ST LAURENCE SCHOOL

YEAR 11 EASTER REVISION

PARENTAL SUPPORT PACK

Click here to return to the content page

Introduction

We are aware of a growing desire from parents to support their children with revision in the build up to exams. Below is a list of topics that you, as a parent, may find useful in supporting your child with their GCSE exams over the coming weeks and months. This is generic advice about revision and will not contain any subject specific revision tasks. Students will be able to see "suggested revision tasks" in one central document on Class Charts.

GCSE exams are, as we know you are aware, tremendously important, and we would like to thank you in advance for everything you have done so far to help us in supporting your children.

Over the coming weeks, our guidance is that students spend between 1 to 2 hours per night during the school week whilst also regularly attending school and between 4 and 6 hours revising per day during the Easter holidays.

Detailed in this document are some practical strategies you can use with your children to help them revise, as well as the science behind why these strategies work. Some of this advice you will have read in previous correspondence from us but other parts are new. Because of this, please do take the time to read through the whole document.

To support with this, we have been fortunate to be made aware of some supportive podcasts that educate students and parents on the power of effective study techniques. The eight-podcast sequence talks about a variety of different study methods which would be helpful for you in supporting your child. The podcasts can be found here or on most podcast streaming services.

We hope this is useful to you over the coming months.

Thank you again for your continued support in the build up to the public examinations.

Mr T Hainsworth

Assistant Headteacher (Teaching & Learning)

Click here to return to the content page

Contents

Click here to return to the content page

Exam regulations

Official documents and regulations will be published on Class Charts for Year 11 and more widely on the school website. These are issues pertaining to privacy, the use of social media and other issues JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) ask us to make students aware of. I would encourage you to look at those with your child ahead of the exams.

There are some simple regulations that students must abide by during the exam period and they are as follows:

- Students are at school on time and are ready to move into the exam hall for the beginning of the exam. For Year 11, this means being under the DT canopy at 8.35am for a morning exam or 1.15pm for an afternoon exam. If a student has an access arrangement which means they sit their exam in an alternative room, they should line up under the canopy by Reception.
- Year 11 students are expected to take the exams in their normal school uniform. This is for exam reasons and the potential for issues that could lead to disqualification from the exam.
- Mobile devices and watches of any form are not allowed in the exam hall under any circumstances and will risk disqualification from exams if these are taken into the exam hall. Students can leave these items in their bags in the locked changing room, hand these into the invigilators or leave them at home on days they have exams.
- Students are not allowed to wear headphones of any form into the exam hall. Students with long hair may have to be asked, under exam guidelines, to show their ears to check if any headphones are being worn. If an invigilator cannot see a student's ears, they may ask the student to hold back their hair to check for headphones/earbuds.
- There are not allowed to be any bracelets, bangles or other jewellery that can be worn on the forearms.
- All stationery must be in a clear and see-through pencil case. Students must come prepared with everything they need for an exam.
- Any water bottles that students wish to take into the exam hall must be completely clear and have all labels removed.
- If a student is taking a calculator into the exam, the case of it should remain in their bags or at home.
- Seating plans will be available under the DT canopy and on the Student Portal in advance of the exam. Students need to check where they are sitting before going to the exam hall.

Click here to return to the content page

What does good revision look like?

Revision is something that is discussed a lot, but the science behind it is not widely known by students. In order to revise effectively, students should be attempting to commit knowledge and understanding to their long-term memory. This starts with having good revision habits.

The basics of good revision

The basics of studying are vitally important:

- **Agree the balance of work and social life** and stick to the agreement – flexibility is key – i.e. if a special night arises, agree that they can make up the work another (specified) time
- **Help them plan their work and revision and meet deadlines** – "The Student Room" provide a very good guide for helping your child plan their revision around their other commitments, and "GetRevising" have an online tool to build it.
- **Stick key dates in a prominent place** e.g. kitchen fridge. An exam timetable can be found here but students will receive their own copy in due course.
- **Provide your child with a quiet place to study** – preferably a dining room / study where they will not be disturbed and there is a table to work at
- **Ensure that your child has a range of stationery available to them** – this can range from highlighters and colour pens, smaller "flash card" style pieces of paper or card, A3 paper etc.
- **Encourage your child to have a clear goal by the end of their revision period** – e.g. 'At the end of these 2 hours I will be able to label a diagram of the heart and answer a question on how the heart works.'
- **Make sure they take regular breaks** – for every thirty to forty minutes of revision students should have a ten-minute break. Students shouldn't revise for longer than forty-minute sessions.
- **Ensure your child gets enough sleep** – teenagers need between eight & ten hours sleep per night (Sleep Foundation). *Sleep hygiene* is really important and avoiding the use of any technology around bedtime can help students (and adults) sleep better.

Staying focussed during revision

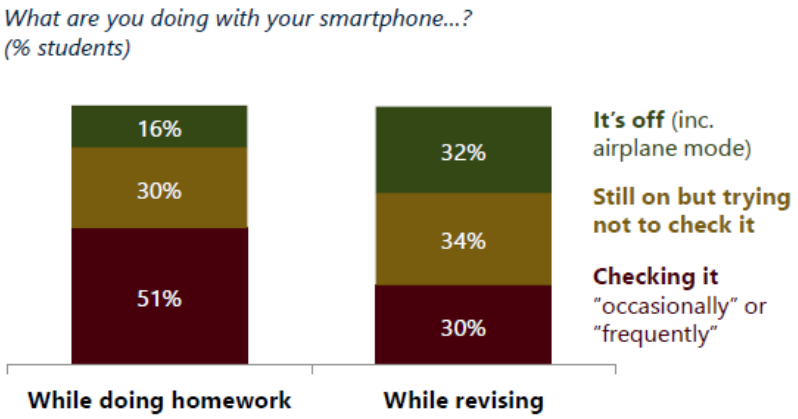
A recent study into the science of revision has found that smartphones and devices are a significant barrier to concentration during the revision period.

Whilst revising, 64% of students acknowledge that their mobile phone is close to them and they are thinking about it rather than their revision.

The average student loses 8 minutes out of every study hour to smartphone distraction, and just having a smartphone on the desk makes students score lower on IQ tests. We suggest making students put the phones away, or even better, in a completely different room during their revision time. Their work will improve in quality, and they'll get through it faster, enjoying more leisure time as a result.

Click here to return to the content page

However, this is just one part of a bigger picture. Students also need to have the energy to focus on their studies. 37% of students do not consistently start the day with a good breakfast. The energy gained from a healthy breakfast every morning helps them to focus better during the morning. This also means that ensuring they eat healthy food and drink plenty of water throughout the day is beneficial to their success in exams. A balanced diet is just as important now as ever.



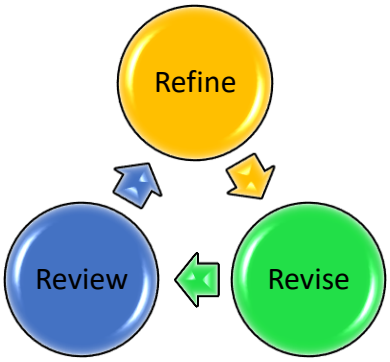
Source: The Revision Census 2020

Click here to return to the content page

The *Three R's of Revision*

By using this cycle, students are helping themselves to work on the things they find the most challenging as well as revising in an "active" manner.

The Three R's of Revision should be seen as a repetitive cycle that students work through multiple times for each subject / topic. By doing this, they are practicing "spaced learning" which will help them to remember more of what they are learning over a longer period of time.



The Three R's of Revision
Source: Internet Geography

Students should start by *refining* (see above) what they need to know about a subject / topic and work out what they currently do and do not know. From this, they can then create a plan and a revision timetable to help them work through these areas of their subjects. They can do this by using some of the six strategies on the next page.

For their revision, they should be spending no more than 30-40 minutes working on the above tasks and this should be followed by a 10-15 minute break. This can then be repeated 2 or 3 times before they have a much longer break of 3-4 hours. It is important that they follow this pattern as their brain finds it difficult to concentrate for much more than 30 minutes and will simply stop taking in new knowledge. This will then lead to them becoming frustrated and upset that revision "isn't working". During their breaks, their brain will be consolidating their learning and working hard to store it in their memory. This is why breaks are so important.

Click here to return to the content page

Revis(e)it

dual coding

Combine text and images.

flash cards

Question on the front, answer on the back.

condense text

Condense text to a sentence then key words.

mind maps

Spider diagram with images and text.

blank page

Write as much as you can on a blank page.

revision clock

Five minutes per chunk. Write...

DON'T copy text, highlight text, underline text and re-read text

Make sure that during their revision time, there are **no distractions at all.** There should be no music, no TV and certainly no smartphones or devices. As stated earlier, the closer your smartphone or device is to them, the more they are thinking about what might be happening in the outside world and therefore are focussing less on their learning.

Once they have spent time revising, they need to test themselves to see what has "gone in" by *reviewing* their learning. They need to practice *retrieving* the knowledge they have learnt from their memory. This is when some of the most effective methods of revision are invaluable to them as a learner.

Review it

self testing

Test yourself using flash cards.

do a quiz

Complete multiple choice quizzes.

past papers

Complete past exam questions and papers.

By using flash cards, tests or practice questions without the help of their notes, they are encouraging their brain to *retrieve* learning from their memory. In the beginning, this may be frustrating as they may think they cannot "do it" or feel they do not know anything; that is a normal feeling to have. However, if they persevere and stick at it, they should notice that they are able to answer more and more questions that may get harder and harder. Encourage them to not give up straight away because it is hard.

Click here to return to the content page

Effective revision techniques for exam success

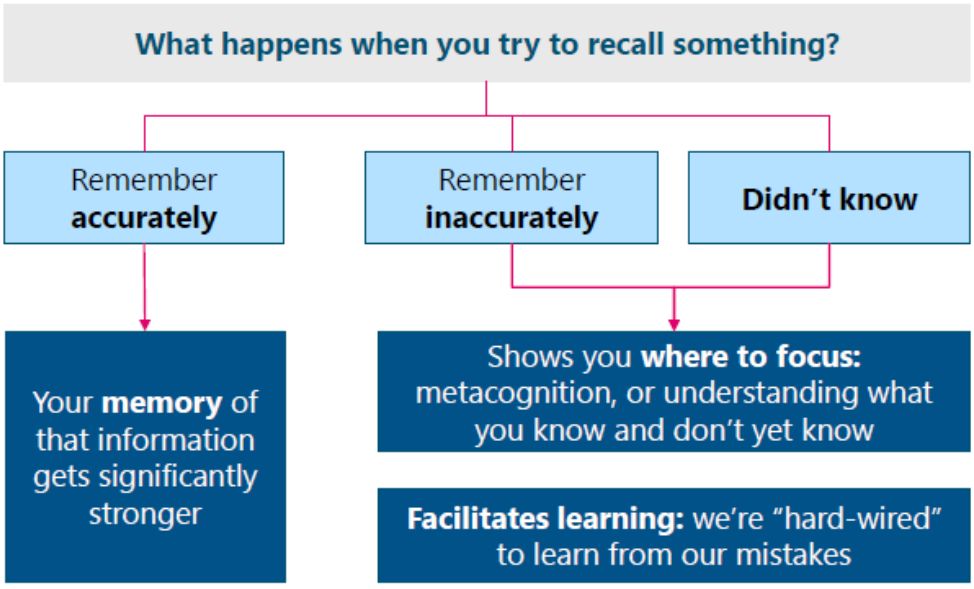
Generally high-effectiveness activities: when used correctly, these are highly effective ways to learn information	**Practice questions** and past papers
	Flashcards
	Pair testing with friends or family
	Using **quiz apps** or software
	Blank page retrieval: writing out what you know from memory
Mixed-effectiveness activities: can be helpful, depending on how they are used and for what	**Mindmaps and spider diagrams**
	Knowledge organisers: making or using them
	Making or using **mnemonics**
	Thinking of **real-life examples**
Generally low-effectiveness activities: have some uses, but low effectiveness as memorisation tools in particular	**Re-reading** notes / books
	Highlighting and underlining
	Note-making and summarising
	Listening to audio or watching videos (e.g. on YouTube)

Source: The Revision Census 2020

Some revision strategies are more effective at allowing students to retrieve knowledge than others. All of them have their place in the revision process, with some less effective methods being needed towards the beginning of the revision process, but time spent on these should be minimal. The more a student can focus on the highly effective methods stated below, the higher their chances of success. However, the effectiveness of these methods may vary between subjects and for different students.

The reason why the strategies listed at the top of the table (right) is because they encourage *knowledge retrieval*. *Retrieval practice* involves recreating something you have learned in the past from your memory, and thinking about it right now. In other words, a while after you have learned something through revision, you need to bring it to mind (or "retrieve" it). Provision studies as part of the *Revision Census 2020* have shown that high achieving students spend between 30 and 50% of their revision time on retrieval practice activities.

The reason retrieval practice works so well is due to it strengthening connections within the student's brain about what they are studying. If a child can remember something accurately, the memory has been made stronger, if they have not been able to, more time and effort is needed to work on the content to remember it better.



Retrieval practice isn't just about "memorising facts" – it also supports:

- **Application of knowledge**, synthesis and inference
- **Recall** (even under stress)
- **Building on what you know**

Source: The Revision Census 2020

Click here to return to the content page

However, simply spending the time on these strategies is not enough to ensure learning is taking place; they must be completed in the correct way. This can be seen in the example from the *Revision Census 2020* regarding flash cards.

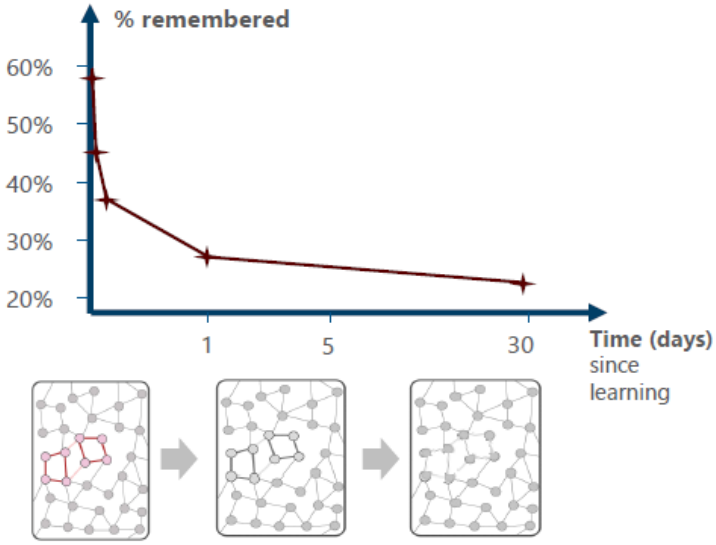
Source: The Revision Census 2020

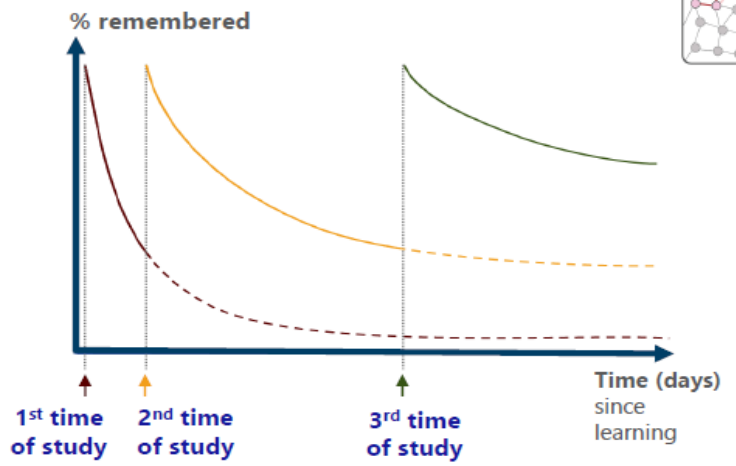
It is important that students understand that retrieval practice (learning by recalling information) is the single most powerful learning strategy known to cognitive psychology (especially when combined with spaced learning; see next section). That said, it might be helpful to overcome potential scepticism and get students used to the higher cognitive effort demanded by retrieval practice by giving them a chance to rehearse retrieval practice techniques. Giving your child encouraging and reassuring messages on this will help their mind-set towards retrieval practice, and in all likelihood, make them want to continue with this method into the future.

Click here to return to the content page

Spaced learning

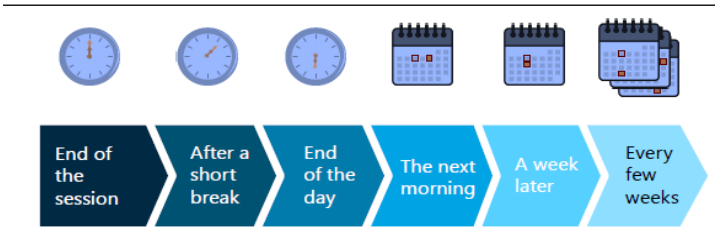
It goes without saying that revision is frustrating for students (and parents). Some students believe that they will be able to learn everything they need to in one attempt. In reality, few ever can and even less actually do. The best analogies to make with your children are those of elite sports men and women. These athletes will not have been the best in the world at what they do the first time of asking. It took a lot of effort, perseverance and dedication to get to the elite level at which they perform. Mastery of learning, unfortunately, is no different.



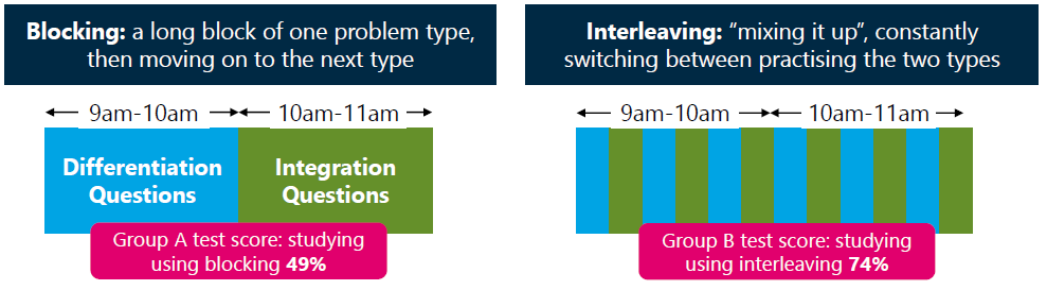


In the 1880's scientists began to study the mind and came to the realisation that memory can fade. From this the "forgetting curve" was first drawn (see above). What it suggests is that on first encounter of learning, students will remember a large proportion of what they are taught or revise. However, as time passes, this learning fades. As you are possibly aware, asking your child what they learnt at school today can often have mixed responses. This is the purpose of s*paced learning.*

Spaced learning is aimed to encourage students to revisit information over a longer period of time. Each time they revisit their learning, they will remember more of it and become more confident in their subjects. A representation of this is shown left. Spaced learning is especially effective when it is combined with *interleaving*. The process requires students to mix up the content / topics they find easy and those they find challenging as opposed to separating them.



Spaced learning: not spending more hours on each topic, but rather spreading that time out



Interleaving works by introducing a little spacing *within* each study session, and practises the skill of remembering how to tackle each problem type "from cold", i.e., without having just done a long run of 10 types of the same problem and found your rhythm. Exams, after all, tend not to contain long runs of the same type of problem – you'll need to remember how each problem type works "from cold" on exam day.

Source: The Revision Census 2020