

**TAKE  
YOUR  
PLACE**

# Study Skills Workbook

**Name:**

**School:**

**Year:**





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# What are study skills?

Study skills are strategies for effective study and learning. These skills should help you study independently while learning the content of a course. Study skills are not just revision! Remember - ability isn't fixed, you can develop it through the right training and mindset.

You can start by building up your motivation:

- Motivation is one of the driving forces behind human behaviour.
- Recognising what motivates you – knowing the driving force behind it all – helps you to achieve your goals.

**Challenge:** Take a moment to think about what motivates you, in general or to study? Are you driven by external rewards (e.g. grades, money, praise or fame) or by an internal sense of satisfaction?

“Even the best strategies will only be effective if students are motivated to use them correctly.”

**John Dunlosky**

(“Strengthening the Student Toolbox”,  
American Educator, Fall 2013, p.21)



## How can you stay motivated to study?

### Set S.M.A.R.T. goals

Write down your goals to put things into perspective. Make sure your goals are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-bound.

### Visualise

Keep your end goal in sight. Visualise where you want to be in 10 years' time.

### Celebrate

Acknowledge one or two things you have achieved each day.

### Break it down

Break down your tasks into manageable chunks so that they feel more achievable.

### Create a timetable

Create a revision timetable to help you stay on track.

### Mix it up

Mix up your revision techniques so you don't get bored.

### Self-care

Remember to take care of your wellbeing.

### Take breaks

Take regular breaks to stay focused and avoid burnout.

### Talk

Talk to someone (friend or family) to feel better and get the support you need.



# Self-care



A good study routine begins and ends with self-care because the most important part of your study is YOU! If you take good care of yourself, you can make sure that your needs are sufficiently met, enabling you to study effectively.

Remember that some stress is natural, and it helps you stay alert. But it is important not to be overwhelmed by stress. If you practise self-care, you can manage stress effectively during revision and exam times.

But it also means:

- Managing your time and workload
- Motivating yourself
- Regulating your emotions
- Building healthy habits
- Setting up revision routines
- Studying to become successful
- Spending time in nature

## What does self-care look like for you?



- Eat well and stay hydrated
- Get enough sleep
- Go out to get fresh air
- Exercise regularly
- Relax
- Have a laugh
- Connect with your loved ones
- Take restful breaks
- Practise mindfulness



## Mindfulness

Mindfulness is paying attention to all of your experiences; body sensations, thoughts, emotions and moods, and to the little changes within them. If you learn to be mindful of your experience within the moment, then you can make a conscious choice in where you want to bring your attention. This means that you can also choose to concentrate on your study or revision. This practice also helps you regulate your emotions and manage stress.

Mindfulness is a regular practice, and it is especially effective when you feel overwhelmed, teaching you to pause and breathe for a few moments and feel grounded in your body. Then, you can choose how to respond. Do you need a break? Maybe you need to break your task down into more manageable chunks!

# Setting goals

Remember what you want (*what is your goal?*)

Remind yourself *why* you want it

Consider what you need to do to get there

Make sure your goal is a **S.M.A.R.T. Goal**:

<b>S</b> - Specific	Describe your goal in detail. Start small. If your goal is broad, break it down.
<b>M</b> - Measurable	State how you will assess whether you have met your goal. Consider a tangible measurement such as a grade in an exam.
<b>A</b> - Achievable	Justify why you think it's possible for you to achieve your goal given your current skill level and the resources available to you.
<b>R</b> - Relevant	Ensure your goal is relevant to your current class, lesson or GCSE revision.
<b>T</b> - Time-bound	State when you want to meet your goal. Ensure this is a realistic time frame.

## Example:

**"I will get an A- in my English essay by working on it for five sessions a week for the next two weeks."**

<b>S</b> - Specific	I have been assigned an essay in my English class which I will target for a higher grade.
<b>M</b> - Measurable	I got a B- in my past essay. My goal is to increase one grade (A- or above).
<b>A</b> - Achievable	I will schedule five sessions per week in my study timetable for the next two weeks. I will read the relevant material and map out an outline. Then, I will work on my essay based on previous feedback.
<b>R</b> - Relevant	The goal of getting an A in my essay is relevant to my longer-term goal of succeeding in my English GCSEs.
<b>T</b> - Time-bound	My essay is due in two weeks.

# Setting goals

**Challenge:** Give it a try!

**Your goal:**

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<b>S</b> - Specific	
<b>M</b> - Measurable	
<b>A</b> - Achievable	
<b>R</b> - Relevant	
<b>T</b> - Time-bound	

Adapted from Drew, C. (February 16, 2023). *38 Examples of SMART Goals for Students*. Helpful Professor  
<https://helpfulprofessor.com/smart-goals-examples-for-students/>

# Setting goals

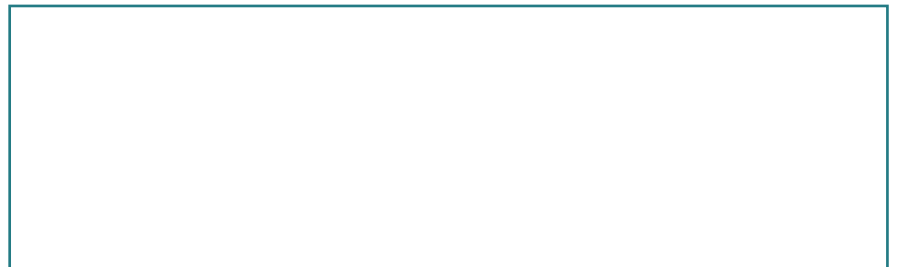
**Challenge:** Can you define your goals as steps leading up to your dream?

**DREAM**

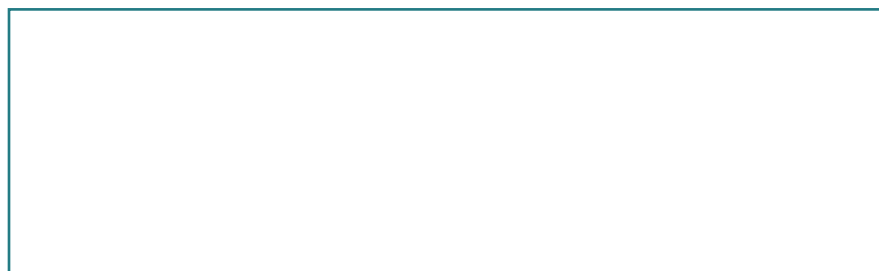


**Goal 4**

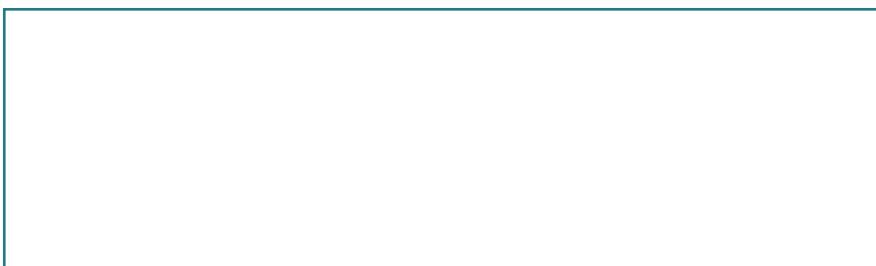
**Goal 3**



**Goal 2**



**Goal 1**





# Setting goals

**Challenge:** Write a letter to your future self. Perhaps you could highlight all the things you hope to achieve in the next 10 years. You could emphasise some of the things that are difficult with your studies right now, but you hope to overcome and seek support with.

What do you hope for your 25-year-old self?

What job/career do you hope to be in?

Are you studying?

Are you travelling?

What have you achieved?

How are you feeling?

Have your motivations changed?



Dear future self,

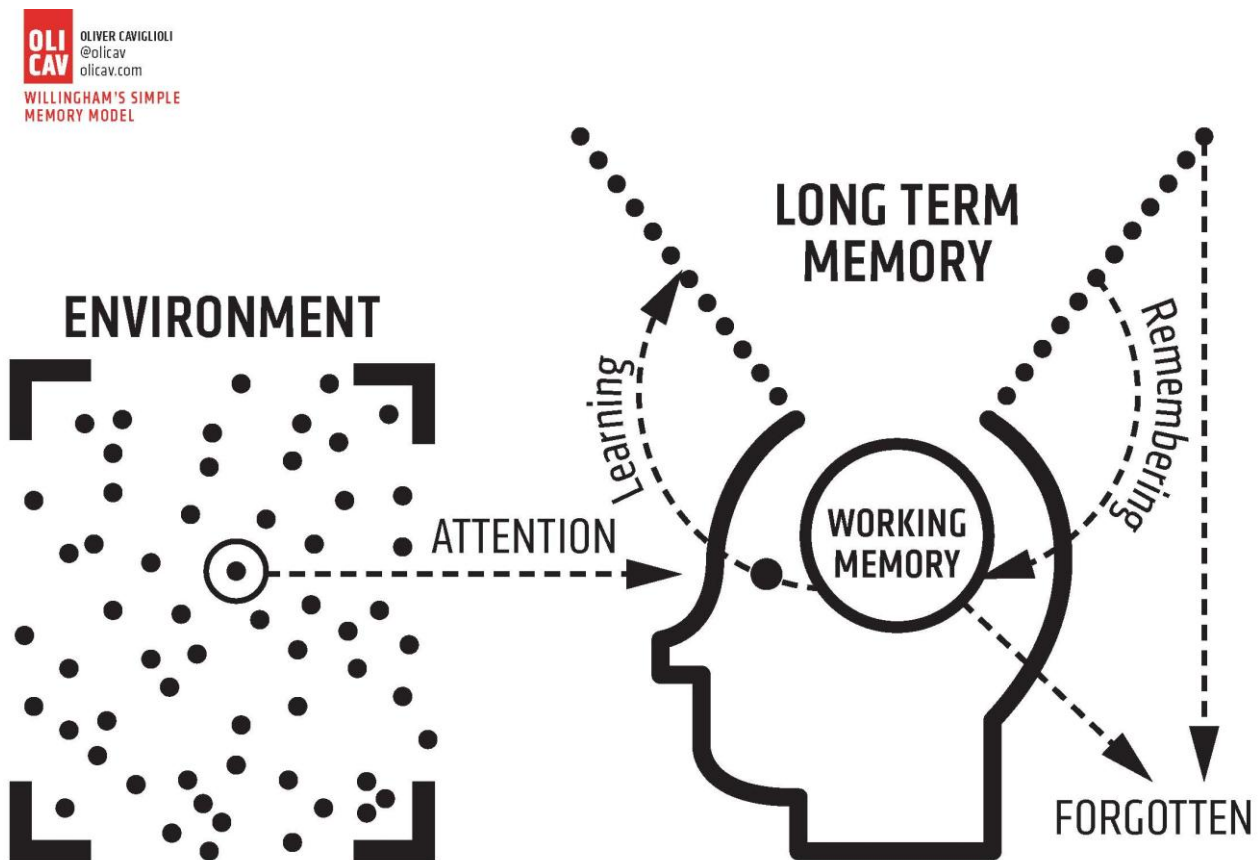
# How we learn

We learn by paying attention to information and by thinking about it. When we pay attention to information, it enters our working memory.

**Working memory** is where we hold and process new information. It has a small capacity. If information is not transferred to long term memory from here, it will be forgotten.

**Long term memory** is where we store the things we have learnt. It has a huge capacity, meaning we can remember things from a long time ago.

**How we learn:** Connecting information from our working memory to our long-term memory is how we learn things. The connection is strengthened through repetition over time.



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## How can you improve your memory?

- **Retrieval practice:** Learning by recalling information and testing yourself.
- **Spacing:** Establishing a study routine and distributing your study over time.

When you **RETRIEVE** a piece of information, you bring it back into your working memory. Your brain is prompted to store the information more effectively, which makes it easier to remember later.

When you **SPACE** out your study over periods of time, you strengthen your long-term memory, making it easier to access the information later.

# Time management

Your study timetable will be unique to your circumstances. For the best routines you should ensure you are consistent. It's important to map out the time you have available and factor study time into this. Important things to consider:

**Plan study time:** How many hours can you give to your study time?

**Energy:** Early bird vs night owl? When do you work best, and are full of energy? Consider your most productive times and stick to it!

**Rest:** Take regular breaks. Do not skip your breaks.



Timetables and 'to do' lists can help you feel more in control – but make sure you include time for hobbies, relaxing, spending time with friends as well as studying and work.

## The Pomodoro Technique

The Pomodoro technique is a popular technique to help boost productivity. Your study sessions are combined into manageable chunks and spaced out with short breaks. You use a timer to track distraction-free work sessions.

With Pomodoro technique, you can:

- Effectively manage time.
- Work without distractions.
- Avoid multitasking.
- Improve concentration.
- See what you can achieve in a limited time.



Pomodoro is the Italian word for tomato. The inventor named the technique after a tomato-shaped timer he used to track his work.

Here's how to use the technique:

1. Identify a task.
2. Set a timer for 25 minutes.
3. Work on the task (with no distractions).
4. End work when the timer rings and mark the task as done.
5. Take a 5-minute break, then move on to the next task.
6. After four sprints, take a longer break (15-30 minutes), then start again.

Pomodoro 1		Pomodoro 2		Pomodoro 3		Pomodoro 4	Break
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# Create a revision timetable

## Step 1: Prioritise your subjects

Create a list of all your subjects in the box below. Rank them from those you're **strongest at** to the **most challenging** and colour code them in that order from **Green** to **Amber** to **Red**.

**Your list:**

**Example:**

Art and Design  
Spanish  
Drama  
Chemistry  
English Language  
Geography  
Biology  
English Literature  
Physics  
Maths

## Step 2: Break down into topics

Break each subject down into topics – e.g. rather than 'Maths', a topic might be 'differentiation' or 'integration'. You can also rate your topics **Green**, **Amber** or **Red** to show how prepared you are for each topic. This will help you decide which topics to prioritise in your revision.

**Example:**

**GCSE Biology topics:**

Organisation  
Bioenergetics  
Infection and response  
Cell biology

Establish  
priorities



Break it  
down



Create your  
timetable



Track your  
progress

# Create a revision timetable

## Step 3: Create your timetable

Create a weekly timetable and update it as you progress. Use the blank timetable on page 12.

- First, write in free time and social time. Block out your rest time.
- Write in upcoming exams and deadlines.
- Now, add in your subjects and related topics. Focus on the subjects and topics in **RED** first, these are the ones you may be least likely to choose – but they are the highest priority.

You can use the blank timetable on page 13 for future weeks.

**Top tip:** Keep your timetable flexible and achievable for you – you could use post-it notes so that revision is movable. Alternatively, you could create a timetable using a free digital planning tool like *GetRevising.co.uk*



## Step 4: Track your progress

On a separate sheet, create a progress tracker for your revision topics. As you revise and test yourself on these topics, you can change your colour rating to track your progress and see how much revision you need in a particular area. Add the dates of your tests where appropriate.

**Example:**

GCSE Biology topics	Initial assessment	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3
Cell biology	23.10.24	22.11.24	10.12.24	10.01.25
Organisation				
Infection and response				
Bioenergetics				

**Challenge:** Create a revision timetable for Gemma.

Gemma's GCSE exams are eight weeks away. She is at school between 9.00am and 3.30pm. She gets home every day at 4pm. Gemma has rugby practice at 7pm every Tuesday for one hour and looks after her younger sister on a Thursday between 4.30pm and 5.30pm.

Gemma's subjects are **Biology**, **Chemistry**, **Physics**, **Maths**, **English**, **French**, **History**, **Art**, **Geography**.

[illegible]

Step 1: Fill in the 'time' column.

Step 2: Shade in the time during which she will be in school.

Step 3: Consider her out-of-school commitments.

**Step 4: Allocate her subjects time slots throughout the week.**

Step 5: Remember to factor in free time and meal breaks.

Revision timetable

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY

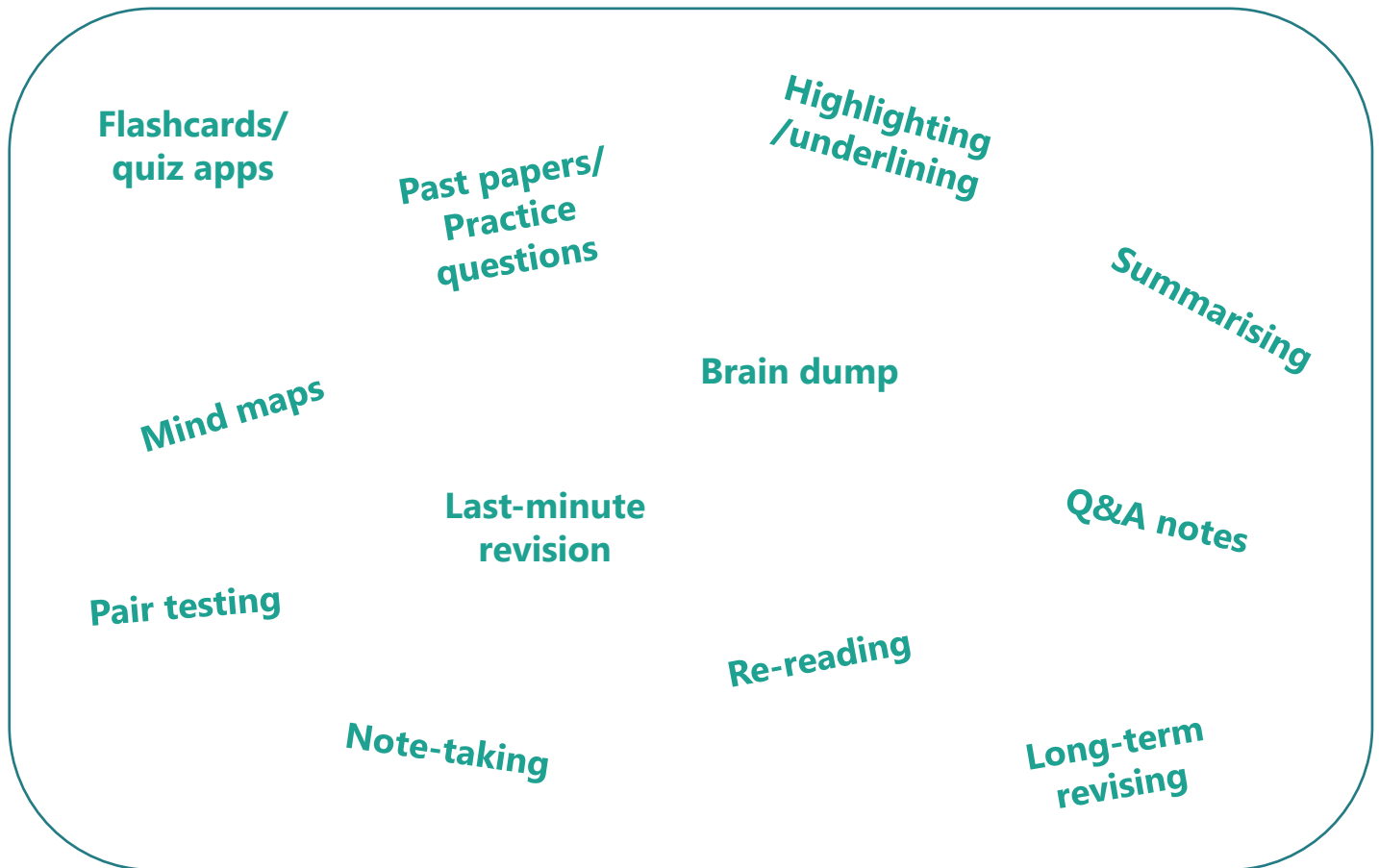
Revision timetable

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY



# Effective study methods 1

**Challenge:** Can you circle which study strategies you think are most effective?



After you complete this challenge, check page 22 to see which study methods are the most effective according to research\*.

## Motivation top tip:

To beat procrastination, try concentrating on your work for just a few minutes, which will activate your brain's drive to finish the task. Evidence shows that just by starting an activity, you will be more motivated to finish it. Use the Pomodoro technique by setting the timer to just 5-10 minutes!



\* Dunlosky, J., Rawson, K. A., Marsh, E. J., Nathan, M. J., & Willingham, D. T. (2013). Improving Students' Learning With Effective Learning Techniques: Promising Directions From Cognitive and Educational Psychology. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 14(1), 4-58.

# Practice tests

Low-stakes quizzes and past papers significantly boost your long-term memory. According to research, they are the most effective learning methods along with spaced practice. Examples include:

- Past papers
- Self-quizzes
- Online quiz apps
- Peer testing

**Top tip:** Buddy up! In addition to studying alone, having a good study partner can be really effective. You can test each other or explain topics to one another. But choose wisely!

**Challenge:** Prepare questions from one of your GCSE subjects, then quiz yourself. Highlight the questions you got wrong for further revision. Then, pair up and test each other.

Self-quiz			
	Question	Answer	
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

# Flashcards

**Top tip:** You can also try online quiz / flashcard tools!

Flashcards are an incredibly easy but effective method to revise – you condense your learning into small, easily revised chunks. Keep your flashcards simple, clear and to-the-point. They should be two-sided and have short pieces of information on each side, such as:

- A question on one side and its answer on the other.
- A key term on one side and its definition on the other.
- A diagram on one side and its explanation on the other.

Avoid overloading flashcards with information (remember, they are designed to aid quick recall).

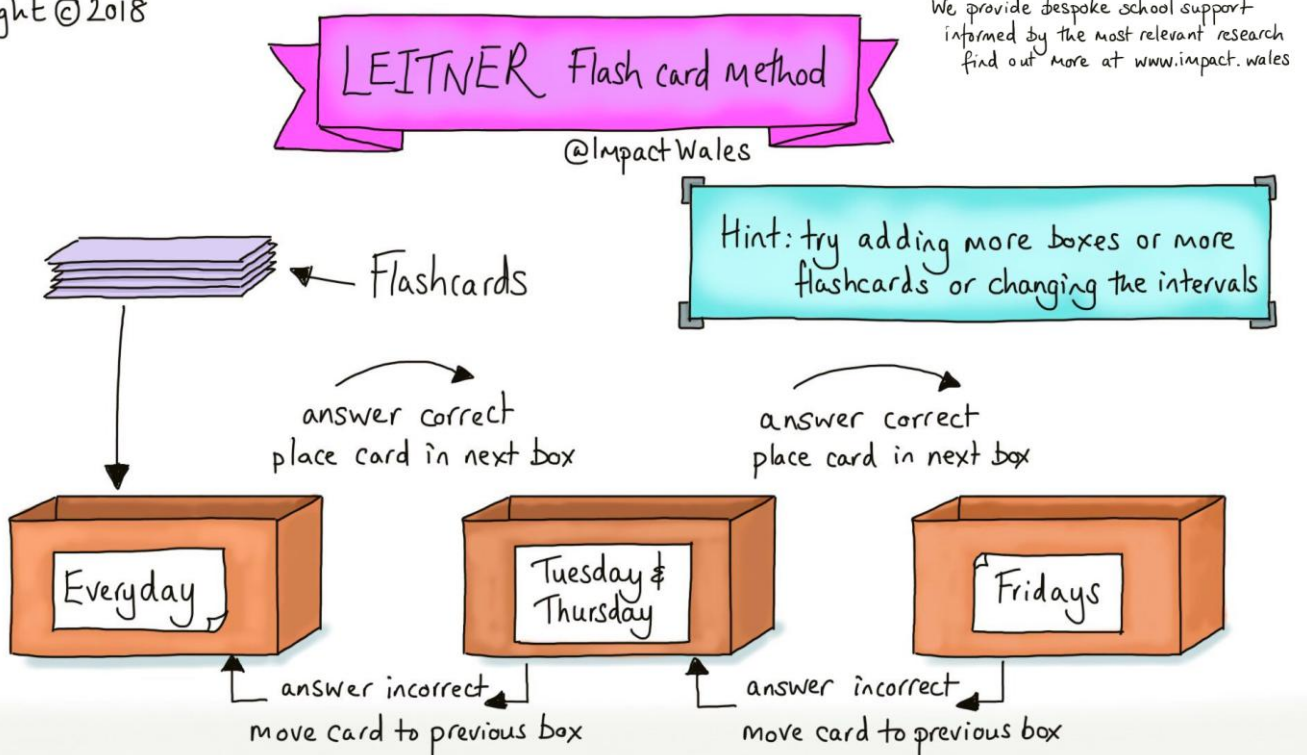


**Quizlet**



**Challenge:** Make a set of flashcards on a topic of your choice from one of your GCSE subjects. Once completed, test your partner on their flashcards, then swap over.

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An effective use of flashcards to prompt & recall learning using spaced practice proposed by Leitner in the 1970s. It focuses on the proficiency of recall of the learner. Information which is easily recalled has a longer time lapse before the next recall opportunity.

Credit © [www.impact.wales](http://www.impact.wales)

# Interleaving

Interleaving is a study technique in which learners alternate between studying a mixture of related topics, rather than focusing on one topic at a time.

According to research, mixing up your study can help you retain more information.

- Instead of studying for one topic in a block of time, break down your study sessions into small chunks. You can use the Pomodoro technique.
- Study one topic in one session and change your topic in the next session. Move on to a similar or related topic.
- Change the order of your topics in your next revision session.
- Do not switch between subjects or unrelated topics.
- Interleaving is especially effective for maths to help you practise different question types.
- You can apply interleaving in your revision timetable.



## Space out and interleave topics

Topic 1	Topic 1
	Topic 2
	Topic 3
	Topic 4
Topic 2	Topic 1
	Topic 3
	Topic 2
	Topic 4
Topic 3	Topic 2
	Topic 4
	Topic 3
	Topic 1
Topic 4	Topic 4
	Topic 2
	Topic 3
	Topic 1

# Brain dump

Testing yourself on what you know without referring to your notes gives you an idea of how much information your memory has retained on a given topic. It also helps you consolidate your learning and identify the gaps in your knowledge. You may then decide how much time you need to devote to revising the topic.

There are some useful strategies to help you test what you know before you dive headfirst into the books.

**Challenge:** On the next page, carry out a brain dump!

**Step 1:** Create a mind map or spider diagram about a topic of your choice from one of your GCSE subjects – **from memory**.

**Step 2:** Write down as much as you know about that topic, i.e. dates, definitions, key words, theories etc. (this should take 5-10 minutes).

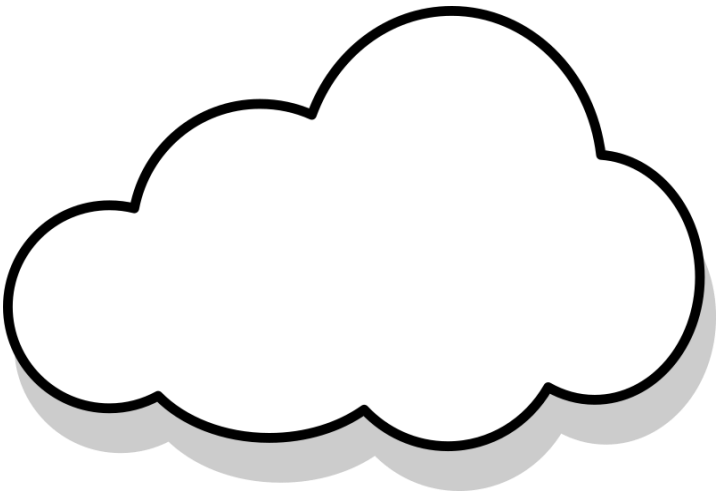
**Step 3:** Now open your books / notes and add in any information you might have written down incorrectly or missed (in a different colour pen).

- Be efficient: write concisely and complete the exercise quickly!
- It's OK to remember points in any order, but try to group related points together – add some structure.



**Top tip:** Each time you sit down to study, start with a brain dump from your last session. This will strengthen your memory through retrieval.

# Brain dump



# Mind maps



Mind mapping is a visual technique that organises information around a central idea using branches for related concepts. It helps to structure thoughts, reveal connections between ideas, and simplify complex information.

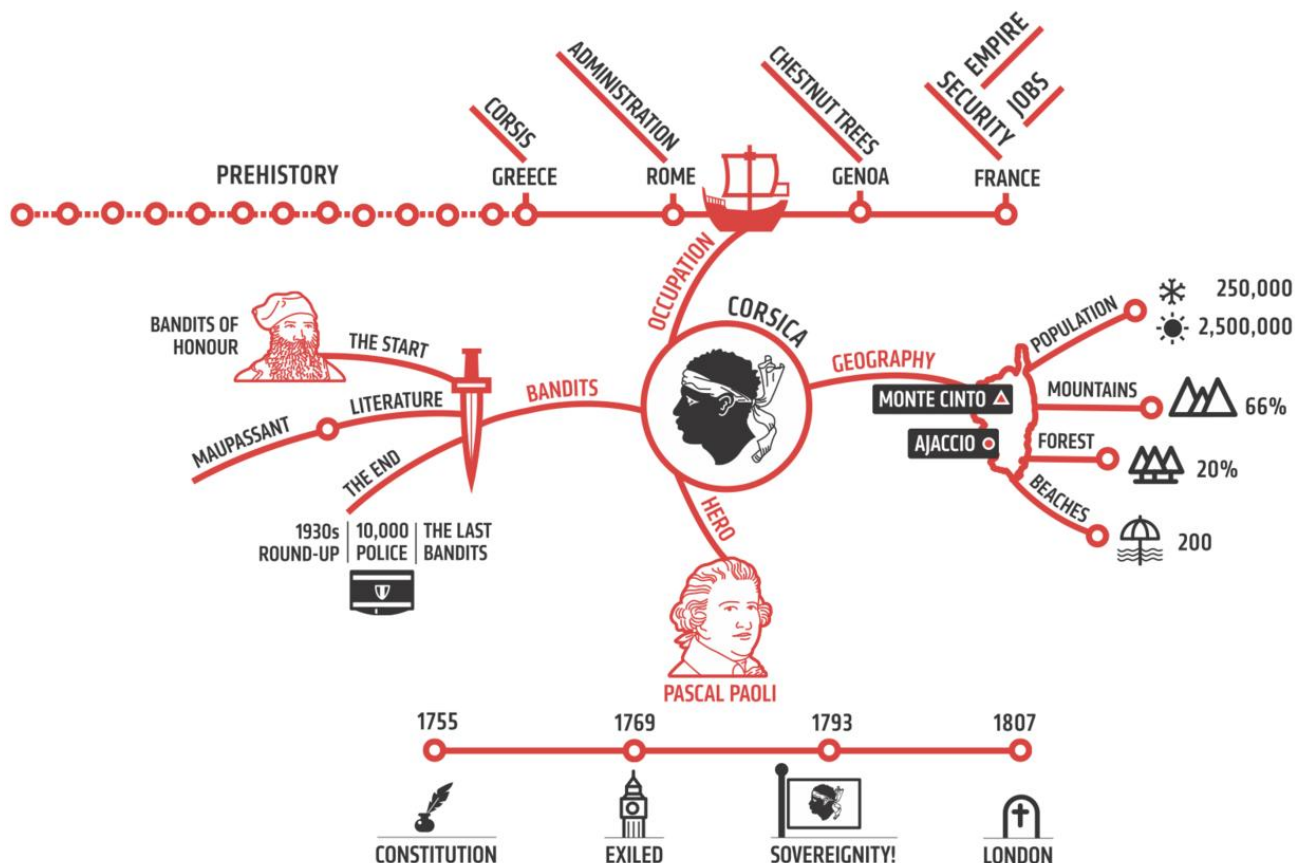
**Challenge:** On the next page, create a mind map!

**Step 1:** Identify your topic.

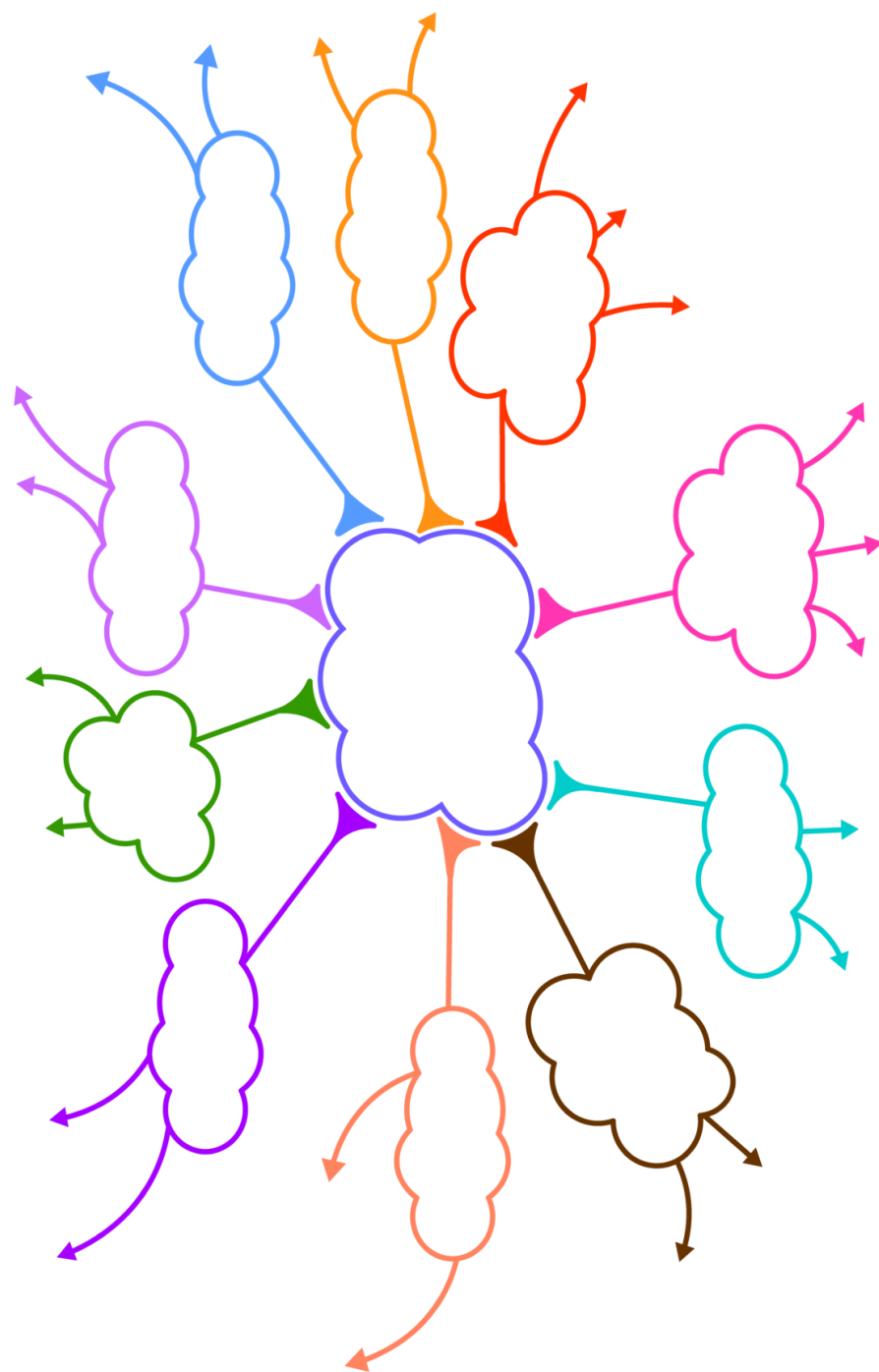
**Step 2:** Identify subtopics.

**Step 3:** Branch off and use images and colour.

**Step 4:** Put it somewhere visible.

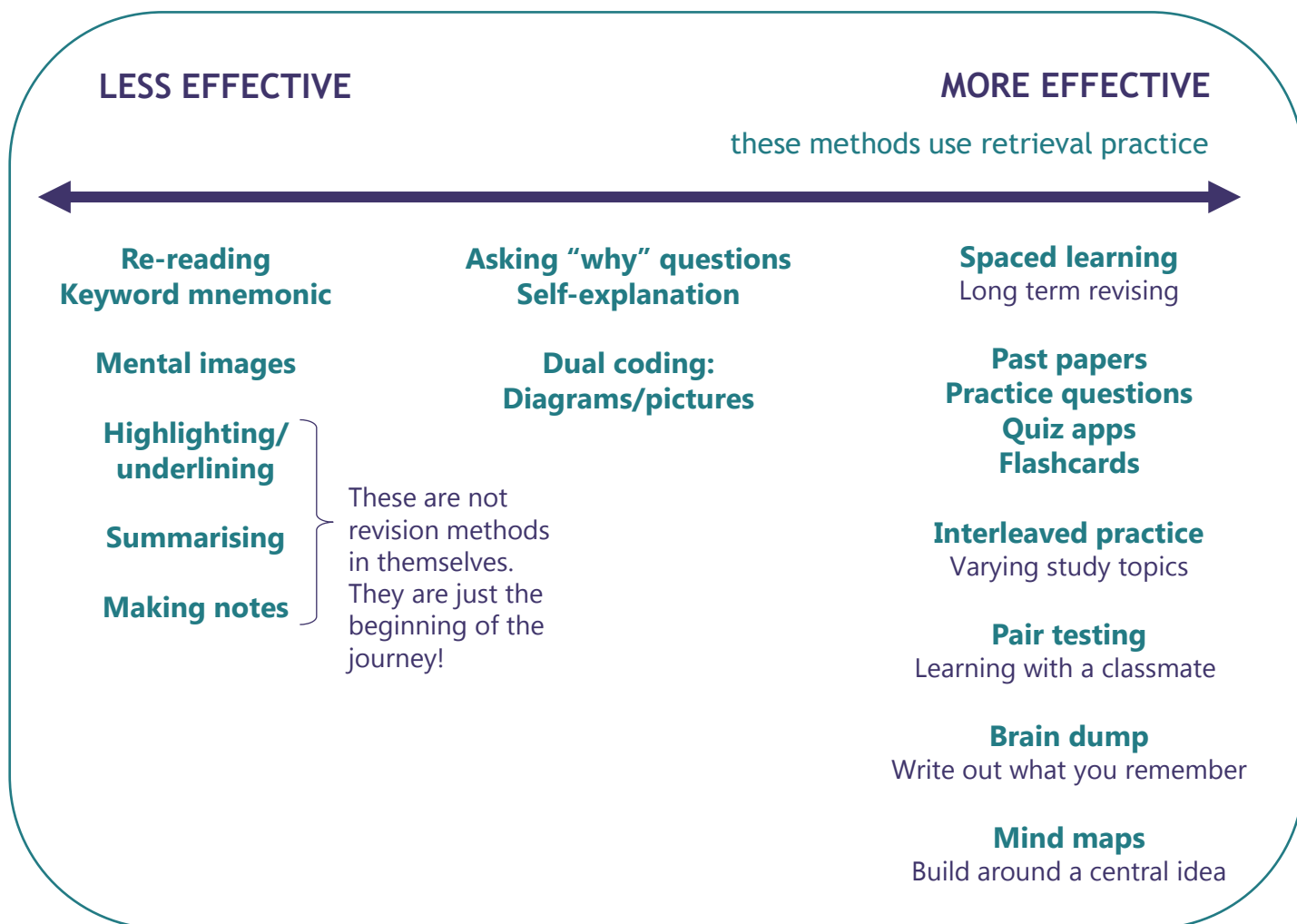


# Mind map





# Effective study methods 2



## Use dual coding

Dual coding is the process of blending **words** and **pictures** while learning. Viewing those two formats gives us **two different representations** of the same piece of information, creating more pathways in our memory. But be mindful of not increasing your cognitive load by cramming too many things! Try using:

- Drawings
- Diagrams
- Posters
- Timelines
- Graphic organisers

## Say it out loud!

When you ask “why” and “how” questions or explain difficult topics to yourself or to someone else, you start engaging with your topic critically. These enhance your brain’s ability to retain information. Make sure you check your answers and do not rely on your memory alone!

## Try mnemonics!

Learning with melody, rhymes and acronyms can help you memorise. Remember “Big elephants can always understand small elephants”?

# Glossary of key terms

**Acronym:** A word formed from the initial letters of other words.

**Brain dump:** A study technique to write down everything one can remember on a topic in a limited time.

**Cognitive load:** The amount of information the working memory can hold at any given time.

**Dual coding:** Combining words and visuals to aid understanding.

**Interleaving:** A learning technique that involves mixing different topics.

**Long term memory:** Part of memory that stores previously learnt information. It has a potentially unlimited capacity.

**Mindfulness:** Paying attention to and being aware of one's experience of the present moment.

**Mind map:** A chart that shows the mental association for information.

**Mnemonics:** A pattern of letters, ideas or associations which aids remembering.

**Multitasking:** Performing several different tasks at the same time.

**Pomodoro technique:** A study technique made up of timed study sessions and short breaks.

**Procrastination:** The habit of postponing or putting something off.

**Resilience:** The ability to quickly recover from difficulties or problems.

**Retrieval:** The strategy of recalling facts, concepts or events from long term memory to enhance learning. Past papers, quizzes, tests, flashcards and mind maps are examples of retrieval practice.

**Revision:** Revisiting and reviewing course materials to consolidate learning.

**Self-care:** The activity of taking care of one's own health or well-being.

**Spacing or spaced practice:** A study method that involves spreading out learning over time.

**Working memory:** Part of memory that holds and processes new information. It has a limited capacity.



# TAKE YOUR PLACE



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