



# Study smarter

## How to support your young person with revision





## Aims of this session

- What can students do to improve their memory, mood and concentration?
- What does research tell us about how to study more effectively – to really help embed knowledge?
- Which techniques really work, and which don't?
- How can you as families support your young person's study and help improve their study habits?



# I learn best when I...

- Read over my notes lots of times
- Highlight key points
- Teach someone else
- Write notes out again in a different form e.g. mind maps
- Test myself using flashcards/quizzes
- Do past paper questions
- Cram the knowledge just before an exam, so it's all fresh in my head
- Revise a topic several times over the course of a few weeks

Can you remember how you studied? Pick as many as applied to you!





# What the research shows doesn't work

There is no one way to revise, but there is a lot of research to show that some of the most common and popular methods are not the most effective. For example:

- **Just** re-reading notes or class slides
- Re-watching recordings without doing anything with them
- **Just** highlighting notes
- Summarising **WHILST** looking at notes
- Cramming information in a short time before the assessment



# The Science of Revision: What Cognitive Psychologists tell us works



Eat well



Sleep well



Effective work/break balance



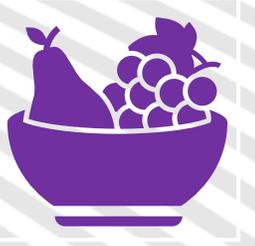
Study environment



Effective study techniques



## Eat well



- Don't skip meals and eat before you start to study – nutrition advisers state that small meals often can be a good way of keeping up energy levels.
- 'Brain food' – it's a thing! Food with a high protein content has been proven to help keep the brain mentally alert.
- Plenty of fruit and veg
- Limit caffeine intake – not just coffee, think about what's in your soft drinks.
- Avoid sugar? Sugar in moderation and keeping food/snacks high in nutritional content will help concentration.



# Sleep well



The science of 'Sleep Hygiene' - it's all about routine...

- Stick to a bedtime routine – aim to go to sleep at the same time each evening
- Plan with your friends to not be online, especially around exam season - that way you won't get FOMO. LEAVE PHONES/IPADS OUT OF REACH
- Try to stop digital revision an hour before you sleep and detox from the blue light.
- End your day screen free – no TV either. Reading is a great way to relax your mind into sleep.
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zd3pywx>



# Effective work/break balance



- Set goals and be realistic
- Break it up – 30 minute of study then 10 minutes of distraction – check your phone, a wee walk, glass of water etc. (adjust the time as suits the challenge)
- On the approach to assessments or exams have a calendar plan.
  - Senior Phase Assessment Calendar: <https://royalhighschool.co.uk/senior-phase-assessment/>
  - My SQA: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/68908.html>
- Study Smart: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zkyts82>



# Study environment



- Where is study happening?
- What are the distractions (phones/digital)?



# Effective study techniques



The key messages from research...

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zkpi96f>

1. Psychologists recommend that to improve your memory you need to make your brain work- they call this '**retrieval practice**'
2. Vital to re-organise the information in some way - notes of your notes, making connections, practising writing answers - helps get material lodged in memory.
3. Spacing out revision is the most effective revision technique: 1 hour a day over 10 days on a topic is better than 10 hours in one day



# Effective study techniques



**Great Students Teach**

**Test For Progress**



Getting Started



Spaced Repetition



Teaching others



Testing yourself



Finding Gaps



Past Papers



# Strategy 1: Getting started



- First step- work out what you need to know - use lists given by teacher/lists of course content on SQA website.
- Find any gaps in notes - go to OneNote/Teams, ask teacher.
- Identify areas of weakness
- When preparing for assessments, come up with a **realistic revision plan**. Switching between different topics/subjects rather than focusing on one topic/ subject during a revision session works best.

**Support at home:** Go through the list of content for each topic with them and help them 'traffic light' how they feel about each topic. Any 'Reds'-encourage them to start with these topics- this gives more time to keep going over them.



# Strategy 2: Spaced repetition



## Spaced Practice

- Cutting up revision into smaller chunks and spacing it out over a period of time is suggested by research as the best strategy to adopt when planning for assessments.

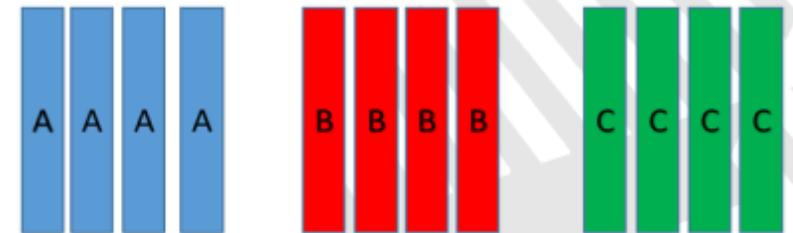
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/znj4dnb>

**Support at home:** Use flashcards organised in a box. Set up a schedule revising the cards in each of the sections in your box. If they answer a card correctly, put it into a section to revisit less frequently in the future, whereas if the answer is wrong, move the card into a section scheduled for frequent visits.

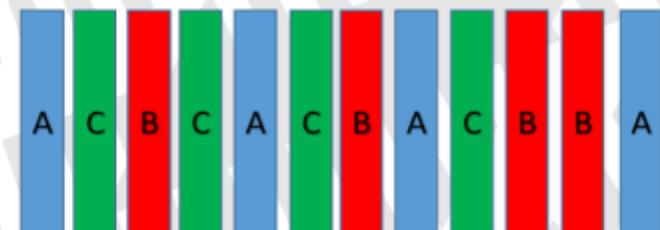
## Interleaving

- As with spaced practice, leaving gaps between studying is very effective. When studying multiple topics, mixing up the material you study adds to its impact.

Massed Practice



Interleaved Practice

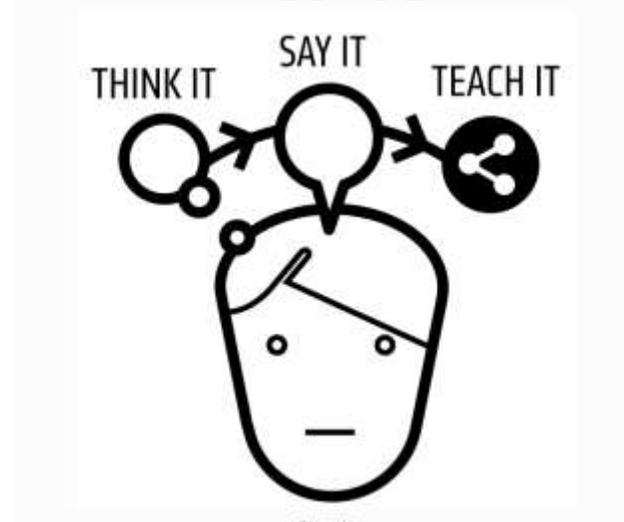




## Strategy 3: Teaching others



- After testing yourself, teach the material to someone else- or even the mirror!
- Found to help aid memory and recall- “the Protégé Effect”.
- Teaching someone else requires you to learn and organise your knowledge in a clear and structured manner.



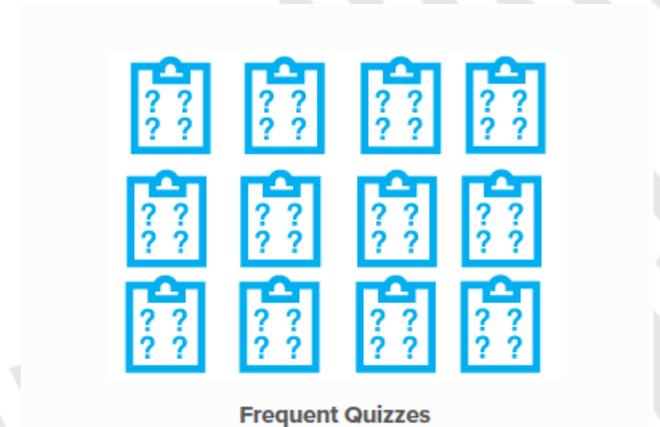
**Support at home:** get them to teach you a topic. Try doing it several times- leaving a longer gap between each time you do it e.g. an hour, a day, a few days, a week.



# Strategy 4: Testing yourself



- Practice **retrieving** information: test yourself frequently.
  - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zhdrkhv>
- Make notes, flashcards, mindmaps, diagrams, glossaries
- THEN test - quizzes, multiple choice questions, past papers, summaries without looking at notes.
- Don't always have to write it- testing yourself by speaking answers out loud can work too
- Keep revisiting the same questions/tests if you didn't do well.



**Support at home:** Test them on what they've learned- make up quizzes or get them to make up quizzes for you to give them. Try to ask unexpected questions to check for understanding.



## Strategy 5: Finding gaps



- Big advantage of frequently testing yourself is it helps you find gaps in your knowledge.
- Key part of improving study skills is improving metacognition - **knowledge about own knowledge**
- Goal is to improve this metacognition for each subject - **and being able to identify specific areas for improvement**

**Support at home:** after testing/doing past paper practice, try and work out why didn't do well. Structure of Q? Memory? Not understanding? Didn't read Q?



## Strategy 6: Past papers



- Vital part of revision process at home (too often left till last minute or not done at all)
- Practising sample answers to past exam questions can help train your brain to retrieve information- do same Q more than once!
- Identifying the command words of the question and knowing how to answer the different types is a huge part of success.

**Support at home:** Go to <https://www.sqa.org.uk/pastpapers/findpastpaper.htm>. Time them doing questions and then go through the marking scheme to see how to improve. Close to the exam, time them doing a full past paper to help manage timings. Encourage them to hand in extra questions to teachers- happy to help.



## FAQs

- What resources can be used to support revision?
- Where can past papers be accessed? How will these be marked?
- When are study support sessions?
  - Term time - [RHS Study Support 2025](#)
  - Easter - TBA
- How much work at home should a young person be doing?



# Resources

- Study Support sessions at RHS - [RHS Study Support 2025](#)
- [Achieve](#) – key notes and linked past paper questions and answers for the majority of courses
  - School access code – VdfELitH
- [SQA - NQ - Past papers and marking instructions](#)
- [SQA - Understanding Standards](#) – marked exam scripts with commentaries (very useful for seeing how different subjects are marked)
- [Scholar Online Learning](#) - log-ins from S4 upwards
- [BBC Bitesize](#) – online resource covering most N5 and Higher qualifications (good for some subjects but doesn't necessarily have everything. Provides content and tests online)
- [Quizlet](#) – free digital flashcards (learners can make their own or use others')
- [Crash Course](#) – videos on a lot of different topics (but not sorted by Scottish qualifications)



## Extra resources

- TED talks- lots of good idea on motivation and revision:  
<https://www.savesthestudent.org/extra-guides/inspirational-ted-talks-to-get-you-through-exams.html>
- Good article about managing stress and anxiety:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/nov/21/how-anxiety-scrambles-your-brain-and-makes-it-hard-to-learn>
- Article about blocking apps and improving productivity:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2014/dec/17/internet-restriction-apps-productivity>