

How to revise

It can be hard to revise, often because we don't have a clear idea of what 'revision' involves. To make things simple, I've broken it down into clear steps for you to follow:

1. Pick a time to study.

Do this well in advance! And make sure you don't make the study session too long. As a general rule-of-thumb I'd recommend study sessions to last 1-2 hours. Start small, then go bigger if you like.

2. Pick a subject and topic.

Make this a topic that you struggle with. By picking something specific, you avoid the risk of taking *the easy route* with your chosen subject. When you're starting out, it's okay to pick any random topic. Over time you will figure out a better strategy.

3. Remove as many distractions as you can.

Yes, this means:

- No phone.
- No web browsing.

But also try to clear the area that you want to work in. Having lots of papers, pens and paperclips in the place that you study is distracting. A clean studying area means a more focused mind.

4. Sit down with an empty page, and any revision materials you have chosen beforehand.

It's a good idea to think about what revision materials you might find really useful before you begin to revise. If these involve online materials then ask your parents if you can use their printer and get paper copies so that you aren't tempted to browse YouTube, Facebook, shopping websites or any other time-wasters.

5. Take notes for 20 minutes.

Just take notes! Rewrite the pages in front of you in **your own words** and this will begin to cement your understanding of the topic. Once you have a full page of notes, try to answer some questions using your own knowledge (and any formula sheets that you would have in an exam).

If your notes and questions are over before the time's up, you may find yourself wondering what to do. If this happens then plan something to revise next.

6. Change your environment for 10 minutes.

After 20 minutes of work, walk into to a different room or stroll down your street and back. Even if you didn't finish the work you were doing.

By doing this you remove yourself from the learning situation and give your brain a needed break!

IMPORTANT TIP

It's unhelpful to place pressure on yourself to *get it* straight away. By doing this your emotions become completely tied to whether you answer a question correctly or incorrectly. When your answers are wrong that is **OKAY!** Keep trying or, if it's becoming very frustrating, move on to something else.

How we learn

In general, we can use the following methods to self-teach a subject:

✓ Repetition

Simply reading and taking notes helps your mind to learn! You will find it easier to learn something if you have come across it already.

✓ Activity

By practicing a question you are **ACTIVELY** using the knowledge stored in your brain and associating that type of question with the method you are using.

✓ Curiosity

Getting excited by a topic is easier said than done, but keep an open mind and you will discover that there is *something* about what you are trying to learn that's genuinely interesting to you. Knowing this very fact will make you curious about everything you study, which is great!

Side note

This is a quick side note about 'metacognition', something that is rarely taught to you by teachers but has really helped me figure out how to learn better. I wish someone had explained this concept to me when I was studying GCSEs - hopefully it will be of some use

to you.

To apply it, you need to think about **what helps you to learn**, and **what doesn't**. It is also helpful to think about ways we can be **kinder** to our brains when we feel unmotivated, are there any things you can do other than forcing yourself to study against your own will? Try having a little break, making yourself a hot drink, or something else, and then coming back to your revision with a fresh mindset.

METACOGNITION

Involves thinking about how you think.

I can't tell you how you learn best because our minds are all very different. However, to help you along, these are some personal ways that I apply metacognition to improve my learning:

- I can sometimes feel my mind wandering off during study. I see this as a sign that I need to do something differently and might give myself a 5-minute break or have something to eat.
- I learn better when I contemplate the knowledge that I have already gained. 'Look at how far I've come!' Having this thought can feel weird at first, like bragging to yourself. But it has huge motivational power when you take it seriously - you have learned and will continue to learn new things. Just keep going!
- Taking the time to organise my notes/books helps me to study.

As an example, around once a month I will go through my notes from class and fix them up as though I'm writing revision notes for someone else.

- Using a calendar keeps me aligned with my goal of getting a good grade.

I *block in* the times where I'm busy for example if I'm in a class, and every time that a friend asks me to hang out, or I want to plan something, I put it in my calendar. This is a wonderful habit to keep disorganised-me in check! When my calendar tells me that it's time to study, then I will study.

Note: I like to use Google calendar as it can sync with my laptop and has a nice colour theme, but there are many great calendars.