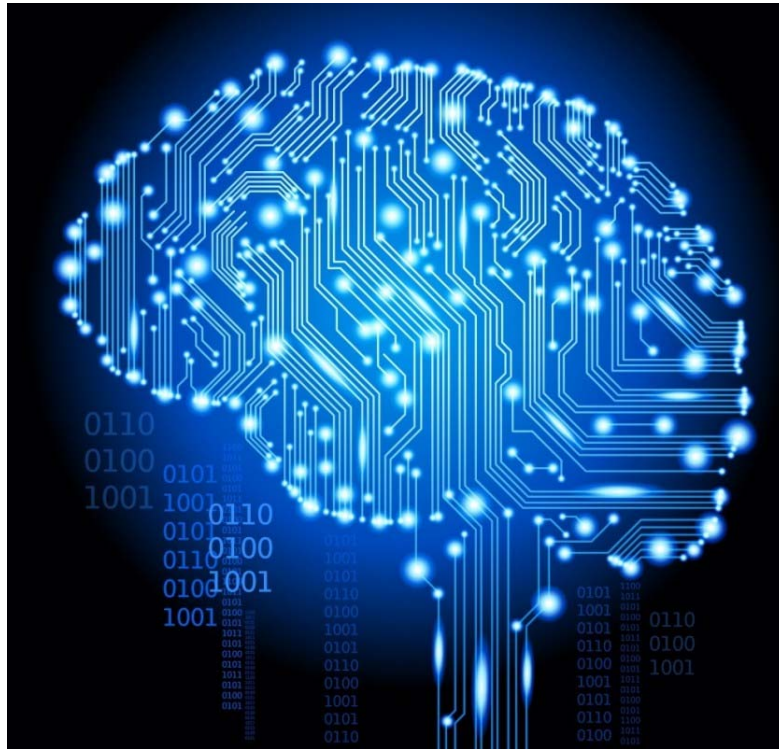




HELSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ASPIRATION • AMBITION • ACHIEVEMENT



A Guide on How to Revise Effectively

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Keep the Panic Monster at bay,
do some revision today



What to do before you revise

- Have an exam timetable which tells you when, where and how long each exam is. From this, you base your preparation on being ready for these exams.
- Make sure you have a list of topics to revise for each of your subjects. (Make sure you know what it is you have to know).
- Make sure you know what type of exam you are taking in each subject, and are familiar with the style of questions in those exams (speaking and listening, essays, short structured questions etc.).
- Make sure you have a complete set of notes from which to revise. This could be your notebooks/folders from class, booklets of notes provided by your teacher, or purchased revision guides. If you are using your notebooks, make sure (by checking against topics to revise) that any missing work is copied up (or photocopied).
- Put together a revision timetable. This should start well before your exams to give you enough time to cover (and revisit) all topics in all subjects. See **Spacing** and **Interleaving** later in this guide.
- Your teachers can help you with all of the above – just ask!

What to avoid

What does research say?

*Re-reading and highlighting are among the commonest and apparently most obvious ways to memorise or revise material. They also give a satisfying – **but deceptive** – feeling of fluency and familiarity with the material (Brown et al, 2014).*

As we can see from the research above, two of the most common (and easy) methods of revision are actually two of the **least effective** techniques.

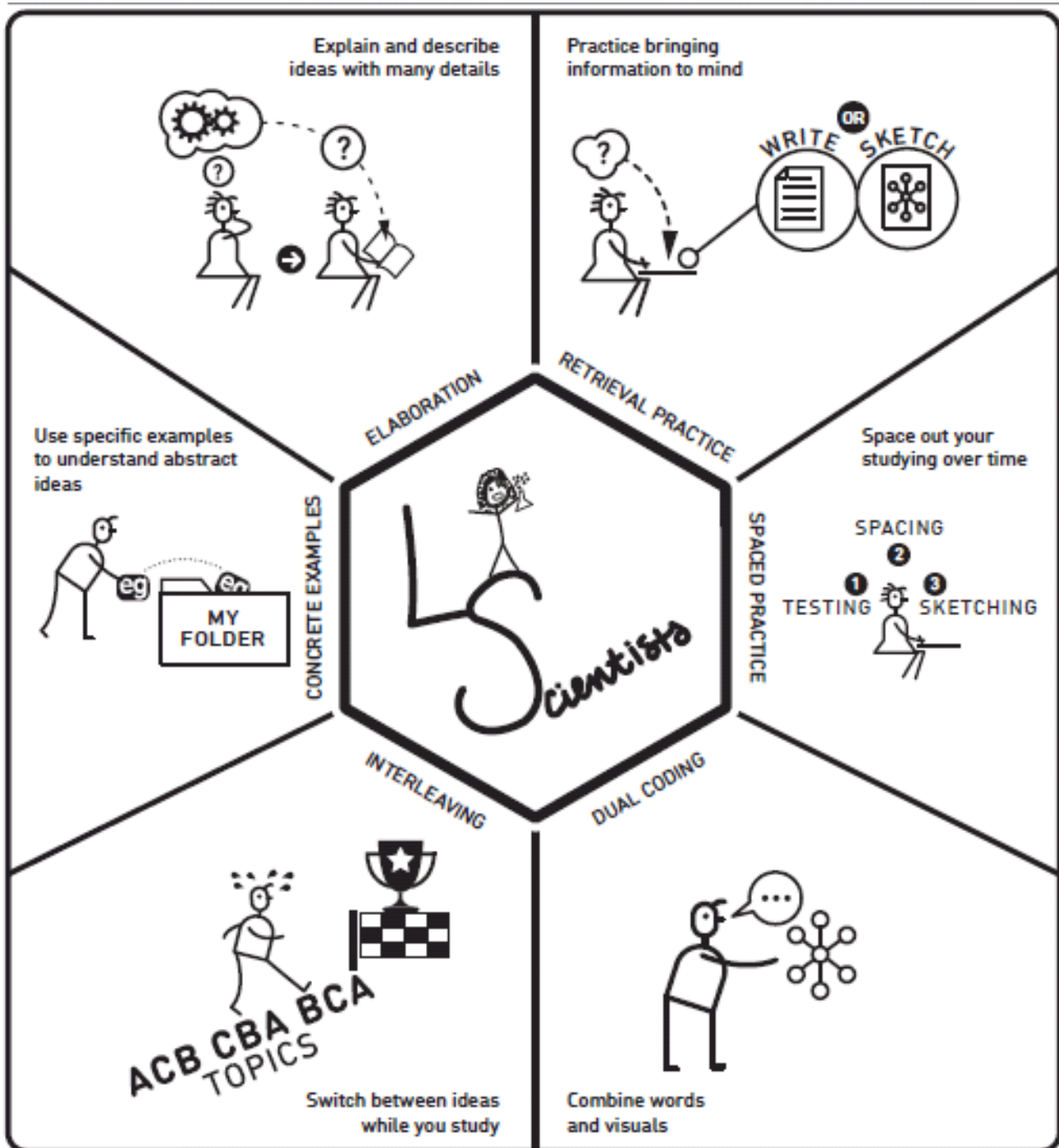
Re-reading and highlighting notes can lead to very little of the read or highlighted information going in to long-term memory.

There is nothing wrong with reading and highlighting, but on their own, they are **very, very ineffective**.

Often it is tempting to study things that you find easy, because this gives a feeling of satisfaction and confidence. However, it is much better to spend precious revision time focusing on the things that you find harder to understand.

Strategies for effective learning

These 6 strategies have supporting evidence from Cognitive Psychology.



Visit www.learningscientists.org for more information on each strategy. Youtube video: <https://goo.gl/d3WTaZ>

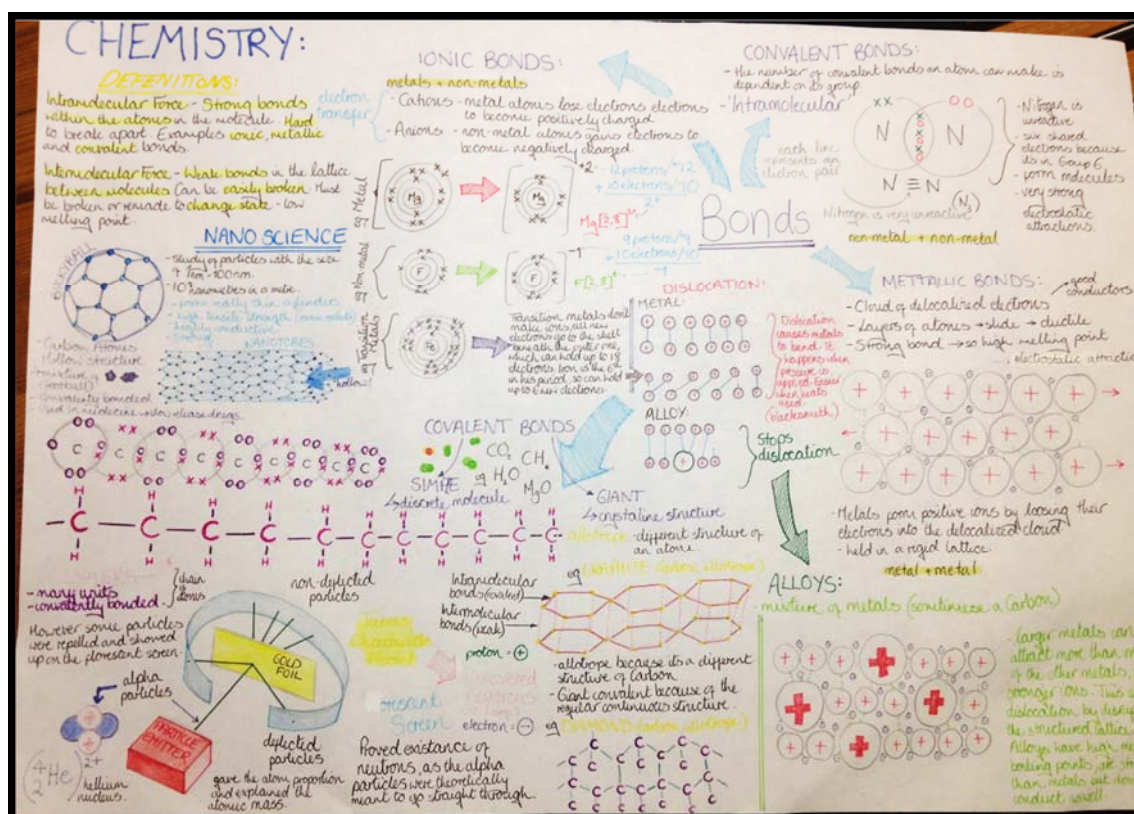
Let's Concentrate on 5 Techniques

In terms of actual revision techniques, we will focus on five:

- Flash Cards
- Mind Maps
- Self Quizzing
- Revision Speed Dating
- Past Papers

We will look at how we can include the learning strategies identified on the previous page within each technique, to ensure that revision is effective.

Try out each technique and identify which combination of methods works best for you.



Revision Technique 1: Flashcards

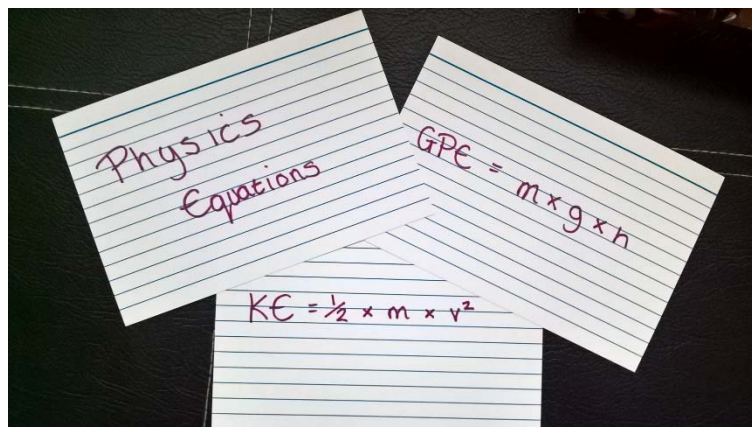
Flashcards have a keyword or the name of a concept/topic on one side and a definition or a series of notes on the other. Probably the easiest way to make flashcards is to use your class notes to produce flash cards for each topic you need to study. On one side will go the topic title and on the reverse you need to summarise the key points. Use pictures and words (**Dual Coding**) and **Concrete Examples** (where appropriate).



If you use this technique, it is important to remember that the creation of the flashcards does not represent the end point of revision for this topic. The next crucial step is to test how well you can recall the information on the flashcard (**Retrieval**). If you are going to create flashcards then make sure they are done early so there is time to revisit the topic (**Spacing**) at a later date.

Youtube clip on creating flashcards: <https://goo.gl/cF3wmU>

Technique for using flashcards – web page: <https://goo.gl/jVPJyR>



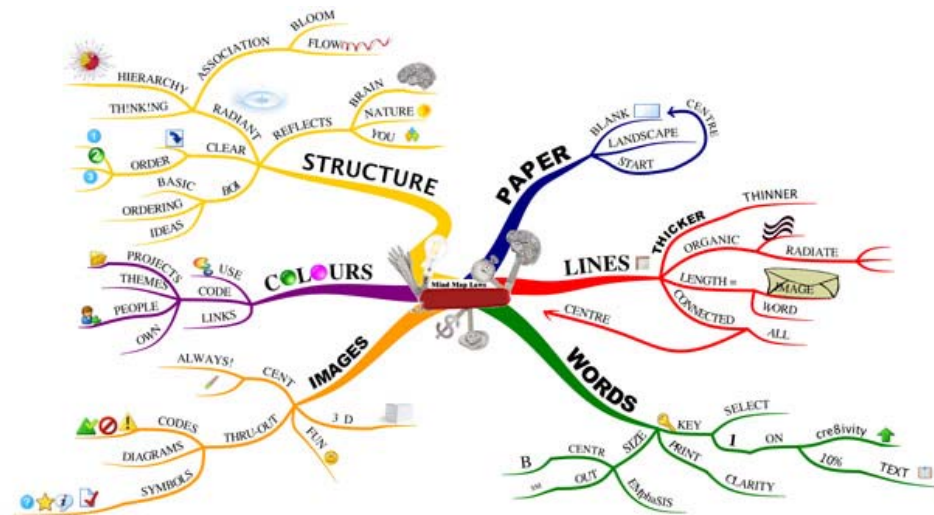
Ryan Williams

Revision Technique 2: Mind Maps

Put simply, a topic is summarised on one large sheet. Each sheet will have more information than a flashcard.

5 Steps to follow:

- i. Write the MAIN TOPIC in the middle of the paper and draw a ring around it.
- ii. For each KEY POINT, draw a branch out from the main topic.
- iii. Write a KEY WORD or PHRASE on each branch.
- iv. Build out further branches and add DETAILS.
- v. Use pictures and words (**Dual Coding**) rather than loads of writing copied from your notes.



This will be even more effective if your teacher provides the framework for the mind map. If you use this technique, it is important to remember that the creation of the mind map does not represent the end point of revision for this topic. The next crucial step is to test how well you can recall the information on the mind map (**Retrieval**). If you are going to create mind maps then make sure they are done early so there is time to revisit the topic (**Spacing**) at a later date...So, is **Retrieval** (recall) key to effective revision?

What does research say?

*“Students who can test themselves or try to **Retrieve** material from their memory are going to learn that material better in the long run. Start by reading the text book then make flashcards of the critical concepts and **test yourself**. A century of research has shown that repeated testing works.”*

Professor Dunlosky, Journal of the Association for Psychological Science

Youtube clip on creating Mind Maps: <https://goo.gl/R55XJG>

Revision Technique 3: Self-Quizzing

This can be as simple as having a blank sheet of paper in front of you and writing down (from memory) everything you know about a topic (**Retrieval**) and trying to **Elaborate** on some of the key ideas. This retrieval could be based on a mind map or flashcards. Once complete, the student then self-checks from the book/flashcard/mind map and corrects any spelling mistakes, omissions or inaccuracies.

You can also use your friends/family to test you from your flashcards/mind maps/revision guide. Parents can really help their child by testing them regularly on different topics.

This looks like a useful website for online quizzing:

<https://www.goconqr.com/en/gcse/resources/quizzes/>

There are also flashcard and mind map tools on this site, and sign up is free.

Retrieval is hard, how can mnemonics help?

When revising topics, try to create and use mnemonics to help you with retrieval. For instance, here is a mnemonic that is quite easy to remember and will help you answer questions on natural selection.

VC BASPOG

Variation, Competition, Best Adapted Survive and Pass On Genes

Another example of a mnemonic is: (for the 5 pillars of Islam).

French People Can't Forget Paris

Fasting, Prayer, Charity, Faith, and Pilgrimage

Another example is: (for the 7 continents).

Always Eat An Apple Says Aunt Nora

Asia, Europe, Australasia, Africa, South America, Antarctica and North America

Revision Technique 4: Speed Dating

This is effective if you have a revision partner or if you have a revision group. Firstly, pick a topic. In pairs, sit opposite each other with a blank sheet of paper each. You have 5 minutes to write as much as you can about the given topic. After 5 minutes compare what each of you have written and the best response receives a point. Then swap partners (if you are in a group), pick a different topic and repeat again.

See who has the most points at the end. This is an effective technique because it forces you to **Retrieve** the information from memory, and by comparing responses, you get to see if you have made any errors or have omitted any key information.

Revision Technique 5: Past Papers

Past paper questions are a very effective method of revision because you have to retrieve the information from memory. Your teacher may provide some papers and there are lots available online. However, you need to be thinking of the following points:

Make sure the past paper questions are from the same exam board that you are studying. Read the questions carefully, taking note of the command words (name, describe, explain, evaluate, justify etc.). Take your time initially when practising, trying your very best to maximize your marks on each question. The number of marks allocated to a question indicates the length and detail of response required. Once you feel confident on a topic, answer the questions in a set amount of time (it tends to be roughly one mark per minute in the examination, so for three questions of 4 marks, 6 marks and 10 marks for example, give yourself 20 minutes to answer them).

Review and mark your answers using official mark schemes and also ask your teacher to mark some of them, particularly if the mark scheme is difficult to interpret. For essay type questions, ask your teacher if they have examples of model answers because this type of question is difficult to self-mark. It is important to know if your answers are going to get you the marks that you need. Reading examiner reports can also help in this respect.

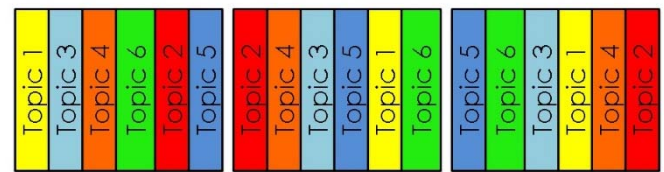
As you progress with your learning, move from a small, narrow selection of topic specific questions up to whole papers. Practising under timed conditions also becomes increasingly important.

Organising Revision

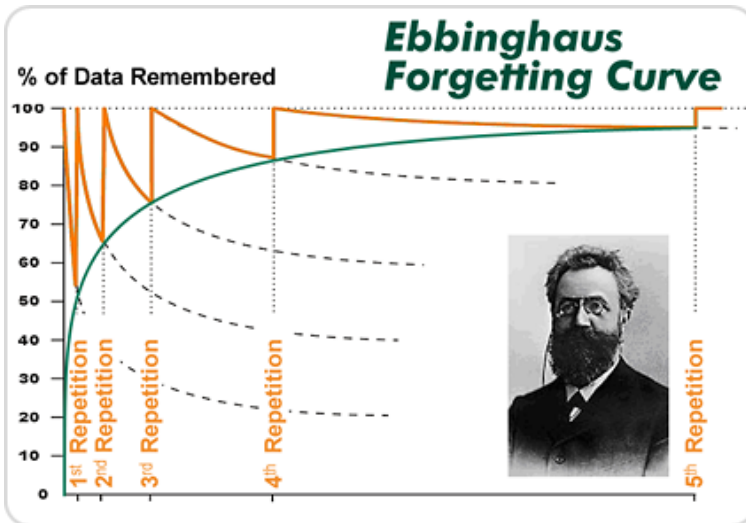
What does research say?

'Blocking' your revision- focusing on one topic for a long time then moving on to a new topic is much less effective than 'interleaving' topics

Blocking



Interleaving



What does research say?

Ebbinghaus's forgetting curve shows that the brain naturally 'forgets' information. If we revisit previously covered topics after some time has elapsed, we are likely to remember more of that information

The research suggests that when you plan your revision timetable, mix your topics and your subjects up (**Interleaving**). It may seem sensible to concentrate on a single topic in History for 3 straight nights, but actually you will remember more if you interleave with different subjects and topics. Remember to revisit (**Spacing**) what you are revising regularly.

Suggested timings and good habits

Suggested revision session timings

25 minutes on a topic
5 minutes break
25 minutes on a different topic
5 minutes break
25 minutes on a different topic
5 minutes break
25 minutes on a different topic.

This means you can revise four different topics in two hours. If you want to revise for a longer period, stick with the 25 minute sessions and do more of them (with 5 minute breaks in between).

In your breaks, make sure that you move around, drink water, eat something.

If you are planning to revise a topic for the first time, you may want to produce a mind map or make flash cards.

If you are revisiting a topic, then it would be sensible to focus on retrieving the mind map or the flash card from memory (then checking how successful you were in remembering the key information), or complete some past paper questions.

Reward yourself at the end of each productive revision session.



Avoid all distractions:

- ⇒ Be honest and strict with yourself;
- ⇒ Keep your TV, computer, laptop, iPad, phone, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat and any games **away**;
- ⇒ Music can interfere with your thinking – switch it off until you have your break;
- ⇒ Do not waste time or delay starting.