



How To Ace Senior School

Ten Top Tips For Smart Students



William
Wadsworth
RGS Y7, Oct 2021

How To Ace Senior School: Ten Top Tips For Smart Students

Meet Your Memory:

how to learn fast, remember for longer, and ace every test!



The Independent Scholar:

how to understand anything (even if it doesn't make sense at first)



Take Charge Of Your Life:

How to get homework (and anything else!) done faster, better, ...and even enjoy it more!



Research



Workshops

1:1
CoachingAce your exams by studying **smarter not harder**

Podcast



Blog



Book

**1,000,000**Students
reached / year

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Meet Your Memory:

how to learn fast, remember for longer, and ace every test!

**The Independent Scholar:**

how to understand anything (even if it doesn't make sense at first)

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Which of these activities do you need your memory for?



YES: need
memory to
do this



Revising for a
French vocab test



Writing a story for
English homework



Playing a piece
on the piano



Riding a bike



Remembering
friends' names



Choosing what to eat
on a restaurant menu



NO: don't
need memory
to do this

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EXAM STUDY
EXPERT

Memory is everything!



Things you know: facts and
information

About you: your life, your
friends, your preferences

Things you can do: "muscle
memory" and physical skills

Imagination!



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Things you know: facts and information

About you: your life, your friends, your preferences

Things you can do: "muscle memory" and physical skills

Imagination!



How you get to "know" things: working memory and long term memory



Information you hear

E.g. from **listening** to teachers, radio, TV, (me!)



Information you see

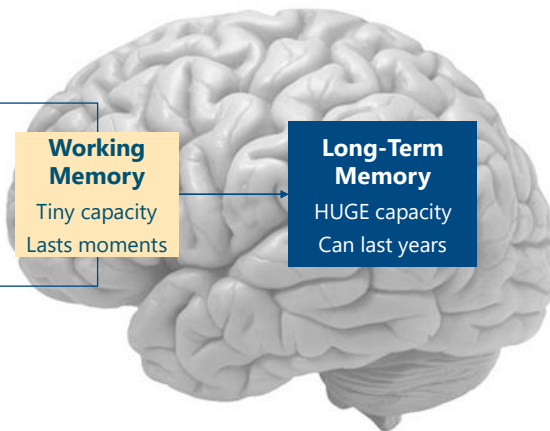
E.g. from **reading** books, posters, websites, etc

Working Memory

Tiny capacity
Lasts moments

Long-Term Memory

HUGE capacity
Can last years



What is working memory?

Remembered it?

3

1

4

1

5

$$\pi = 3.1415$$



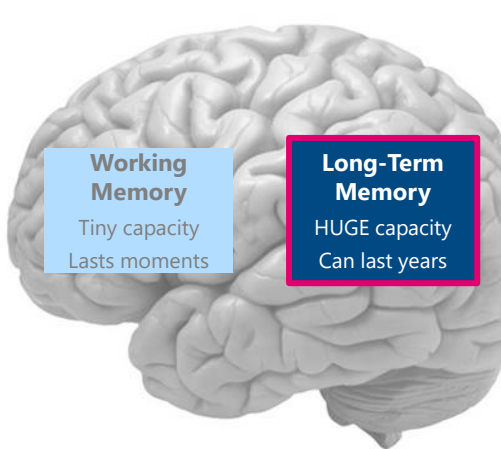
Working memory has its limits!

$$\pi = 3.1415926535$$

V. hard to remember this many digits (11) a few seconds later!



Your long term memory is pretty incredible...



258 digits....!!

To be outstanding senior students, we need a reliable way to get information to STICK in long term memory

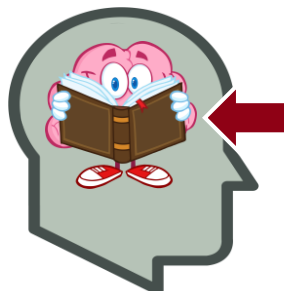
So, how do we get information into long term memory?

- 1 Read the information over and over again
- 2 Make summary notes
- 3 Say it out loud
- 4 Test yourself on it
- 5 Use colour to help you remember

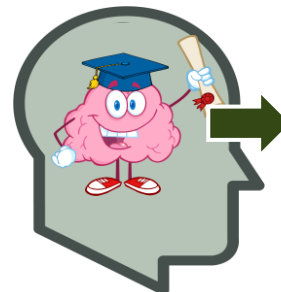


Two options when learning: "long way" vs "smart way"

The long way



The smart way



Retrieval practice: testing yourself

Pair testing: building long-term memory by testing with help from a classmate (or supportive family member)

Question
number



Did they get the
answer right?



The person playing role of "tester" should:

1. **Give feedback** to help you learn from your mistakes
2. **Revisit questions you got wrong** more than once

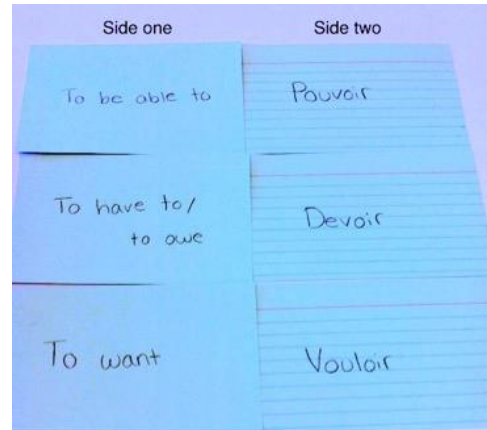


Don't have a partner to test you?
Test yourself with flashcards!

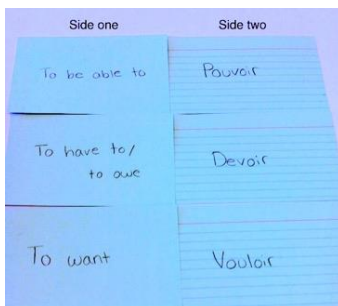
The best flashcards are:

- **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 😊

Test yourself by looking at one side, and trying to remember the answer on the back!



Or if you don't have flashcards, divide a sheet of paper down the middle and put questions on one side, answers on the other



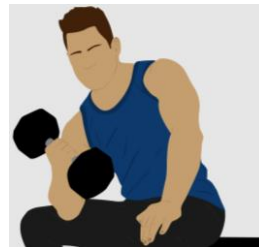
To be able to	Pouvoir
To have to	Devoir
To want	Vouloir

Test yourself by covering the right-hand column and trying to remember the answers

For best long-term memory results, test yourself repeatedly, on different days, with time delays in between



Like training a muscle, each time **you stretch your memory by trying to remember something**, your memory grows **stronger and lasts longer**



Memory: our first four top tips for smart students!

Meet Your Memory



The Independent Scholar



Take Charge Of Your Life



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**A scholar: someone who is good at learning
by studying** (including on their own..!)

How to learn anything by studying it for yourself (even if you don't get it at first!)

Reading for learning

Science, history, geography, English...

Sea otters dwell in the North Pacific. They are the largest of the mustelids, a group that also includes freshwater otters, weasels, and badgers. They are from 4 to 5 feet long and most weigh from 60 to 85 pounds. Large males may weigh 100 pounds or more.

Unlike most marine mammals, such as seals or dolphins, sea otters lack a layer of blubber, and therefore have to eat up to 30 percent of their body weight a day in clams, crabs, fish, octopus, squids, and other delicacies to maintain body heat. Their voracious appetites do not create food shortages, however, because they are picky eaters, each animal preferring only a

Maths problems

Maths, sciences, engineering...

numerator 18
denominator 30

To simplify a fraction, we divide both the numerator (top number) and the denominator (bottom number) by the same number.

If we divide both these numbers by 6, the fraction becomes $\frac{18 \div 6}{30 \div 6} = \frac{3}{5}$

If $y = 5$, what does b equal?
 $9y + 6 = 4b - 5$

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Reading for learning: four steps

1. Read and highlight / underline

2. Make flashcards

3. Test yourself
with the flashcards

4. Space your testing
over different days

Let's walk through these steps with an example...

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Reading for learning: choosing what to underline

Sea otters are a type of otter that dwell in the North Pacific.

1

2

3

4

5

5 parts to this sentence: if you could only highlight / underline one of the five parts, which would it be?

Which part contains the most useful information?
Which did you learn the most from?

**1. Read and
highlight /
underline**

Reading for learning: choosing what to underline

Sea otters are a type of otter that dwell in the North Pacific.

They are the largest of the mustelids, a group of mammals that also includes freshwater otters, weasels, and badgers.

Unlike most marine mammals, such as seals or dolphins, sea otters lack a layer of blubber, and therefore have to eat up to 30 percent of their body weight a day in clams, crabs, fish, octopus, squids, and other delicacies to maintain body heat.

1. Read and highlight / underline



Making flashcards

Sea otters are a type of otter that dwell in the North Pacific.

They are the largest of the mustelids, a group of mammals that also includes freshwater otters, weasels, and badgers.

Sea Otters

Where live? North Pacific

What type of mammal? Mustelids

Size vs other mustelids Largest

Examples of mustelids (4)

- Sea otters
- Freshwater otters
- Weasels
- Badgers

1. Read and highlight / underline

2. Make flashcards

3. Test yourself with the flashcards



Test yourself (quiz time..!)

Sea Otters	
Where live?	North Pacific
What type of mammal?	Mustelids
Size vs other mustelids	Largest
Examples of mustelids (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea otters • Freshwater otters • Weasels • Badgers

1. Read and highlight / underline

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3. Test yourself with the flashcards

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Do the quiz again later today, tomorrow, next week...

Sea otters are a type of otter that dwell in the North Pacific. They are the largest of the mustelids, a group of mammals that also includes freshwater otters, weasels, and badgers.

Sea Otters	
Where live?	North Pacific
What group are they from?	Mustelids
Size vs other mustelids	Largest of the mustelids
Examples of mustelids (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea otters • Freshwater otters • Weasels • Badgers

Test now

Few hours later

Tomorrow



1. Read and highlight / underline

2. Make flashcards

3. Test yourself with the flashcards

4. Space your testing over different days

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You might not always do all of these 4 steps, but the more you do, the better you'll remember what you've read...

1. Read and highlight / underline

2. Make flashcards

3. Test yourself with the flashcards

4. Space your testing over different days

If nothing else, do Step 1...

e.g. when reading non-fiction books for fun / interest

Do Steps 2-3 when there's a bit more at stake e.g. for a vocab test tomorrow

Be sure to do all four steps when you really want to know the material

e.g. for a major topic test or year-end exam

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What about maths problems?

Reading for learning

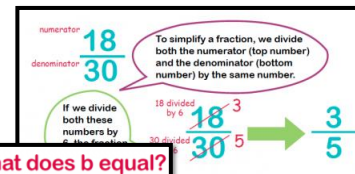
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Maths (style) problems

Maths, sciences, IT...



If $y = 5$, what does b equal?
 $9y + 6 = 4b - 5$

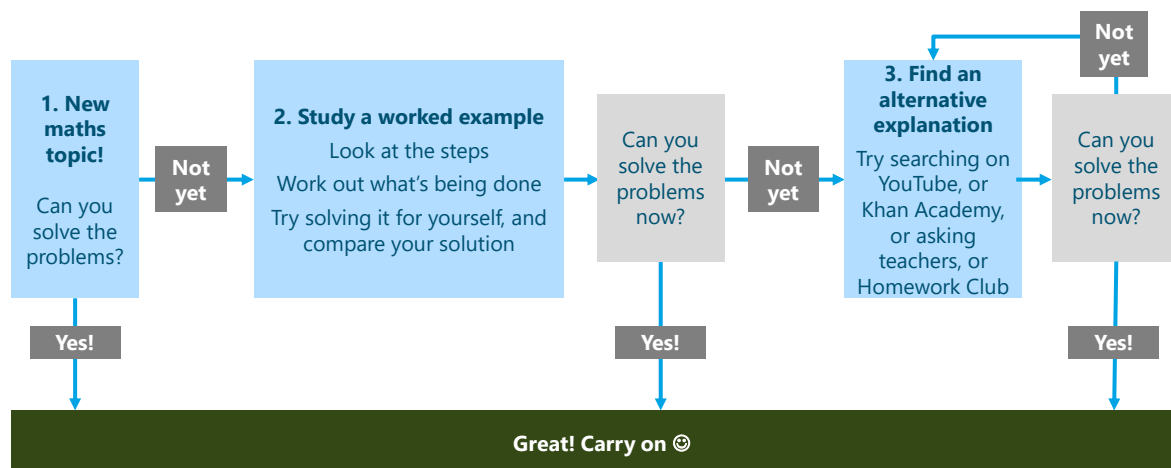
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What about maths problems? – persevere, trust the process!



Becoming independent scholars: our next two top tips!

Meet Your Memory



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The Independent Scholar



- 5 **Reading for learning:** i. Underline, ii. Make flashcards, iii. Test, iv. Test again!
- 6 **Persevere** in maths-style questions: study examples, find other explanations

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Procrastination: delaying something that must be done, often because it is (or seems!) unpleasant or boring



That's definitely been me before...



Nope, I've never done that!



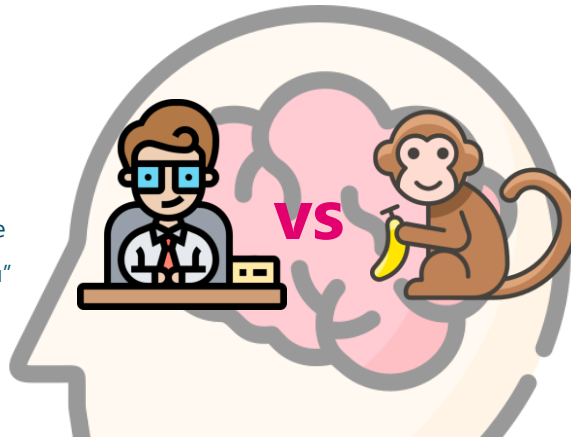
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Winning control of your life: a crucial step towards making a big success of yourself – not just at school but in life in general!

Inner C.E.O.

"Central Executive" Organiser

- Plans ahead
- Likes to get things done
- Cares about "future you"
- High-achiever, successful, happy



Playtime Monkey

- Procrastinates
- Likes non-stop playtime
- Cares only about today
- Under-achiever, disappointed / frustrated

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Taking control of your monkey: 4 steps

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Step 1: have a clear plan



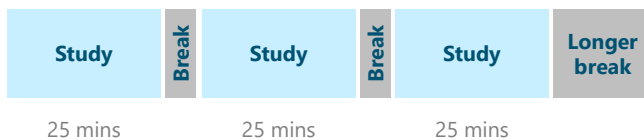
Top tip: habit of 5 minutes per day keeping your planner up to date – ideally at the same time each day

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 2a: train your monkey with timed bursts of work



1. **Set a timer** for e.g. 25 mins (ideally not on the phone..)
 2. **Concentrate hard** for that time
 3. **Take a break** for e.g. 10 mins
- Repeat....



Step 2b: train your monkey through establishing routines

Saturday morning

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

08.00-12.00	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

The monkey will come to expect you'll be working at these times, and will make less of a fuss!

Step 3: the monkey is easily distracted – remove temptation to help him stay focused...



Phone off and out of the room



For devices you use for study e.g. iPad:

- Delete distracting apps
- AND / OR log out of them
- AND / OR go on airplane mode



A little music is OK – make sure it's not distracting

Non-vocal is best...

Step 4: tricks for calming an over-excited monkey



Set a timer for just
5 minutes



Pick something easy /
fun to start with

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Taking charge of your life: gives us our remaining tips!

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Memory



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Take Charge
Of Your Life



- 7 Take **5 minutes a day** to update your planner
- 8 **Find a routine** that works for you and try **setting a timer** when studying
- 9 **Eliminate distractions** – turn off the phone!
- 10 Use the **“just 5 minutes”** or **“just do SOMETHING”** tricks

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Over to you: **choose one** of these tips to try out **tonight!**

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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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