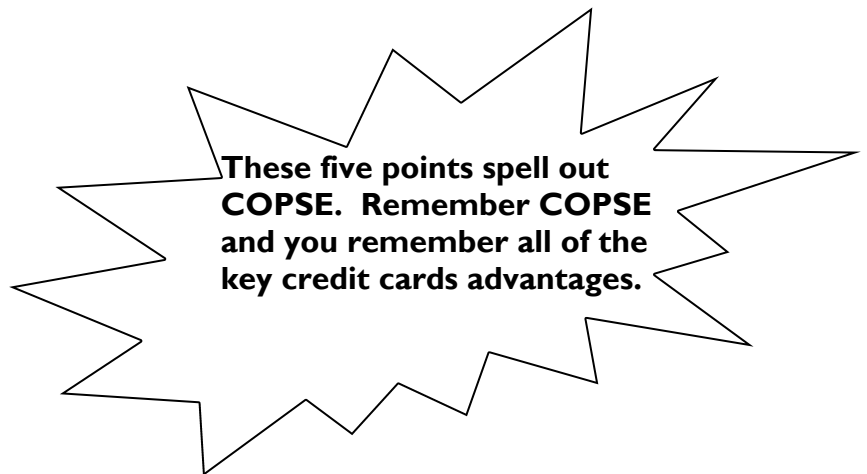
6. **Mnemonics and Acronyms**

- A mnemonic is a word or abbreviation that helps you remember.
- An acronym is a word made up using the first letters of a series of other words, or the first word of a series of sentences. An example—to remember the advantages of carrying credit cards (for a business studies question):

Convenient to carry
Outlets for use everywhere
Pay later
Security
Extras, insurance, air miles

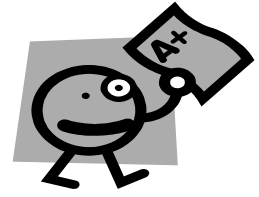
REMEMBER

- If you have remembered your mnemonics and mind maps, it is not cheating to write them down on paper as soon as you get in the exam room.
- Make acronyms funny, personal or even rude if it helps. It is an excellent way of reducing a great deal of information into manageable chunks.



7. Flash Cards

- Research shows that when our brain is storing information our eyes are often angled upwards to the right or to the left (depending on how your brain is set up)
- Flash cards can be a big help in remembering important information
- Why not make some brightly coloured lists or just write down key words that you want to remember
- Try different colours for different topics/subjects



8. Wall Posters (large scale flash cards)

- Use the flash card idea to condense information onto large scale posters to put up in your bedroom or around your house. You will sub-consciously remember key points as you look at these each day.
- Ask your family if you can use different rooms for different topic areas and put up posters. You could colour code each room ! The dining room could become maths, the kitchen science, the living room English and so on. As you move around the house you move through and open the different subject files !



9. Lists, charts and notes

- More traditional methods still work !
- Bullet pointed lists are a good way to summarise information
- Visual methods including charts are excellent ways to memorise information, especially if they are large (big enough for your wall !)
- Concentrate on shrinking the information down as far as possible
- Eliminate excessive words from lists, focus on key terms

10. Word Walls

- Following on from above, using the key terms and the language used in subjects will earn you marks. Why not have some of these scattered around the house/bedroom or on walls around the house (see number 8)

A graphic of a brick wall with a horizontal line above it. The words 'Economies of Scale' are written in a large, bold, black font across the middle of the wall.

Economies of Scale

11. Study Buddy—Sharing Learning

- One of the most effective ways to learn is to teach someone else
- This helps you process information yourself as you explain it to others
- Use friends and family to test you—how do you know if you know it (move quickly away from the idea that if you have read something that you must know it—you probably don't!) You may be wasting your valuable revision time. A study buddy can help you here.
- Build in a testing EACH DAY to see how well you are learning/revising something

12. Practising Previous Exam Questions

- Test yourself against the real goal posts by doing past papers !
- These give you a great idea of the style of questions, how many questions in each section and timing
- It gives you an excellent experience of decoding the trigger words—what exactly are they asking you to do rather than answering a question as you want to. Understand the language !

Over 60% of all errors in exams are caused by not reading the question properly.



13. Show You Know

- Show yourself that you know your stuff !
- Don't fool yourself that you know something because you spent 2 hours reading it !
- How effective was that time spent ?
- Recite things out loud
- Write down lists after revising to see if you can recall things
- Stop yourself from eating that chocolate biscuit until you can provide that answer to yourself

You know something if you recall it whenever you want

You cannot be sure that you know something because you can recall it 30 seconds after reading it—that is fooling yourself.

Learn and re-learn

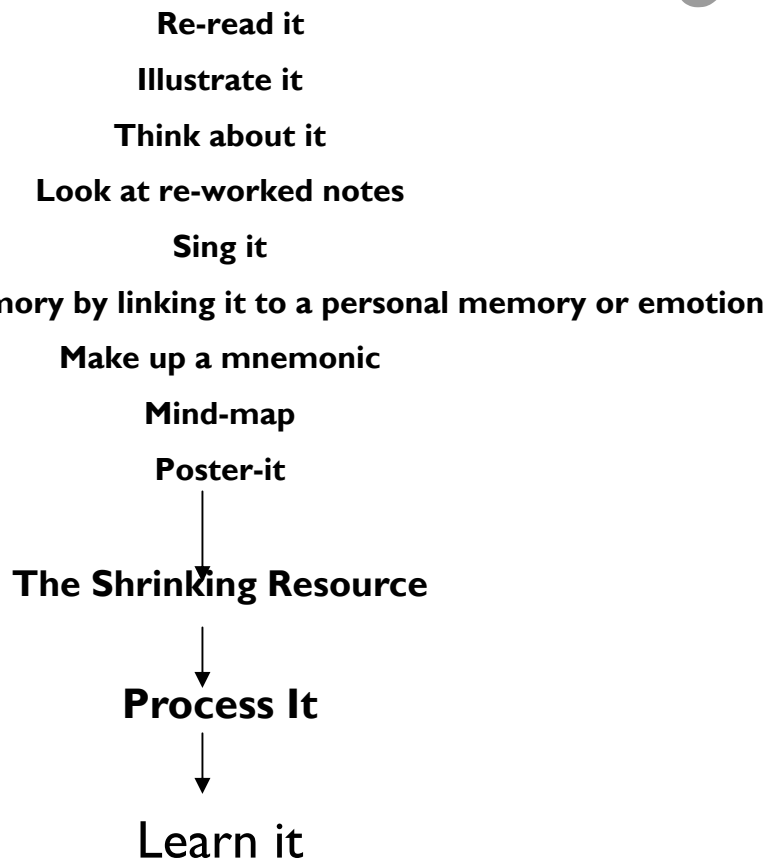
14. Revision Cards

- Some people like to condense information onto small revision cards
- These are portable and can be carried around
- Keep words to a minimum, key points only, don't over-crowd the card, it becomes difficult to read and visualise
- Have some organisation, i.e. one card per topic
- Use colour, use pictures, use bullet points
- Make it fun and use mnemonics to make it fun
- The process of carding up a topic is as important as reading the card later as it will help you revise



15. Take a break

- People learn best at the start and finish of each revision session, so have lots of starts and ends !
- The maximum time that you can concentrate is 40 minutes
- Reward yourself by finishing something and then taking 5 minutes out for a coffee—then back to it!





And some don'ts



- Don't kid yourself that you know something just because it seems familiar
- Don't revise with friends if you won't concentrate on work. If you are revising with friends make sure that it is the revising and testing that you are doing—you are only fooling yourself if you are not working. Friends are for life, GCSEs happen just once
- Don't fool yourself that you know something just because you have read it. Process it, learn it, test yourself against it
- Don't go on revising if you are tired. This is not profitable time and it will be better spent sleeping and picking up that time later. Give yourself a break, especially before bedtime and work to a plan, **not** adhoc (make it up as you go)
- Don't necessarily measure yourself against your friends—they learn in different ways, they may revise quicker or may not be telling you everything about the quantity of work.. If your friend hasn't done much either then feeling more confident is very short sighted—you both will fall short of your potential !

And Finally, some more tips

- Get your notes up to scratch and plug any gaps NOW
- Divide your work into sections/chunk down ready for revision (topic based) using file dividers
- Think about more than one subject at a time
- Revise several topics in one day/evening
- Chunk down
- Plan your time & stick to it
- Give yourself rewards
- Think of the long term benefits and not the short term !
- Believe in yourself



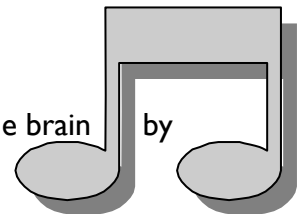
Where I Learn

Essential Checklist

- Comfortable place to work & revise
- Desk/table
- Comfortable chair to support your back
- Good level of lighting
- Good level of ventilation and warmth
- Quiet
- Family understands your needs
- No TV, CD player noise
- All the resources that you need, including notes, books, pens, pencils, paper, card, colours
- Organise your space and remove distractions
- Keep a tidy room (untidy rooms lead to low self-esteem !)
- A 'do not disturb' sign !

Music

- Some people work better with a low level of musical background.
- Some classical music has been shown to improve the concentration of the brain by stimulating it.
- Avoid fast beat music (stops learning)
- Slow and quiet music can be relaxing
- Some Mozart and parts of Vivaldi's Four Seasons plays at about 60 beats per minute, the same as the heart
- Instrumental music often more beneficial than singing/talking



Aromatherapy Oils

- Burning essential oils can be beneficial to concentration and others for relaxation
- Rosemary is said to help concentration



How Do I Organise Myself ?

- Planning a revision programme needs a great deal of thought
- Work backwards from the time of the exams to the moment you intend to start revising
- Build in enough breaks
- Don't over-estimate the time it takes to:
 - ⇒ Get your notes up to date (missing notes copied)
 - ⇒ Get your topics indexed and file divided
 - ⇒ Get your notes shrunk and chunked (see revision techniques)
 - ⇒ Get your understanding tested
 - ⇒ Get your understanding re-tested after repeating the process, for every sub topic of every topic of every GCSE

GCSE Subject → Topics → Sub Topics

Shrunk and Chunk

- Know what you are going to do tonight between 8pm and 8.30
- Planning is control
- Control reduces stress
- The more in control and less stressful you are the more likely you are to achieve your best
- Time spent on planning is never wasted

The Plan Step 1—Draw up a grid similar to this one

Week No				Weeks
	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

You could break this down into hours but build in breaks and rewards (i.e. watching East Enders)

Step 2

- Diary dates—fill in everything on your planner. Include holidays, social events, sporting fixtures, you may need to think about this !

Step 3

- Fill in the dates of your GCSE exams, this shows you how much time you have between each one

Step 4

- Break subjects down into topics and revise topic by topic
- Count up the number of topics
- Count how many slots that you will need for each topic, but check that you are giving enough time for each topic
- Check that you are giving yourself time to shrink down resources and self-test
- Check that you are building in time for re-testing and re-revising topics !
- Always work backwards from the exams, you then see how much time that you haven't got !

Relaxation

- You must build in time to relax otherwise you will not make it or get so stressed that revision becomes a negative learning tool.
- Build in mop-up slots and safety slots in case something pops up that throws your timetable out of schedule

Step 5

- Copy your plan if possible (in case the dog eats it)
- Put it up where you can see it and check against it
- Tick off work completed and further work that may be needed
- Use the plan to control your life—being in control is good !

On Exam Day

- Working towards an exam is being like an elite athlete preparing for a top performance
- Be at your peak
- SLEEP
- Take physical exercise
- EAT quality food—your body is your temple, don't fuel your brain with rubbish !



Your brain weighs less than 3lbs but it consumes 20% of all the oxygen you take in and runs at a power rating of 10 watts. The energy that it burns accounts for nearly a third of all the heat given off by your body. Rest it and feed it !

- Get into a routine. Set your alarm clock giving yourself good time to get up
- Eat breakfast— fuel that brain
- Be positive—no negative thoughts allowed
- Keep your head up and shoulders relaxed
- Tell yourself that you can do it
- Take on water—fuel the brain
- Know your exam time beforehand
- Know your exam venue beforehand
- Know your seat beforehand
- Get your exam equipment ready the night before
- Keep focused



Looking After Yourself

Understanding Stress



Stress can make your brain stop working

Different things stress different people

Stress can be positive—where you feel stretched and rise to the challenge

OR negative, when your thinking brain closes down

Undress Stress

- Being in control reduces stress
- Make a plan and stick to it
- Establish a routine and stick to it
- Eat properly
- Get enough sleep
- Take regular breaks as part of your plan
- When on planned leisure forget work
- When revising Subject 'A' forget Subject 'B', 'C' and 'D'
- Build variety into your revision and beat boredom
- Talk to people, talk to everyone. This is a natural way of relieving tension—don't bottle it all up
- Don't worry what other people are doing—keep your eye on your future not their's
- Listen to good advice but be aware that some people SAY a lot and do NOTHING. You need to get on with what you need to do.
- Organise a stress free work zone where you can really focus on what you need to do and when you need to do it

Symptoms of Stress

- Bad tempered/irritable
- Persistent headaches
- Persistent backache
- Lack of concentration (worse than normal !)
- Feelings of panic
- Feelings that you can't get your breath properly
- Feelings of unhappiness or despair
- Feelings of pointlessness
- Stomach ache
- Dizziness



You will probably experience some or all of these things over the revision period

If they start to get in the way, seek help and tell somebody

Negative stress stops learning and is unhealthy

Stress Tip

Nearly every single symptom on this list is caused by disruption to your breathing patterns. If your brain takes in 20% of all oxygen you absorb, stress makes you breathe at only a fraction of your proper capacity—what effect is this going to have on the way you learn ?

Caffeine Conscious

Fluids are important for your body, but do not overload on caffeine.

Caffeine can greatly exaggerate the feelings of stress.

Too much coffee, tea and coke can wind you up—drink de-caff.

Too much sugar will make you sleepy and make it harder to concentrate

Cereals and fruit are better snacks while you are working. Avoid lots of sweets

Stress Busting

Suggested Actions

- Share the problem/talk it out with someone else
- Be active. Do something physical to take your mind off the problem. Feel good about being fit or try some relaxation classes
- Be logical. Make a list of possibilities, consider all of the options. Nothing is as bad as it seems
- Relax. Tighten your muscles and then drop your shoulders and let the tension go.
- Write about it. Seeing things on paper can make some fears look smaller than they seem in your head
- Concentrate on your breathing.

Try ten repetitions like this:

Breathe in deeply for a slow count of four.

Hold the breath for a slow count of twelve

Release the breath slowly for a slow count of eight

Force yourself to delay worrying.

Do something else for 15 minutes and then come back to the problem.

Positive Attitudes

- Think positively and don't think about the negative alternative—just don't think about it.
- Control it. Make yourself stop, pause, think and take a fresh look.
- What is the worst that could happen ?
- Imagine the worst possible scenario—is it really going to be like this ? Has it happened to anybody else you know personally ? If so, what was it ?
- Focus on something pleasant—try your own virtual reality experience. Where will you be spending the summer months ?
- See the funny side. Smile at everybody—they will smile back ! How does it make you feel ? Smile at yourself in the mirror !
- Imagine looking back at the problem a few years on from now. How important do you think it will be then ?
- Set some goals to get through it. Break the problem down. Tackle it one step at a time and keep thinking how good you will feel when the problem is behind you.
- You are NOT alone. This feeling is experienced by thousands of students every year. It is normal. You are not alone and very soon you will be through it.

And Finally.....

Be positive

Climbing the ladder to success is not meant to be easy

Exams are meant to challenge you

They are hard work

Exams need a great deal of prep work

You can do your best

You can focus on your own learning

You can avoid *distractions* from friends

You can use friends for *support*

You can plan

You can find your way of effectively revising

Keep saying it and you will believe it



Falling back on failure is no excuse and is often too comfortable as the way out.

Say no to:

I could have done better

I am not very good at..

I can't do..

I haven't got time to...

I am too thick to...

I never eat breakfast because..

I get too tired to...

I get really stressed out by exams..

I don't know how to do a revision timetable..

I don't know how to revise...

I can't do exams....

Keep saying it and you will believe it

Be proud of your achievements

Take charge of your learning

Be pro-active

Believe in your success

You CAN DO it !