

# Successful Revision: A Guide

**WARNING!** Studies clearly show that some revision strategies are less effective than others.

The **least effective** revision strategies are:

- Re-reading notes
- Re-writing notes
- Highlighting or underlining notes/ revision guides
- Cramming at the last minute



## RETRIEVAL PRACTICE -The **BEST** approach to revision

### What is Retrieval Practice?

It's doing revision activities which involve regularly recalling information from memory.

Challenging your brain to recall information creates **stronger memory traces**, increasing the likelihood that the information will be stored in your **long-term memory**. Also, the more you practice retrieving the information from long-term memory, the easier it is to do. This will help you in exam conditions when you are under pressure.

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## How can I get the most out of retrieval practice?



### Spaced Practice

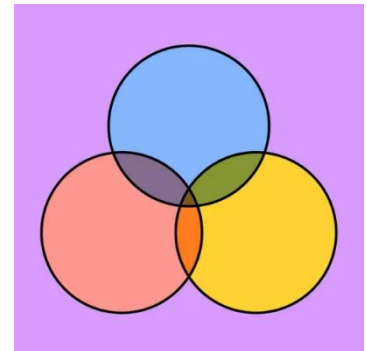
Break up revision into manageable chunks of 20-30 minutes and plan to return to knowledge at a later point to see how much you can recall.

[Click here for more advice about spaced retrieval practice.](#)

### Interleaving

Mix up and combine different topics in a revision sessions. For example, if you are going to revise for 2 hours, break it down into four 30 minute sessions with each session focussing on a different topic/subject.

[Click here for more advice about interleaving.](#)



# RETRIEVAL STRATEGIES

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## #1 Brain Dumps (also called the Blank Sheet Method)

### Good for...

- ✓ Identifying which parts of a topic you need to focus on most
- ✓ Recalling information on a whole topic after focussed revision on sub-topics

### How it works...

1. Take a blank piece of paper and write down the topic name as a heading.
2. Set yourself and appropriate time limit and write down as much as you can remember on the page.
3. Read over your class notes/exercise book/revision guide and then close the book.
4. Take a different colour pen and add more information from your memory.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until you have everything.

### Getting the most out of brain dumps:

- Use it to identify what information you struggled to remember so you know what parts of the topic to prioritise for more focussed revision.
  - Use brain dumps as a group revision activity. You and your study partner spend 5 minutes recording everything you can remember on your won blank sheet. Swap with each other. Take a different colour pen and add to your partner's brain dump anything they have missed.
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[Click image for more information](#)

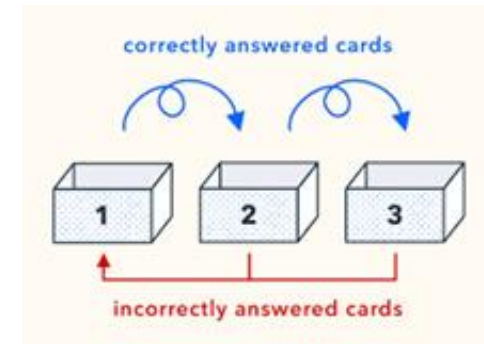
## #2 Flash Cards

### Good for...

- ✓ Recalling key words and facts, definitions and short answers
- ✓ Quick recall checks

### How do I make flash cards?

1. Buy or make index cards.
2. Write key questions on the front and the answers on the back.
3. Alternatively, you can buy flashcards by subject and exam board (although you do then have to use them).



### Getting the most out of your flashcards:

- Use the [Leitner Method](#) to help prioritise the topics you need to spend more time on.
- Shuffle cards regularly so you tackle questions in a different order.
- Keep them handy so you can use them when you have 5 minutes to spare.
- Force yourself to say the answer out loud or write it down do not just say it in your head.
- Avoid multiple choice questions – they don't make your brain work hard enough.

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## #3 Mind Maps from Memory

### Good for...

- ✓ Recalling large amounts of information in a topic
- ✓ Making connections within and across different topics



Click image for more  
information

### How it works...

1. Choose a topic.
2. On the paper write down the headings which cover the key content in the topic.
3. Next, look over your notes/revision guide/text book on one of the sections for 10 minutes.
4. Write down on your mind map all you can remember under the appropriate heading.
5. Repeat for the next section until you have covered all headings.
6. Now go back to your first heading and use your notes/revision guide/text book to see what you've missed.
7. Cover your notes again and add any further points.
8. Repeat step 7.

### Getting the most out of mind maps:

- Create the mind map from memory. Otherwise you are just copying which doesn't help you learn.
- Don't waste time making it pretty. Use different colour pens for a reason e.g. links and connections
- Repeat the exercise regularly – you should see that what you can remember in your first attempt increases each time you do it.

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## #4 Revision Clocks

### Good for...

- Recalling the different parts of a larger topic.

### How it works...

1. [Print](#) or make a copy of the revision clock template.
2. Choose a topic and in each segment write down the different questions or sub topics that make up this work.
3. Spend 5 minutes per segment writing down everything you can remember. To complete the clock will take 1 hour.



4. Return to it later and use your notes to add anything you missed in a different colour.

### Getting the most out of your revision clock:

- Complete the revision clock from memory, otherwise you are just copying notes.
  - For longer questions/bigger subtopics, adapt the clock into four 15 minute segments or six 10 minute segments.
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## #5 Timelines from Memory



### Good for...

- Recalling information in sequence e.g plot in a text, formation of geographical feature

### How it works...

1. Make a timeline template that covers the number of steps/events you need to recall.
2. Write down the name of the key event, year or fact along the timeline.
3. From memory, write down the important information related to each prompt.
4. Check your notes and, in a different colour pen, add any information you forgot.

### Getting the most out of your timeline from memory:

- Add challenge – as your memory improves, start with a blank piece of paper and add the key events, years or other prompts from memory as well as the important information related to the prompt.
- Can you remember what happens but keep getting the order mixed up? Write down each event/step in the sequence on a post-it note. From memory stick the post-its on the timeline in the correct order. Check and repeat regularly
- Try creating a mnemonic to help you remember the order of events as you build your timeline from memory.

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## #6 Retrieval Relay

### Good for...

- Recalling information for extended answers or big topics.

### How it works...

1. Print or make a copy of the retrieval relay template.
2. Choose a full topic you have studied or a past paper question.
3. Without using your notes, write down as much as you can remember in box 1.
4. Now spend 3-5 minutes reading your notes/revision guide/text book before putting them away.
5. Now add and further information in box 2.
6. Repeat steps for box 3 and by box 4 you should have a complete answer.
7. Focus on revising the information in boxes 2-4 as this is the information you have found harder to recall.

### Getting the most out of retrieval relay:

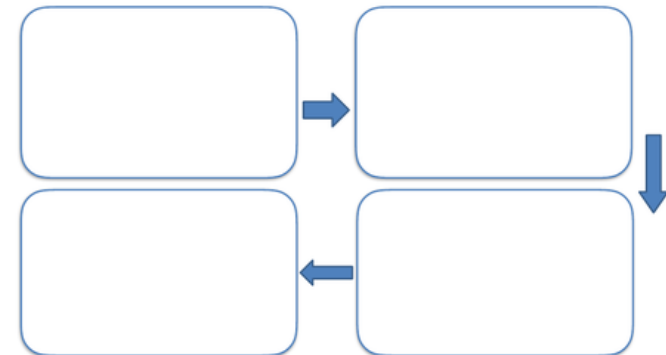
- You can use this activity for group revision. Person 1 completes the Box 1 and passes the paper to the next person. Person 2 then fills in Box 2 without repeating anything Person 1 has written down. Person 3 and Person 4 completes boxes 3 and 4 in the same way. Mix up who is Person 3 and 4 to ensure everyone is challenged.
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#### Retrieval Relay Race!



Instructions: In the first box write as much as you can remember about our topic. In the second box one of your peers must write what they can recall about our topic **but they cannot repeat any of the information from your first box!** The third box needs to be completed by someone else but again this must include new information and the same for the final box.



## #7 Practicing Assessment Questions

### Good for...

- ✓ Applying learning in context
- ✓ Identifying gaps in knowledge and topics to revise.

### How it works...

1. Begin answering a past paper (google subject and exam board).
2. When you get to a question you cannot answer, stop and use one of the revision techniques above to revise that content.
3. Return to the paper and continue. Repeat step 2 above as necessary.
4. Once you have completed the paper, use the mark scheme to identify where you have missed information and add this in a different colour.

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### Exam Board Websites for Past Papers and Mark Schemes

<a href="#">English Language and Literature</a> : Power & Conflict, An Inspector Calls, A Christmas Carol, Romeo & Juliet
<a href="#">Combined Science</a>
<a href="#">Maths</a>
<a href="#">History</a> : Crime & Punishment, Superpower Relations & The Cold War, Weimar & Nazi Germany, Early Elizabethan England
<a href="#">Geography</a> : Hazards, Cold Environments, Rivers & Coasts, Urbanisation, Changing Economic World, Water, Fieldwork
<a href="#">RS</a> : Christianity, Islam & Philosophical Issues
<a href="#">Triple Science</a> : Chemistry, Physics, Biology
<a href="#">French</a> / <a href="#">Spanish</a>



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