The Priory Academy LSST

Parent and Student Revision Handbook

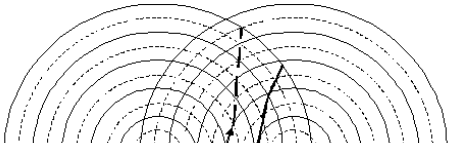
A guide full of revision hints, tips and techniques

Information about Revision

Firstly, do not panic! The storage capacity of the brain is almost infinite! The estimated number of connections your brain can make between different ideas is 1 followed by 800 zeros!

The Main Problems

1. Interference – when one bit of information gets confused with another. To prevent this avoid studying similar topics together and make sure to take regular breaks.



2. Lack of meaningful revision – we've all read a page in a book and once at the bottom have had to re-read the page again because we haven't taken the information in. Make sure you utilise appropriate revision techniques. Avoid checking emails/Facebook/twitter/instagram etc. whilst you revise. You'll think you're revising but really your brain will be in social mode, not learning mode.

3. Stress/Panic – this often happens when you leave your revision too late and therefore overload your working memory. The key to preventing this is starting your revision early and working to a revision timetable.

How our brains work

Our brains have two types of memory - working and long-term. The working memory is quite small and typically holds between 5 and 9 items. In order to learn something properly, we have to shift it from our working memory to our long-term memory – this is where revision comes in.
Everyone's brain requires the same three things to allow this transition from working to long-term memory to happen:

a) Repetition
b) Multi-modal activities – not just relying on reading information, or watching videos but using a variety of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic activities.
c) Effort – unfortunately you cannot just download the information in to your long-term memory, it won't happen unless you **actively** revise.

Top Ten Revision Tips

1. Start Early – don't cram everything in to the last few days before your exam. Plan a revision timetable and stick to it!

2. Pay attention to how you learn:
   Position: The position you revise in affects your concentration, lying on your bed probably won't be as effective as sitting upright at a desk/table.
   Food: Do you study best before dinner? After eating? Whilst snacking? What food helps you concentrate?
   Time of day: Do you work better in the evenings, straight afterschool or first thing in the morning?
   Location: Do you prefer to revise in your room? In the dining room? At school?

3. Do something with the material you want to learn. Some things need to be practised not just read or discussed or explained to someone e.g. maths questions, diagrams in lots of subjects, language vocabulary etc.

4. Get plenty of sleep!

5. Revise in short bursts – generally your age plus 2 is about the number of minutes you can realistically concentrate for effectively. Have a quick break at least once every 20 minutes. Do something active in your break; don't just check your phone!

6. Variety is key – spending too long on one subject, even with breaks, isn't productive. Spend 40-45 minutes (two short sessions) on one subject; take a 10-20 minute break and then focus on a different subject.

7. Don't work with the TV, laptop or phone on – you'll overload your working memory dividing your capacity for paying attention between two things. If you listen to music choose quiet instrumental music, lyrics will distract from what you are trying to learn.

8. Study different subjects in different rooms, or different areas of a room.

9. Revise the same material in different ways, so your repetition isn't just doing the exact same thing over and over.

10. Try lots of different ways of revising until you find the ones that work for you!

Method 1: Stepping Stones

Especially useful for:

If you do the steps in the same order:

- Sequences
- Chronology
- Equations

If you do the steps in a different order each time:

- Creating flexible understanding of big topics, where there are lots of links between ideas.

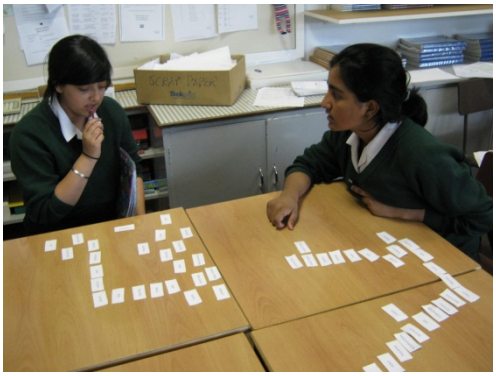
What to do:

- Write each part of what you want to remember on a big piece of paper and put them on the floor.
- Only write key words and draw diagrams too. Bright colours will help.
- Jump /hop/walk between them shouting out what is on them.

Why does it work?

- Because you're reducing the topic to keywords.
- If you add pictures you're linking also to your visual memory.
- If you repeat in the same order each time you have repetition, which helps to move information from the working memory to the long-term memory.
- If you repeat in a different order each time, forcing yourself to think of new connections, you are building a huge network of mental connections in your head, which means you'll be able to retrieve the information from lots of different 'pathways'.

Method 2: Dominos



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- Sequences
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- Equations

If you do the steps in a different order each time:

- Creating flexible understanding of big topics, where there are lots of links between ideas.

What to do:

- Write out the key words from a topic on strips of paper.
- Put your notes away and re-arrange the key words, in any way you like, so you can explain the topic ('tell the story').
- You could then write out the 'dominos' after you have arranged them to help provide a different way of remembering the topic.

Why does it work?

- Because you're reducing the topic to keywords.
- If you add pictures you're linking also to your visual memory.
- If you repeat in the same order each time you have repetition, which helps to move information from the working memory to the long-term memory.
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Method 3: Teach It

Especially useful for:

- Absolutely anything!

What to do:

- Teach someone else what you want to learn.
- Use a piece of A3 paper as if it were a whiteboard and teach someone a topic (it could even be teaching your pet hamster!)

Why it works:

- Because other people don't always understand what you mean, so they ask questions which help you to express yourself more clearly. These questions make you think about the meaning of what you've learned, so you have to understand it, rather than just remember the words you learned.
- Talking about a topic out loud as well as writing key points and words or drawing diagrams uses more parts of your brain – it truly is multi-modal revision! (It explains why teachers know their stuff back to front and inside out!)

Method 4: Record It

Especially useful for:

- Absolutely anything!

What to do:

- Record what you want to learn and listen to the recording over and over again.
- Remember to vary the tone, speed, loudness and pitch of your voice to make it interesting to listen to. Put in claps and bells or any other auditory clue to highlight important ideas. Funny accents will also help.
- If you have friends who want to help, have each person record a different section of the notes, so you can link a particular voice with a particularly topic.
- Listen to your notes whenever you're doing something ordinary such as sitting on the bus, at the gym or walking the dog. It is especially good if you listen just before bedtime and then go straight to sleep. Test yourself when you first wake up, to consolidate your memory.

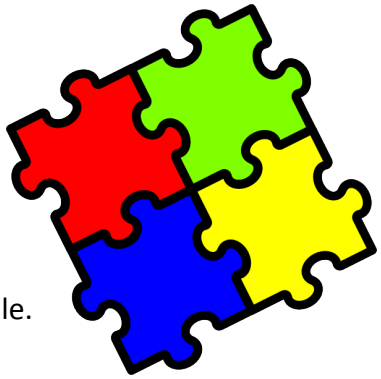
Why it works:

- Revising just before you sleep (and that means *just* before, not once you have checked Facebook, or texted ten people) means there is no new information going into your working memory to dislodge what you've revised before your brain starts transferring it to your long term memory.

Method 5: Jigsaw

Especially useful for:

- Diagrams.



What to do:

- Photocopy a key diagram and then cut it into pieces, so each part of the diagram is on a separate piece.
- Put it back together or give it to a study partner to reassemble.

Why it works:

- Because you are deconstructing it thoughtfully, by cutting it into pieces, then testing your memory by reconstructing it.

Method 6: Key Word Snap

Especially useful for:

- Anything.

What to do:

- Write as many key words from the topic as you like onto cards, one word per card.
- Play snap, against yourself or a partner. Every time there is a ***link*** between two of the key words, shout 'snap'.
- Explain the connection, if your partner accepts it you have won the cards. If you were revising GCSE History for example, and the words were 'communism' and 'Czechoslovakia' you might 'snap' these by saying that Britain was so afraid of communism that they excluded Russia from the meeting with Hitler about the future of Czechoslovakia in 1938.

Why it works:

- You are actively processing the information by making the game.
- By playing the game several times, you are repeating the revision.
- It is auditory and fun. If you include pictures/symbols/colours/different fonts on the game cards it will also be visual: 3 out of 4 factors which our memories like to work with.

Method 7: Index Card Time Trial

Especially useful for:

- Anything.

What to do:

- Write a term on one side of an index card and the definition/key information on the other.
- You have to accurately identify the information on the reverse within a set time.
- Play against a partner; you decide on the time limit and how many cards you have to accurately describe in that time. For example, you could have 3 cards in 30 seconds to score a point. You could also do this with questions and answers, rather than terms and definitions.

Why it works:

- You are actively processing the information by making the game.
- By playing the game several times, you are repeating the revision.
- It is auditory and fun. If you include pictures/symbols/colours/different fonts on the game cards it will also be visual: 3 out of 4 factors which our memories like to work with.

Method 8: Memory Game

Especially useful for:

- Sequences, chronology or equations.

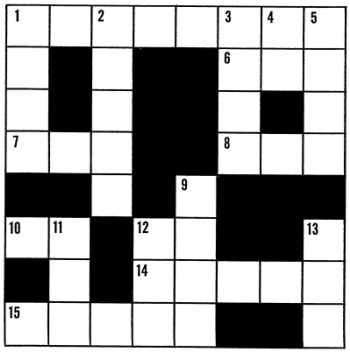
What to do:

- Write each stage of a sequence on a different card.
- Turn them over.
- Turn over one at random and you have to say what comes before and what comes after. You could set yourself a time limit too and play against a partner.

Why it works:

- You are actively processing the information by making the game.
- By playing the game several times, you are repeating the revision.
- It is auditory and fun. If you include pictures/symbols/colours/different fonts on the game cards it will also be visual: 3 out of 4 factors which our memories like to work with.

Method 9: Crosswords



Especially useful for:

- Key terms and definitions

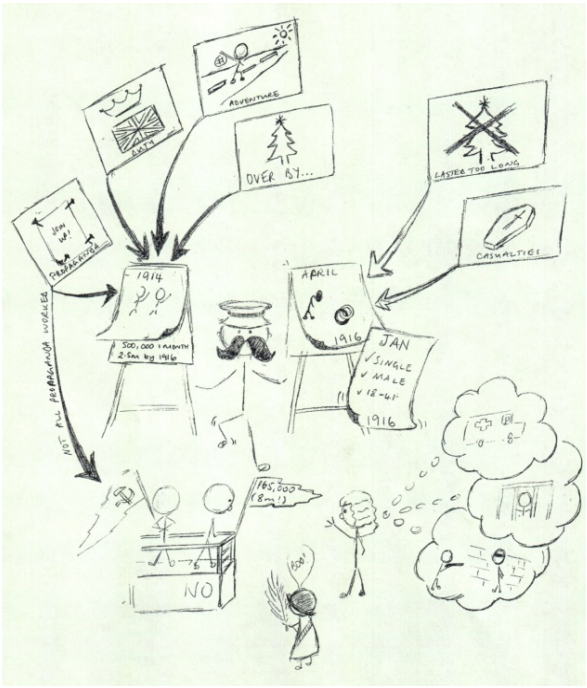
What to do:

- For learning key terms - make a crossword puzzle: the word you need to learn goes in the puzzle, the clue is the definition. Use different colours / fonts for different words / clues.
- You can make one for free at http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com
- You and a friend could do one each and then solve each other's.

Why it works:

- You're processing the words actively and then practising retrieving them by solving the crossword puzzle.

Method 10: Doodle It



Especially useful for:

- Revising whole topics

What to do:

- Collect together all your notes on one topic (this example here is a GCSE topic: recruitment for World War I)
- Now create a picture that links all of this information together.
- Make sure all of the bits of your picture fit together.
- Ideally, use colour, different font shapes and sizes to increase the visually memorable elements.

Why it works:

- Because it uses every aspect of your memory – words, pictures, actively doing something and, because you have created it personally, it has emotional significance. All of these things help move information from the working memory to the long-term memory.
- Because it is really quick to revise! Although it takes time to do, you can scan over it to remind yourself really, really quickly.

Method 11: Backwards Pictures

Especially useful for:

- Revising cause and effect – why things happen the way they do (whether in history, scientific processes, the plots of books, etc.)

What to do:

- Draw a picture of the last stage of the process/plot/event.
- Then draw the second to last stage. Decide what to draw by asking yourself 'why did this (last stage) happen?'
- Repeat until you get to the start.

Why it works:

- Because you are starting from the effect, and you have to think back to why that happened, so you have to *understand* the way things developed, rather than just *know that* xyz happened.

Method 12: Reduce your notes

Especially useful for:

- Detailed information

What to do:

- **Don't** get a highlighter and highlight big chunks! You will learn nothing by doing this; it might make you read more carefully but it won't help you remember it.
- Choose your key words (10-30, depending on how much is covered, is about right). Nouns are often the most useful. These will form the framework of your notes.
- Add colour, pictures, symbols, arrows and numbers to support you.

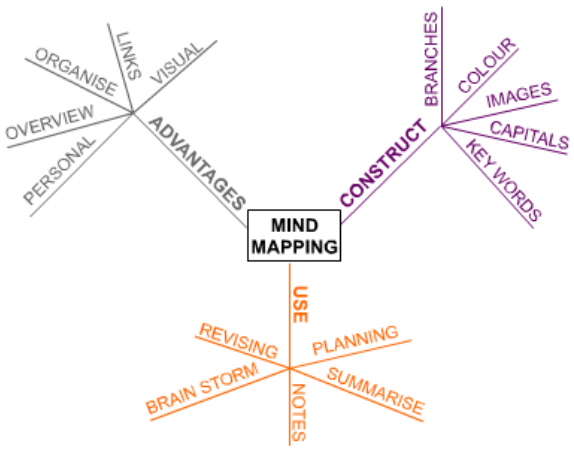
Why it works:

- Because you've had to process the information to reduce it to keywords; so you've had to think about the meaning rather than just the words.
- Because it's quicker to read through than the original notes, so revisiting this revision is easier.

Method 13: Mind Maps

Especially useful for:

- Almost anything!



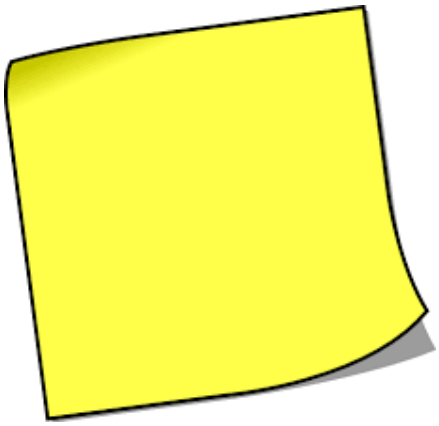
What to do:

- 3 simple rules: one word per branch, lots of colour and relevant but personal pictures.
- Put your key topic in the middle. E.g. Cuba
- Think about how you can organise everything you know about the topic. These groupings will be your main branches and need to be a different colour to separate it further and connect to your brain easier. E. g. Revolution, Bag of Pigs, Missiles, USSR etc.
- Now think of the key details. Off each main branch add the details you need. Remember, you can only write one word per branch. Consider adding images to help reinforce ideas.

Why it works:

- Visual signs and key words are easier to remember than linear notes.
- Revision will be made easier with all the key points illustrated.
- You can arrange notes in a way that your brain recognises.
- Clearly shows links and associations.
- Compact, and can summarise pages of information.
- You can review the information at a glance, helping you remember it.

Method 14: Post It!



Especially useful for:

- Almost anything!

What to do:

- Stick these at strategic points around your room. For example: by the light switch - left hand side of shelf - right hand side of shelf - left-hand cupboard door - right-hand cupboard door - next to picture, etc.
- Now, walk around the room, pausing in front of each sticky-note in turn and reading the keyword.

Why it works:

- If you do this a few times, you will find it easy to recall what is on each of the sticky-notes without actually walking around the room.
- You can use the system more than once to help you remember different lists of keywords. To make sure you do not get the lists confused, use different coloured sticky-notes - or different coloured pens - or a large coloured blob on the corner - or a small cartoon - etc.