



How To Study Smarter:

*Ace Your GCSEs
... And Beyond!*



William
Wadsworth
RGS Y10, Feb 2022

How to study smarter, not harder
for your best results with less stress 😊

How To Study Smarter: Ace Your GCSEs & Beyond



**Learn Faster &
Remember More**



**Smarter
Study Habits**

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How to revise effectively?

What do YOU think?

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If you're trying to memorise a topic, for best results, you should:

- 1 Revisit the topic on different days
- 2 Revise as hard as possible on a single day
- 3 Either of the above – it doesn't matter



Students often test themselves as part of revision (e.g. using flashcards or practice questions). **Why?**

- 1 To check whether you've learned it
- 2 To learn faster and remember more
- 3 More active – helps you stay engaged



How to revise effectively?

Two principles for success:

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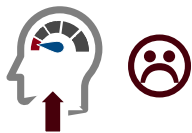
Retrieval Practice



Retrieval practice: the power of testing



If laying down memory is like building a "pathway" of neurons...



Learning by pushing information "in" (repeated exposure to information, e.g. re-reading) is like slowly etching out a track by foot

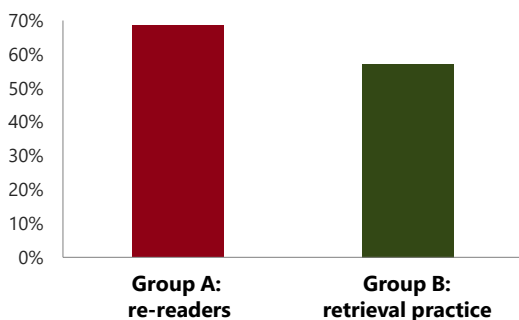


Learning by retrieval (pulling information "out", with some form of testing / quizzing) is like building a tarmacked highway with a steamroller

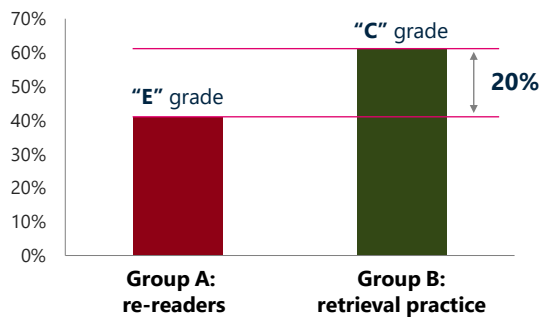


The power of retrieval practice

How well did students *think* they would perform after learning different ways

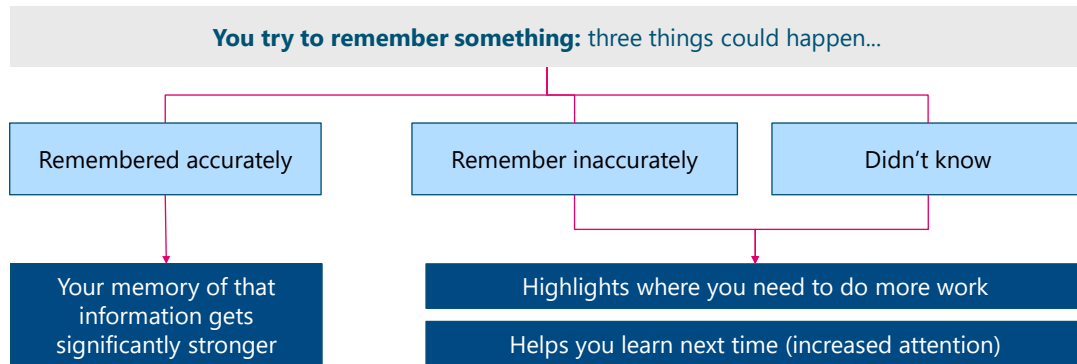


Performance on test after revising by re-reading OR retrieval practice



Our intuitions about "what works for me" are sometimes misleading!

Why retrieval practice works



Students often test themselves as part of revision (e.g. using flashcards or practice questions). **Why?**

To check whether you've learned it

To learn faster and remember more

More active – helps you stay engaged

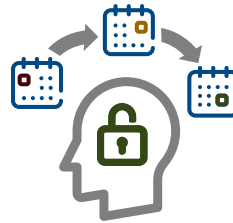


Retrieval Practice

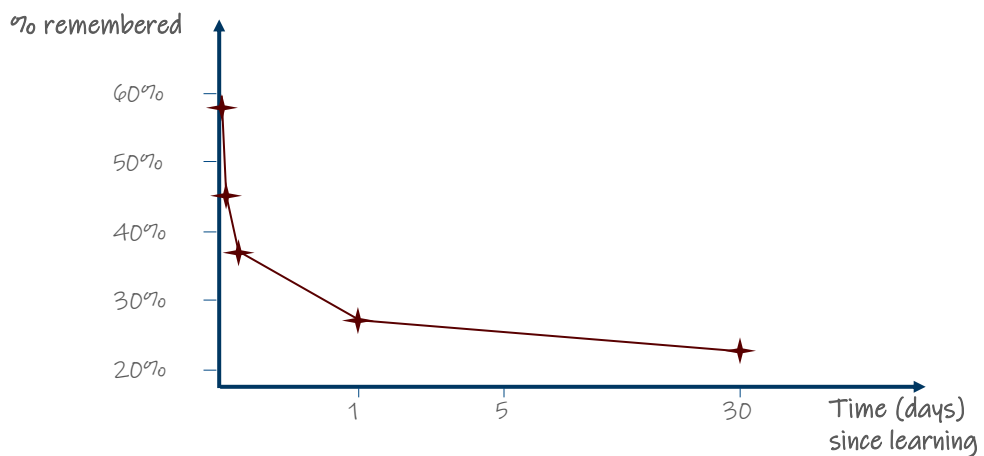


"Testing Effect"

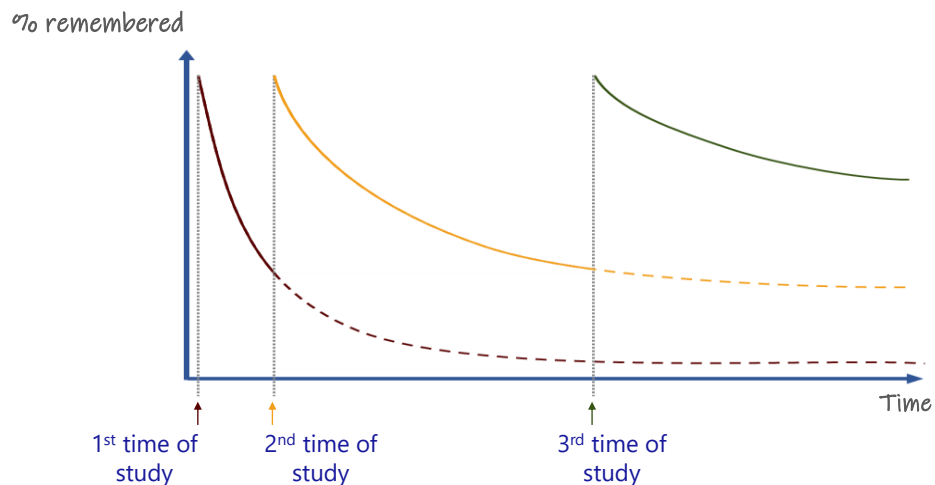
Spaced Learning



The instant you stop learning, you start forgetting



The solution is to space out your learning



If you're trying to memorise a topic, for best results, you should:

Revisit the topic on different days

Revise as hard as possible on a single day

Either of the above – it doesn't matter



Simplicity is key: build spaced repetition right into your study routine



5 mins at the end of session

End of day recap

Weekly recap session – everything from that week

It's not about spending more hours on each topic, it's about spreading that time out

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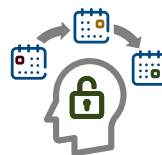
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Retrieval Practice



Spaced Learning



"Spaced retrieval practice": the most powerful way to consolidate information known to cognitive psychologists

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Re-
readingHighlighting
/ underlining

Flashcards

Quiz apps

So, which revision techniques work best?

Making notes

Mindmaps /
spider
diagramsPractice
questions

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Retrieval practice: the power of testing



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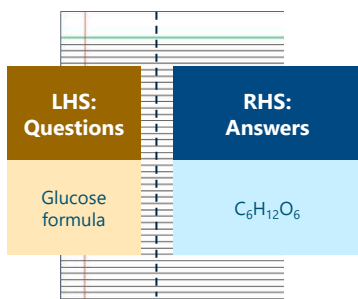


"Long way"

"Smart way": uses retrieval practice

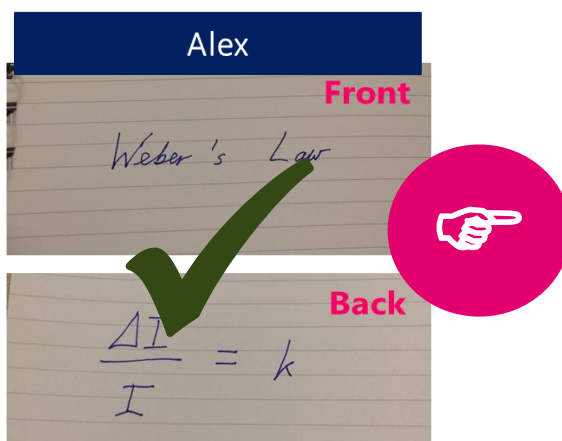
Q&A Notes – a powerful upgrade for your note-making strategy

Switch to “Q&A Notes” so you can do retrieval practice



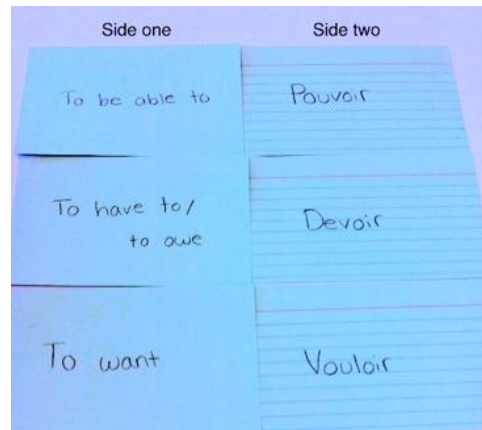
- Split information into question / answer pairs
- Test yourself by covering up the answers

Flashcards: strategy matters...

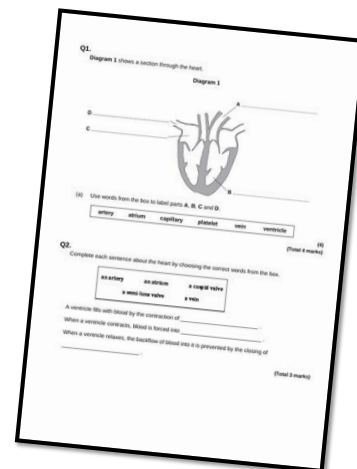
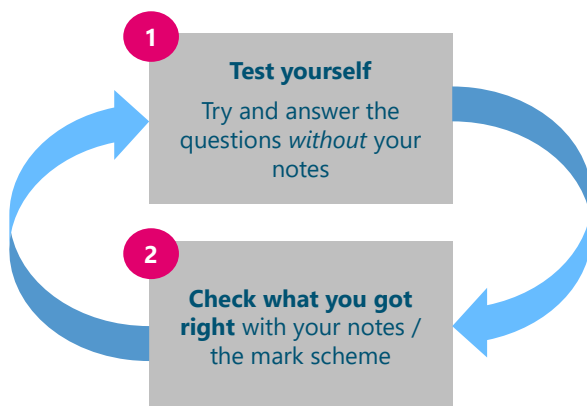


Flashcards – the best flashcards are:

- **Two-sided:** clear question on the front, clear answer on the back
- **Simple:** less is more... break info down into lots of cards
- **Made quickly:** don't waste time making them pretty – make them fast, and get into TESTING YOURSELF with them 😊



Practice questions: strategy matters



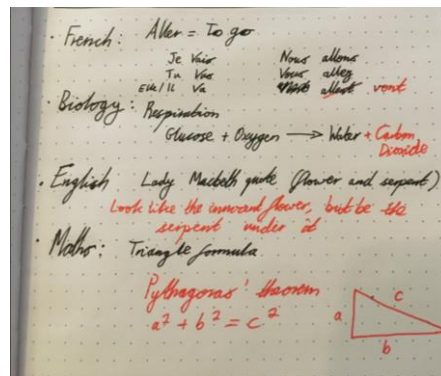
Which revision techniques are most effective?



**This all sounds great for
revising for tests and exams!**
What else have you got...?

Memory journaling: year-round habit for exceptional results

- ✓ **Accelerated learning:** "lock" away knowledge as you learn it
- ✓ **Supercharged student:** "magically" absorb more from classes



5 minutes every day, ideally at the same time of day

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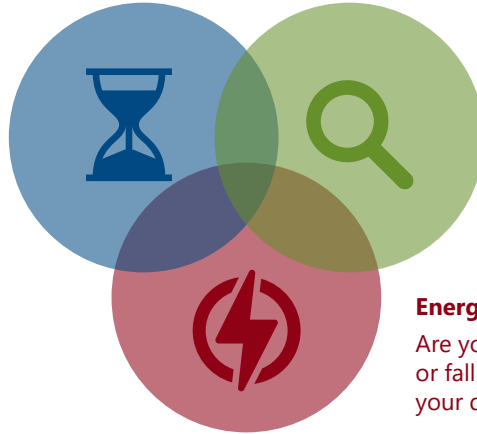
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Productivity = how efficiently you can get your work done

Time & Tasks

Are you making time?
Are you spending it on the right things?



Concentration

Are you focused or distracted?

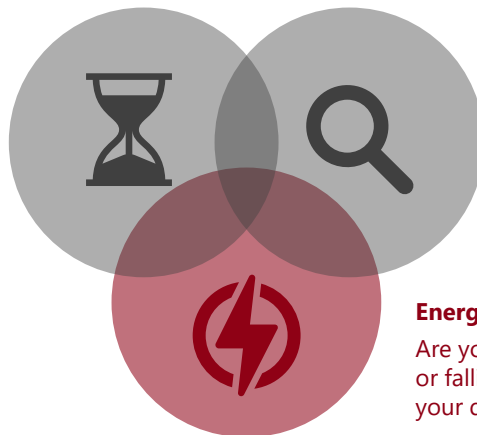
Energy

Are you engaged, or falling asleep at your desk?

Productivity = how efficiently you can get your work done

Time & Tasks

Are you making time?
Are you spending it on the right things?



Concentration

Are you focused or distracted?

Energy

Are you engaged, or falling asleep at your desk?

Energy: the four primary fuel types you need to keep your engine running



(The right)
FOOD



WATER



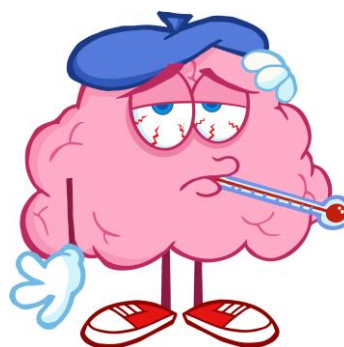
EXERCISE



SLEEP

A sleep deprived brain is a sick brain...

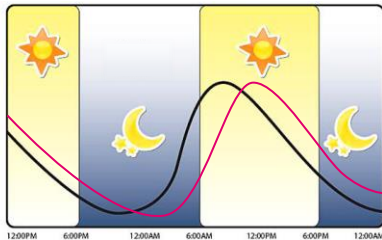
- ↓ Less able to concentrate
- ↓ Worse at paying attention
- ↓ Less able to solve problems
- ↓ Less creative
- ↓ Less able to form new memories



Not a set of handicaps anyone wants when studying! Get your 7-8+ hours in...

Science of sleep: the 2 systems that make you sleepy

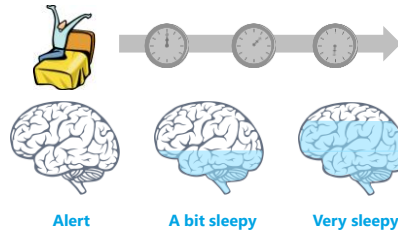
1. The day / night cycle (circadian rhythm)



What you should do:

A **regular sleep routine** (bedtime alarm?)
No phones before bed.

2. The "sleep signal" (adenosine)



Avoid **caffeine, naps and exercise** late in the day

Productivity = how efficiently you can get your work done

Time & Tasks

Are you making time?
 Are you spending it on the right things?



Concentration

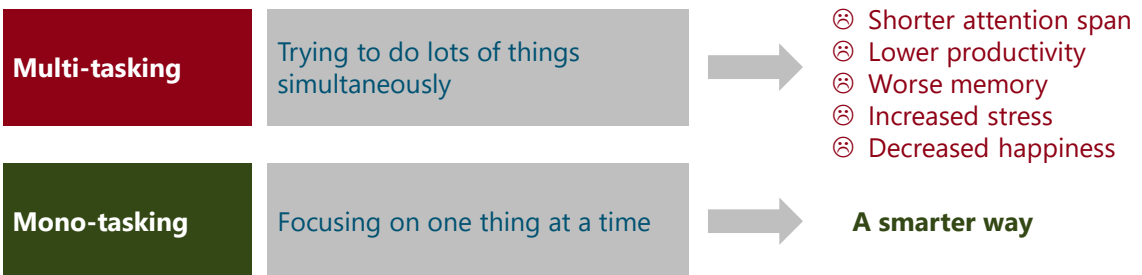
Are you focused or distracted?

Energy

Are you engaged, or falling asleep at your desk?

To do spaced retrieval practice well, you need full focus. Here's how.

Multi-tasking causes big problems... Is there a better way?



Doing one thing at a time: "monotasking" in practice

Phone off + out of sight



Optional but permitted: non-distracting music of your choice



Write lists: get distracting thoughts out of your head

TO DO TODAY
Write article on <i>How to Learn Music</i> (max 10 pps)
Finetune <i>How to Learn Music</i> by reading it out loud
Condense <i>How to Learn Music</i> to 3 pps
UNPLANNED & URGENT
Order a pizza
Choose a bike to buy
Read article on learning music in Asia
Look for jazz happenings in July in Rome on Internet

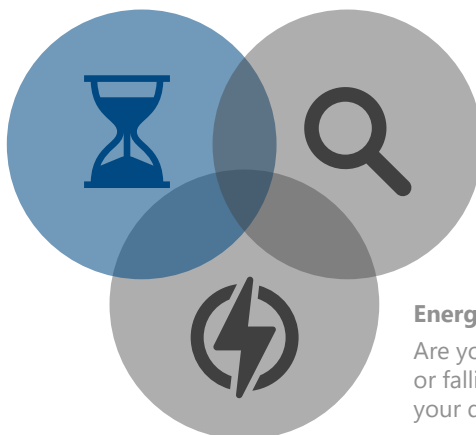


Mindfulness

Productivity = how efficiently you can get your work done

Time & Tasks

Are you making time?
Are you spending it on the right things?



Concentration

Are you focused or distracted?

Energy

Are you engaged, or falling asleep at your desk?

Step 1: have a clear plan



Top tip: habit of 5 minutes per day keeping your planner up to date – ideally at the same time each day

Make sure you have a clear list of tasks telling you:

- What needs doing?
- By when?
- What are you going to do tonight?
- For longer tasks, be specific: what's the next step you can take today?
 - *E.g. don't put big vague tasks like "do history project" – break it down into the first concrete step to take, e.g. "read Chapter 2 on Battle of Hastings"*

Step 2: Establish a clear routine

Saturday morning

THIS IS ONLY AN EXAMPLE: YOUR ROUTINE MIGHT BE TOTALLY DIFFERENT!

9.00-12.00	Finish homework
12.15-12.45	Music practice
13.00	Have lunch
Rest of day...	Enjoy yourself!

Establish routines for each day of the week: regular times when you sit down to work

You're train your brain to expect you'll be working at these times – you'll procrastinate less and deliver more!

Sticking to a routine: overcoming procrastination

Break it down



What's the next step?

Just do SOMETHING



Start anywhere, start badly

"Just 5 minutes" trick



Set a timer for just 5 mins work

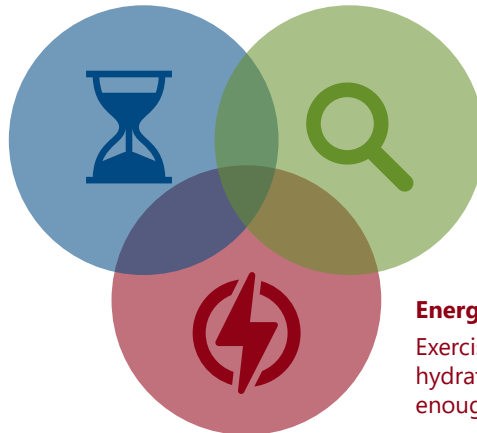


Write

What's the one most important thing that will help YOU get things done more efficiently?

Time & Tasks

Keep your to-do list out of your head
Have a clear routine
Overcoming procrastination (break it down)



Concentration

Monotask – do one thing at once
Control distractions

Energy

Exercise, stay hydrated and get enough sleep

Go further: listen to the Exam Study Expert podcast (it's free!)



"Really helped me!"
Helena, US



"Tips which REALLY worked!"
FJTapner, UK



"Awesome"
Charlie Boy, UK



"Utterly impressed"
Ruby7, Australia



"Clear & motivational!"
Rwarman, UK



"Can I just say, you are a god"
Rose, Australia

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Wishing you every success