

Some Revision Strategies

Repetition & Rehearsal

Strategies based around **repetition** and rehearsal are often relied upon too heavily by students, but they do have their place. They are good for learning **short pieces of information** that have to be reproduced exactly. For example:

- Definitions of things (e.g. in Science)
- Short quotations (e.g. in English)

"A COMPOUND CONTAINS TWO OR MORE TYPES OF ATOM CHEMICALLY BONDED TOGETHER"

Write definitions or quotations on **index cards** and carry them around with you. Read through them when you have a spare moment such as on a bus journey. This way you can fit some revision into your everyday life.

"NOW IS THE WINTER OF OUR DISCONTENT
MADE GLORIOUS SUMMER BY THIS SON OF YORK..."

Write important facts on **Post-It Notes** and stick them up around the house. That way, you'll get continual reminders.

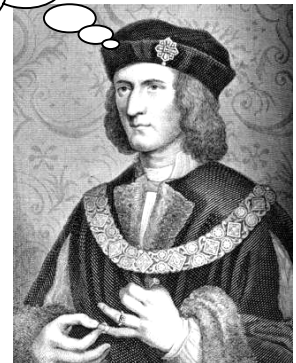
Red, Orange, Yellow,
Green, Blue, Indigo,
Violet...

Mnemonics

Mnemonics are memory tricks that help you remember more complex information. They are especially good for **recalling things in sequence**, for example:

- "**M**any **V**ery **E**nergetic **M**en **J**ump **S**ideways **U**sing **N**ew **P**limsolls" gives you the order of the planets in the solar system: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars...

There are many 'stock' mnemonics that you might know about (e.g. "Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain" for the colours of the rainbow) but you can make up your own very easily. Try to produce a sentence that makes sense, and that produces an interesting or funny picture in your mind.



Lyrics, Raps and Poems

It might sound funny, but creating songs or raps around the material you need to learn works really well for some people. The effort that goes into thinking up the right words makes for really **effective learning**, and the rhymes, rhythm and tune help you to **recall** the information, especially if you use a tune you know well. This technique works for all sorts of materials, for example:

- Describing sequences of events (e.g. in History)
- Summarising the plot of books and plays (in English)
- Explaining processes (e.g. in Maths, Science and Geography)



Yo listen up y'all I'm Attila the Hun
And I wanted to be ruler of everyone
My barbarian hordes swept across the plains
In my two most aggressive military campaigns
I got the Franks and the Vandals involved with my schemes
But got beaten by the Romans just outside Orleans
But it wasn't them alone that saw me off
'Cos they had the assistance of the Visigoths...

Flow Charts

Flow charts are an excellent way of getting to grips with **processes**, especially in subjects like Maths or Science, where there are set procedures that must be followed to do certain things. Not only does drawing up the flowchart increase your **understanding** of the process, but also the finished chart is a useful source of information.

Cartoons



Some students find it much easier to understand things after they have turned them into cartoons. This is a **versatile** technique that works best for revising what people did or do, for example:

- Key events in history
- Processes in Sociology
- The action in plays or novels

You don't have to be a good artist – stick figures are fine.

Mind Maps

Many students find it very helpful to revise by drawing 'mind maps'. These are diagrams that show the different parts of a topic or idea and the **connections** between them. They work for most subjects and are particularly good for:

- Summarising information
- Pulling together different parts of a topic
- Understanding the overall structure of a subject

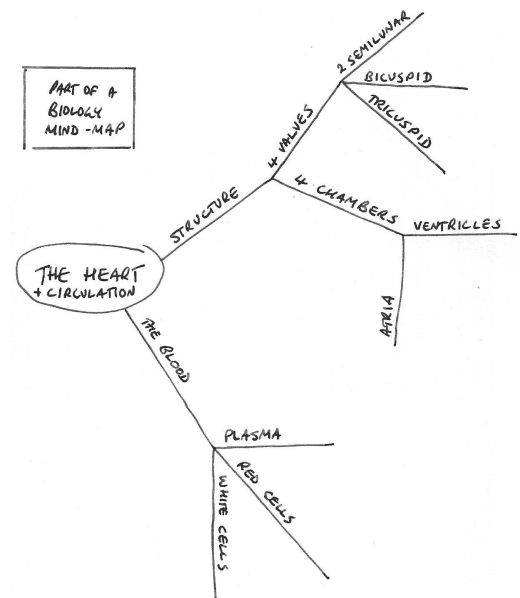
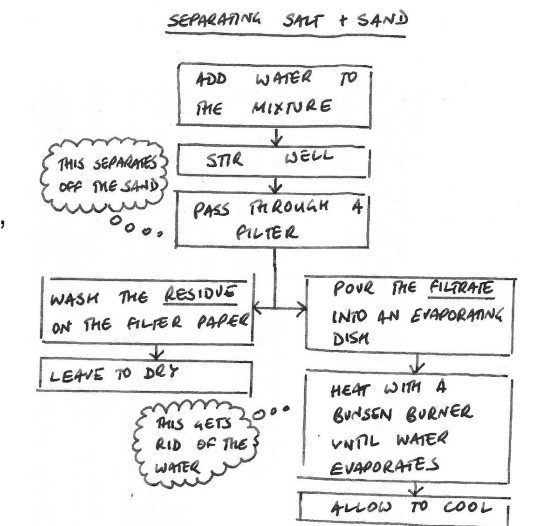
When drawing out a mind map, start with the name of the topic. Write it in the centre of the page and draw a circle round it. Next, write the names of the subtopics that relate to it, and draw lines connecting these to the main topic heading. More information can now be linked to the subheadings. You can use colour to separate out different subtopics, and add keywords, diagrams and symbols – but don't overcrowd the mind map, this only makes it difficult to understand.

You can find out more on the Internet.

<http://www.mind-map.com/EN/index.html>
<http://www.mindtools.com/mindmaps.html>

Posters

Rather than making notes, some students find making posters more **interesting** and a better way of learning. This is another strategy that works for just about any subject. Your poster can contain keywords, definitions, short explanations, diagrams, pictures – just about anything, in fact. You can put the posters up around your room so you can look at them whenever you need to.



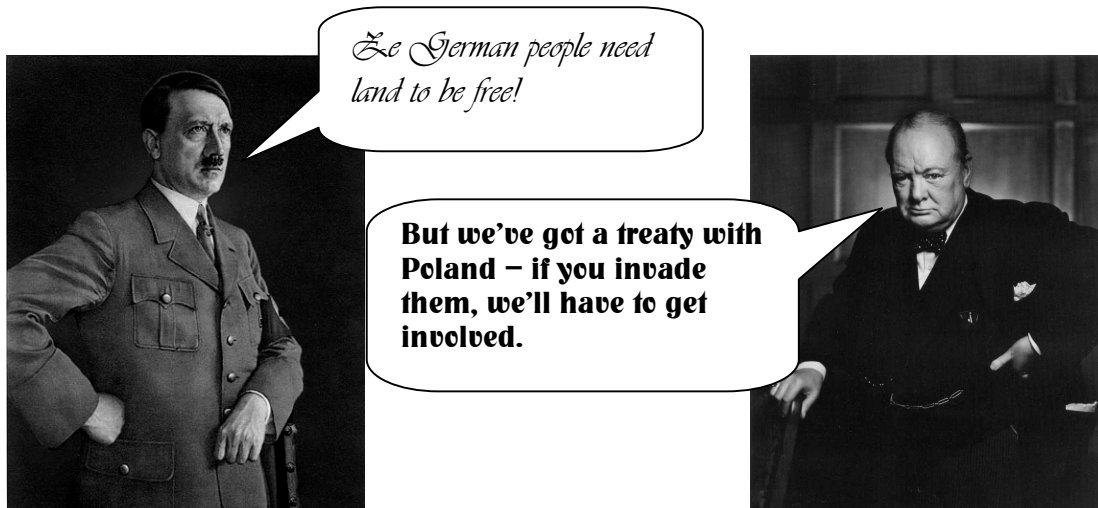
Pair and Small Group Strategies



Working with others can be a good way of revising – it makes it more fun, and you can keep each other **motivated**. However, you might need to work hard at keeping focused - you can also distract each other. Things you could do include:

- ❑ **Teaching each other** – this is one of the best learning strategies. Teaching things to other people really helps you **organise and understand** the information in your own mind. Divide a topic up between two or three of you. Each person explains their bit of the topic, whilst the others make their own notes and ask questions. By the time you've all had a go, you've covered the topic.

- ❑ **Acting and role-play.** This is very good for learning more about plays in English, but can help you understand all sorts of things, like History. For example, each person could take the part of a world leader during World War II – Churchill, Stalin, Hitler etc. – and explain their **point of view and motives** for war to the others.



General Advice

- ❑ Use the **subject syllabus or specification** to plan your revision – there's no point learning things that won't be in the exams
- ❑ Remember that **different techniques** work for different people – you'll need to experiment with different strategies to find out what works best for you.
- ❑ Whatever strategy you are using, remember the principles of good revision – work in **short bursts** with regular breaks.
- ❑ Set yourself **clear targets** for each revision session – start by planning exactly what you want to be able to do by the end of the session. For example “revise the heart” is a bit too vague, whereas “draw and label a diagram of the heart” is better because it has a clear target.
- ❑ **Test your learning** regularly – this is your only guide to whether the techniques you are using are working or not.