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SMITHILLS SCHOOL
PRIDE & RESPECT

Study Advice





Common Problems and Answers

I don't know where to begin.

- ▶ Be in control!
- ▶ Make a list of all the things you have to do.
- ▶ Make a weekly timetable.
- ▶ Break revision down into manageable chunks.
- ▶ Don't miss lessons - you may miss a revision session.
- ▶ Begin revising early, with an hour or two each day, build up as exams get nearer.

I knew it a minute ago.

- ▶ Make notes. Make questions based on the notes.
- ▶ Review. After reading a section try and recall the information.
- ▶ Try answering the questions you made up earlier.
- ▶ Reread sections you had trouble remembering.
- ▶ Keep on rereading even if you have perfect recall. The more you study a section the more permanent the learning will become.

I'm going to stay up all night before the exam!

- ▶ No!!! Avoid mental exhaustion.
- ▶ Take short breaks often, when revising.
- ▶ At the end of the day relax, unwind mentally and physically.
- ▶ Eat well, sleep and get enough exercise.

I've got so much to do and so little time.

- ▶ Read revision check list.
- ▶ Find out what you already know.
- ▶ Identify most important topics and areas still not understood.

I'm best if I leave it a day or two before the exam!

- ▶ Wrong! Pace yourself.
- ▶ Start revising now.
- ▶ Keep revising as you go along.
- ▶ Begin with an hour or two a day.
- ▶ Increase revision time as the exams get nearer.
- ▶ Keep reviewing what you revised earlier so you don't forget it.

There's too much to remember.

- ▶ Organise.
- ▶ Make Notes.
- ▶ Group Information.
- ▶ Make mind maps.

I read it. I understand it, but I just can't get it to sink in.

- ▶ Try and make it mean something to you by:
- ▶ Learning in chunks.
- ▶ Using mnemonics (memory assisting techniques).
- ▶ Sound alike associations.

I'm not sure I understand it!

- ▶ Test yourself.
- ▶ Make Up questions about key sections use section headings to do this.





Examination Preparation

In School

- ▶ Form good habits - listen carefully in class.
- ▶ Concentrate fully on what the teacher is saying.
- ▶ Do not daydream or spend time chatting to others.
- ▶ At the end of the lesson, think about what was covered in class and how it might be useful for the exam.
- ▶ Listen for key phrases such as: 'This is important', 'It is essential you know this' and 'You will need to know this for the exam'.
- ▶ Listen for what is emphasised. Listen for words like: 'To summarise', 'The main point is'.
- ▶ Make sure you identify and understand important information.
- ▶ Relate what you have learned in class to what you already know. Does it extend your revision knowledge or make something clear that you did not understand?
- ▶ Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- ▶ Regularly drink water.

At home

- ▶ Revise in a suitable place - the same place every day. Experts say that the right surroundings improve revision effectiveness.
- ▶ Think about lighting, temperature and space.
- ▶ Try and work at a desk or table. The more you make where you revise like an exam room, the better you will do.
- ▶ Try and work in a quiet place, free from distractions.
- ▶ Organise all your material before starting. This included having standard equipment such as: paper, pens, resources books, revision guides, calculator and so forth to hand. Good organisation eliminates unnecessary interruptions.
- ▶ Set your self short term goals that you can achieve such as: 'This week I will spend x hours studying the following subjects...'
- ▶ Stick to the goals you set yourself.
- ▶ Don't put off getting started! It's later than you think!
- ▶ Regularly drink water.

Revision Techniques

- ▶ Start by getting a copy of the examination timetable.
- ▶ Calculate the amount of time available till the start of the exams.
- ▶ Work out how many weeks and days there are and devise a revision timetable.
- ▶ Remember to include for relaxation time and time with friends.
- ▶ Make revision notes for every subject. Don't worry about the time this takes, because while you are making the notes, you are actually revising!
- ▶ Once you have identified key themes and points, revise from your notes and produce condensed versions fro quick revision.
- ▶ Keep revision sessions short with a maximum of 25 to 30 minutes per subject. Then have a 5 -10 minute break before you start on a new subject.



12 Successful Revision Tips

- 1** Flash cards. Use an 8cm x 14cm card to learn specialised vocabulary. On the front write the term, on the back write the definition, or an important fact about the term. Carry your flash cards with you and when you have a spare moment, take them out and quiz yourself.
 - 2** Divided page. Draw a dividing line down the centre of a sheet of paper. Write the important questions on the left-hand side and the answers on the right. Cover the right-hand side and try to give the answer. Check and recheck until you're sure you know the material.
 - 3** Cover card. As you are revising, look over your book and read what you are trying to memorise. Use the cover card to conceal what you've just read. Try reciting, or writing the facts from memory. Check until you are sure you have mastered the facts.
 - 4** Remembering. One secret of remembering what you have revised is 'over learning'. Go on looking over material you are sure of, even when you think you know it all.
 - 5** Keep reviewing. It has been proved that we can forget things we think we have learned within two weeks. Keep looking back over material very shortly after you have learned it for the first time.
 - 6** Use mind maps. Condense the material you have chosen to learn into mind maps. Use illustrations if you have a visual memory. Put them onto flash cards and keep going over the information.
 - 7** Recite until you are sick of it! Saying things over and over again can burn them into the memory like no other revision material. Another option is to tape record yourself and play the tape last thing at night before you go to sleep.
 - 8** Don't revise a subject to completion and then start on another, as this will probably result in you forgetting the first subject. A little often, rather than a lot late, is the best rule here. It's better to spend half your time on one subject and then move on to another.
 - 9** When you return to a subject, spend some time refreshing your memory on the material previously revised and then move on to new material.
 - 10** Take the opportunity to look at past exam papers and try to identify key themes and topics which might be examined. At the very least it will give you some idea of how exam questions are structured.
 - 11** Work out what sort of knowledge you need for each subject exam. Some want definitions of key terms and examples. Some want a knowledge of concepts and others want you to solve problems and memorise formulae.
 - 12** Don't think you will perform best on the topics you have learned the night before the exam. It is best just to review rather than to learn when the exam is getting close. Try and keep your confidence high by concentrating on how much you know rather than by worrying about how much you don't know.
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Improving Your Memory

Acronyms & Acrostics

An acronym is an invented combination of letters. Each letter is a cue to an idea you need to remember. For example: B R A S S is an acronym for how to shoot a rifle: Breathe, Relax, Aim, Sight and Squeeze.

An acrostic is an invented sentence where the first letter of every word is a cue to an idea you need to remember. For example: Richard of York Gained Battles In Vain, helps you remember the colours of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet.

Pegging

Select a place you know very well. Imagine yourself walking through the location, selecting clearly defined places. If you were visualising your home, you could start at the front door and then work your way through the house.

Imagine yourself putting the objects that you need to remember into each of the places as you walk through the location in a direct path. Recall the walk and you will remember the objects you 'pegged' in which location and therefore the knowledge you want to recall.

The Keyword Method (for foreign language vocab)

Make a list of the words you want to remember. Then select a key word in English that sounds like the foreign word. Then picture an image that involves the key word with the English meaning of the foreign word. For example: the Spanish word *cabina* means phone box. For the English key word you might think 'cab in a' and you might think of a cab trying to fit in a phone box. When you see the word 'cabina' you should be able to retrieve the definition phone box.

The Image - Name Technique (for remembering names)

Simply invent any relationship between the name and the physical characteristics of a person. For example, if you wanted to remember Kylie Minogue's name, you might fix it in your memory by remembering she is 'smiley' (rhymes with Kylie) when she sings.

Chaining (for ordered and unordered lists)

Create a story where each word or idea you have to remember cues the next idea you want to recall. If you wanted to remember the words: Napoleon, ear, door, Germany, you could invent a story of Napoleon with his ear to the door listening to people speak in German.

Making Revision Notes

The best way to revise is to make a good set of brief, organised notes for each subject. If you have a study guide, underline or highlight all the main ideas.

- Write down your notes in a concise, organised way.
- Do not try to write down every word.
- Write down the main ideas, content and information.
- Develop your own way of abbreviating words.
- (Notice how the main topic is in bold letters.)
- (There are 3 main ideas that have been numbered)
- (This is a standard note making format.)

Note Making Guidelines

Equipment needed: Use a loose leaf folder, ruler, coloured pens, highlighters. Use A4 paper to write on. Then:

- Number, title and date each page in the upper right-hand corner.
- Leave a space at the top of the page and write important information here.
- Use a pen, never a pencil.
- Write clearly.
- Leave blanks for any information missed or something you don't understand. Check this with your teacher.
- Use correct spellings.
- Use white space effectively. Separate topics. Leave margins.
- Use asterisks (*), underline and use capital letters for important information.
- Write down the meanings of difficult vocabulary.
- Write down the main ideas and the supporting ideas.
- Use headings and subheadings.
- Number points under each heading.
- Try and use your own words.
- Never write down anything word for word.
- Listen in class for extra hints about what you should be revising and add these to your notes.



The Day of the Exam

When the day of an exam arrives it is natural to feel nervous and tense. Recognise and accept these feelings and then try to relax. It's a good idea to walk briskly to school on the morning because this reduces the effects of tension and promotes a positive attitude.

Before you set out make sure you have all the equipment you need for that exam. **Arrive in time!**

In the Exam

- Look at the front of the paper and find out exactly how many questions you have to do.
- Find out if any questions are compulsory.
- Find out if some sections have a choice of questions. Answering TOO MANY questions is a waste of effort. Answering TOO FEW questions could lead to failure.
- Check on the allocation of marks so you can work out how to allocate time. Spend the most time on the questions where you get the most marks.
- Read the questions on the paper at least twice.
- Try to spot key words and phrases or anything that is slightly unusual.
- Answer the question in the right way, underline, circle, draw a line etc., stick to the length of answer expected.
- Check whether you have to show calculations or not. When in doubt, show them.
- Try to spot the question that is easiest for you. This is the one to begin with.
- Always number your answers in the margin. Remember, you can do the questions in any order you want as long as there is a number in the margin so the examiner knows what you are doing.
- Once you start answering questions allocate the time evenly between questions and when time is up, even if you have not finished, move on to the next. As time passes in answering a question, it becomes increasingly difficult to earn extra marks. The majority of marks are usually picked up in the first 10 to 15 minutes in most subjects. You can always leave a space and go back if you have time at the end of the exam.
- Do what the exam says. For example, if you are told to 'briefly summarise' then keep your answer short and concise, giving only the key facts without elaborating.
- Keep your writing legible and never cross out a mistake so completely that an examiner cannot read it. You might have been right and the examiner will give you credit for this.
- If you are writing at length, at the end always refer back to the original question.
- If you run out of time on a question, summarise and jot down the main points.

Key Words in Exam Question

All questions contain key words that tell you exactly what to do. For example, you will never be asked to write 'a short essay' on anything. If you are asked to 'list' you are not being asked to write a story or an argument. LIST is the key word here.

Key Words & Action Required

CONTRAST show the difference

COMPARE show the differences/similarities

CRITICISE give your judgement or opinion on some thing showing its good and bad points. It is not necessary to attack it.

DEFINE give the formal meaning. Often a case of giving a memorised definition.

DESCRIBE write a detailed account in a logical sequence.

LIST produce a numbered list of words, sentences or comments

Other Key Words

Use this space to jot down any other key words you discover whilst revising.



Preferred Learning Styles

Find your learning style and then the types of activities that suit you best.

Visual

- ▶ Murals and montages.
- ▶ Visual/graphic organisers
- ▶ Memory Art
- ▶ Mind Maps
- ▶ Visual displays and manipulating them i.e. PowerPoint presentations
- ▶ Use of colour with purpose i.e. 'Anything important I will write up in blue'
- ▶ Flowcharts
- ▶ Graphs
- ▶ Video recording and photography

Mathematical/Logical

- ▶ Stepped or ordered flowcharts
- ▶ Timelines
- ▶ Logical analysis
- ▶ Critique
- ▶ Pattern games
- ▶ Formula

Intrapersonal

- ▶ Feelings
- ▶ Diaries and logs
- ▶ Autobiographical reporting
- ▶ Personal Projection
- ▶ Quiet reflection
- ▶ Being allowed to sit and internalise
- ▶ Relating to personal experience

Musical

- ▶ Create a concept song or rap, illustrate with sound i.e. 'Love sounds like ... because...'
- ▶ Discerning rhythmic patterns
- ▶ Chants

Linguistic

- ▶ Written essays
- ▶ Vocabulary
- ▶ Key Words
- ▶ Darts exercises
- ▶ Written reports
- ▶ Learning logs and journals
- ▶ Poetry writing
- ▶ Word games

Physical/Kinesthetic

- ▶ Modelling situations e.g. Being a red blood cell moving round circulatory system delivering oxygen into cells
- ▶ 'Walking' the thought
- ▶ Physically moving labels around on white board to label diagram
- ▶ Lab experiments
- ▶ Dramatisation
- ▶ Charades and mimes
- ▶ Illustrations using body language and gestures
- ▶ Human tableaux

Interpersonal

- ▶ Group work
 - ▶ Explaining or teaching to another
 - ▶ Round robin
 - ▶ Giving and receiving feedback
 - ▶ Interviews
 - ▶ Pair share
 - ▶ Jigsaw approach where each member of the group finds out a different piece of information which they report back so the group can put together the whole picture.
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