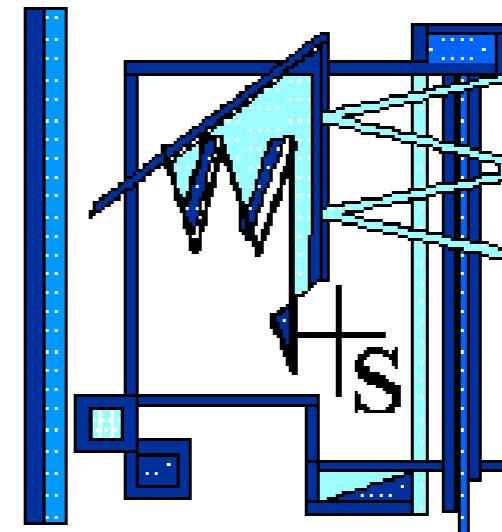


Woodfarm High School



Senior Phase Study Skills

Woodfarm: The school that *PREPARES* you for life

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Notes

Introduction

Everyone gets nervous sitting exams. Some pupils instinctively seem to organise themselves and perform well in them, while others struggle with the basics of motivation, time management and feel overwhelmed, not knowing where to start.

Exams are not tests of memory; they are designed to test what you have learned. Effective revision consolidates what you have learned.

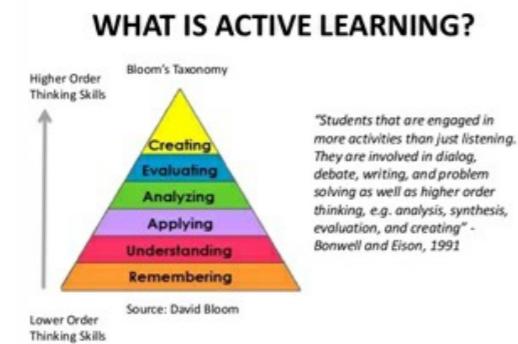
This booklet is designed for both students and parents to guide you through the process, and help you find the best methods of study that work for you.

Remember, here at Woodfarm High School our staff endeavour to support our pupils so that they feel confident and prepared going into their exams. We aim to offer support before, during and after examinations so that every Woodfarm High student achieves success.



General Advice

Be More Active



Effective revision means you have to **USE** the information you have, and are trying to learn. Learning should be **ACTIVE**. Many people approach studying in a **PASSIVE** way, they only read their textbook and notes but they don't **DO** anything with the information they have.

Learners are more effective when they reorganise the information they have obtained in a way that makes sense to them. You become an active learner when you engage with the material.

Ways to improve concentration and become an active learner:

- Create a quiet, well lit study environment
- Make notes on what you are studying and re-arrange the information in some other way.
- Make associations and links between information you know, and what you are trying to learn
- Condense your notes and make flashcards to study from, and then have someone quiz you.

These techniques help your body and mind to a routine for studying.

Switch presentation styles; if the information is presented in text try making visual diagrams and drawings to represent the information you need to learn.

If you are learning from visual imagery (anatomy etc.) write down what you are learning in words.

Time Management

Recognise that effective revision means that you will have to give up some things in the short term. Social media, gaming, time with friends etc. Remember that this is a short-term sacrifice for longer-term benefits, and rewards can be built into your study routine.

DO NOT LEAVE REVISION TILL THE LAST MINUTE – an obvious but often ignored piece of advice. Cramming does not work and you will end up feeling stressed. Give yourself plenty of time to learn the information you need to know. You will need to plan ahead to achieve success in your SQA exams. You should begin revision no later than 8 weeks before your exam diet begins.



Prioritise

Don't focus on the information you already know well, and feel confident with, instead get out of your comfort zone and study the areas you don't know so well. Remember exams will test you on a wide range of things. What are you likely to be tested on?

SUMMARY/CHECKLIST for parents/carers.

- Help organise and prioritise their workload.
- Have the exam timetable on display at home
- Create a designated ordered study space with materials and equipment easily accessible.
- Minimise disruptions and interruptions.
- Help by testing them on their revision – flash cards/quizzes etc.
- Reassure them that nerves are normal, but they **CAN** do it!
- Make sure they get plenty of sleep.
- Encourage them to eat well and exercise/rest when appropriate
- Provide plenty of encouragement, praise and rewards.
- Make sure they are prepared for their exam the night before

The night before your exam

Always check the date and time of your exam, and remember to arrive at least 15 minutes before the exam is scheduled to begin. Give yourself plenty of time to get to school, you want to arrive feeling relaxed, not stressed due to travel.

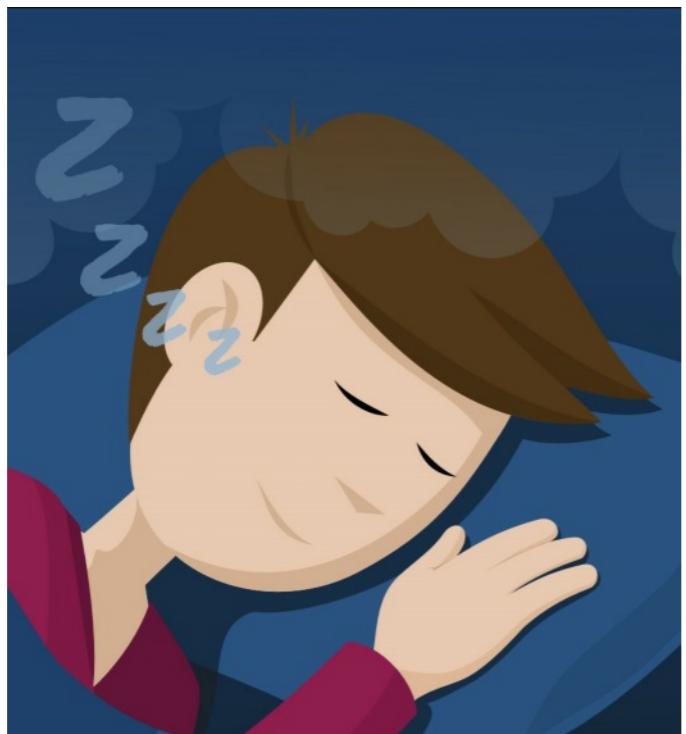
A good tip is to lay out your uniform the night before, ensuring everything is ready to put on in the morning. You don't want to stress looking for a clean, ironed shirt.

Pack your bag with everything you will need:

- Extra pens and pencils
- Calculator (if needed)
- Revision notes
- Bottle of water
- A watch for checking the time
- Scottish Candidate Number

Finally set your alarm and try to get a good nights rest.

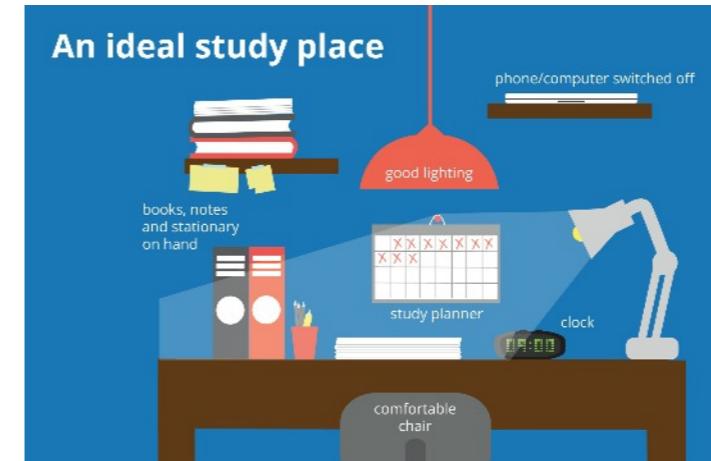
Little preparations can go a long way to making you feel less stressed.



Talk to your teachers, they have a wealth of experience and know the exams format well. Teachers should be able to provide you with course outlines, also check the SQA pages on revision at www.sqa.org.uk. Look through the archive of past papers; this will give you pointers on content of previous exams. You may find repeating topics or themes, reviewing past papers also allows you to familiarise yourself with the style of questions and language for each subject area.

Environment

Location, Location, Location



Where is the most effective area for studying? It is highly unlikely to be in front of a window looking onto a busy street or a TV screen. The best location for studying is a quiet space, free from distraction that will allow you to focus; you may find that this is your bedroom, for others it might be a different location in the house.

Organisation is key

A messy workspace will be a distraction, make sure you have all your equipment and revision notes within reach. A tidy space = a tidy mind. You may wish to spend time ahead of revision organising your revision materials into subject categories, this will save time later. Time spent looking for things during 'study' time is not studying and can be stressful and frustrating.

Tip: Use magazine files to organise your subject revision notes, this will keep your paperwork tidy and accessible. Colour coding subjects may help.

Listening to music

Be careful with this one, we listen to music to relax and enjoy ourselves, but often our choices of music are detrimental to study. If you must listen to music, stick to soft instrumental music, rather than music with lyrics. Adjusting playlists, singing along and skipping tunes can become a source of distraction.

De-digitalise



Perhaps the hardest one of all. Go off the grid and revise with paper copies of your study materials. Yes, really!

Unplug your laptop/tablet/PC and put your mobile phone out of sight and reach (put it in another room or switch it off). It is far too tempting to browse the web, go on social media and respond to notifications on your phone. Removing these distractions for the duration of your study time is essential; your productivity depends on it. You can reward your hard work later with online time.

Study Leave

Use your spring break holiday and study leave time for studying; that is what it is for. Lots of pupils who achieve success in exams structure their study leave by mimicking the school day, with set breaks and lunches. They also give themselves the evenings off, knowing that they are rewarding the effort they put in during the day.

Rewards

It is important to acknowledge when you are putting in the time and effort with your studying by rewarding your efforts. Rewards work best when they are scheduled into your study planning, this gives you the incentive to carry on, knowing that you have something to look forward to at the end of it. This could be catching up with your favourite show, spending time with friends etc.

Target setting

Set yourself achievable goals. Remember your targets should be **SMART**.

Always have a goal for each study session; this allows you to measure your achievement. For example, by the end of this session I will have revised the key areas for Chemistry unit.... Or I will have worked through the first 4 questions of the Maths 2017 paper.

Help...I'm stuck

This is a normal part of the process when revising and if used constructively helps to identify gaps in your knowledge. Make a note of the area/theme or specific point you are struggling with and seek help from your teacher. You might also find that talking to your friends and parents will help.

Where to start

There are lots of online resources you can access to aid your revision

Remember to access SCHOLAR and BBC Bitesize

Where to get passwords:.....

The SQA website is a great place to start.

On this site you can download past papers and marking schemes for all subjects studied free of charge, these can be found here.

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/pastpapers/findpastpaper.htm>

MySQA allows pupils to register for SQA results by text or e-mail

The SQA exam timetable is available on the SQA app (free to download) this allows you to personalise your own exam timetable

Health and Wellbeing



Exams are a stressful time for everyone, so it is important to look after yourself during this intense time.

Make sure you get plenty of sleep. Sleep deprivation is the enemy of focus, memory and effective revision. Aim for 8 hours.

Tip: use an alarm clock rather than your phone, a phone is a distraction.

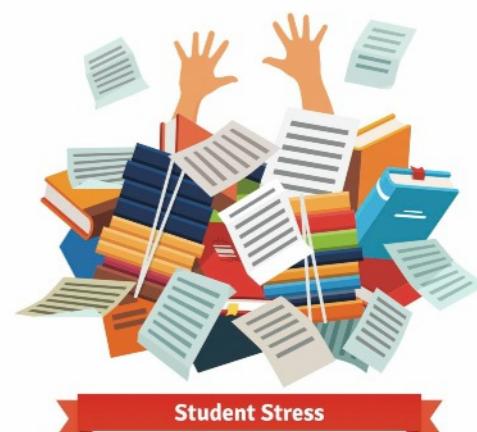
Schedule your breaks, keep hydrated and try to eat sensibly. It can be tempting to reach for sugary and fat laden snacks when we are stressed, but these will not help your concentration. Too much sugar will cause your energy levels to spike and plummet, leaving you feeling tired and lethargic.

Exercise

Go for a walk, football training, swimming, yoga etc. Physical activity will boost your endorphins, making you feel better while lowering your stress levels and will help you sleep better.

Feeling stressed?

If you are feeling anxious about your exams seek advice from your teachers. During study leave you can make arrangements to come in for one to one advice, or attend supported study sessions when they are offered.



Remember to breathe. This sounds strange as we all know how to do this, but practising breathing techniques are a very effective method of making ourselves feel calmer when we are feeling overwhelmed.

There are a variety of great health and wellbeing apps and resources out there.

Here are a few.

Calm (there is a free and paid version)
Headspace (free and paid versions)



Other tips and suggestions

Make a quiz on the topic you have been revising, share these with friends revising the same subject.

Open your revision book, look at it for 2 minutes, then close the book and write down everything you can remember.

Make a PowerPoint presentation on an area you are finding difficult, try presenting it to friends, family members.

Use the Study Tube section of You Tube, lots of great content from people sharing their tips, tricks and personal experiences.

Put post it notes around the house and go for a walk around the house reading them aloud.

Record yourself reading your notes aloud, play them back on your iPhone or MP3 player while you are doing another activity, walking the dog, housework etc.

Use revision websites such as BBC Bitesize Scotland and Scholar for advice.

Do timed past paper questions, mark them using the marking scheme and then get your teacher to mark it.

Ask for exemplar answers from your teachers, these are good for essay style responses to see good practice in structuring an answer.

Visualise – create pictures in your mind as you are reading. Visualise what you are learning.

Spend time looking at the marks allocation. Don't spend too long on a 2 mark question and leave yourself short of time for an 8 mark question.

Make flashcards that are colour coded for each subject, use them to write up key information you must know for that subject. Learn the content.



For more information about study tips, tricks and techniques visit the school website and follow the links for study skills

Making a Plan... And Sticking To It.

Structuring your study will make a huge difference to your revision. Setting achievable goals within a manageable timeframe will give you the confidence and framework for success. It is helpful to review your exam timetable and work backwards to the first day you plan to revise. It is recommended that you give yourself at least 8 weeks before your exams begin so that you can comfortably fit revision for all of your subjects and cycle through them a few times.

List your subjects and allocate the amount of time you expect to spend on each. It is unlikely that this time will be spread evenly; it is worthwhile spending more time on the subjects/topics that you find are the most difficult.

Draw up a revision plan for each week (remember aim to begin study at least 8 weeks before the exam diet begins)

Display your study plan somewhere visible, a good idea is to make more than one copy and place the second copy in a public spot in your home e.g. kitchen fridge door or notice board. It will be harder to ignore your plan and make excuses for not studying when others are aware of how you have chosen to commit your study time.

Fill in the dates and times of each exam along with any regular commitments that block off study time.

Use revision checklists for each subject as a starting point. Look at what you need to know and try to identify the gaps in your knowledge (see study techniques sections for strategies on this) also use the results of tests, homework or past papers you have worked through, plus feedback from your teacher.

Plan your time carefully, and revise often.

Balance



While structured study sessions are important, downtime is vitally important too. Plan for time off, including time for outdoor activities. This is important for your health and well-being, you will feel more refreshed with changes of scene, fresh air and exercise. Look after yourself during this time, it's very easy to reach for your favourite snacks and junk food, but these aren't great for your concentration as high levels of sugar can cause spikes and dips in your energy.

Instead aim to eat slow release carbohydrates and low GI foods that will balance your energy levels and prevent slumps. Don't stay up late, make sure you are getting a good night's sleep, if you are sleep deprived your concentration will be compromised. A decent sleep also allows your brain to shift what you have learned from your short-term memory to long-term memory. Think of it like a USB pen drive transferring data to the hard drive of a computer.

Take regular breaks while studying, it is important that you leave your workspace for this, go for a short walk, make a drink etc.

You might find that switching activities will keep you motivated; for example, one or two sessions of Maths have a break then changing to Geography. Switching between different types of subjects will keep your mind active and alert and builds in variety.

Keep positive! Focus on what you have achieved, visualise what you want out of this experience.

Timetabling for success



Below are examples of how to break up your study time during term time and how time might be spent during study leave.

Remember study leave is not a holiday; it is a time when SQA candidates are permitted to study at home. Many students find the discipline of studying at home difficult so it is vital that time is structured, and creating study schedules are a good way to do this. Get into the habit of using a study planner during term time so that the practice it easier to continue during study leave.

Here are examples of study planners for both term and study leave.

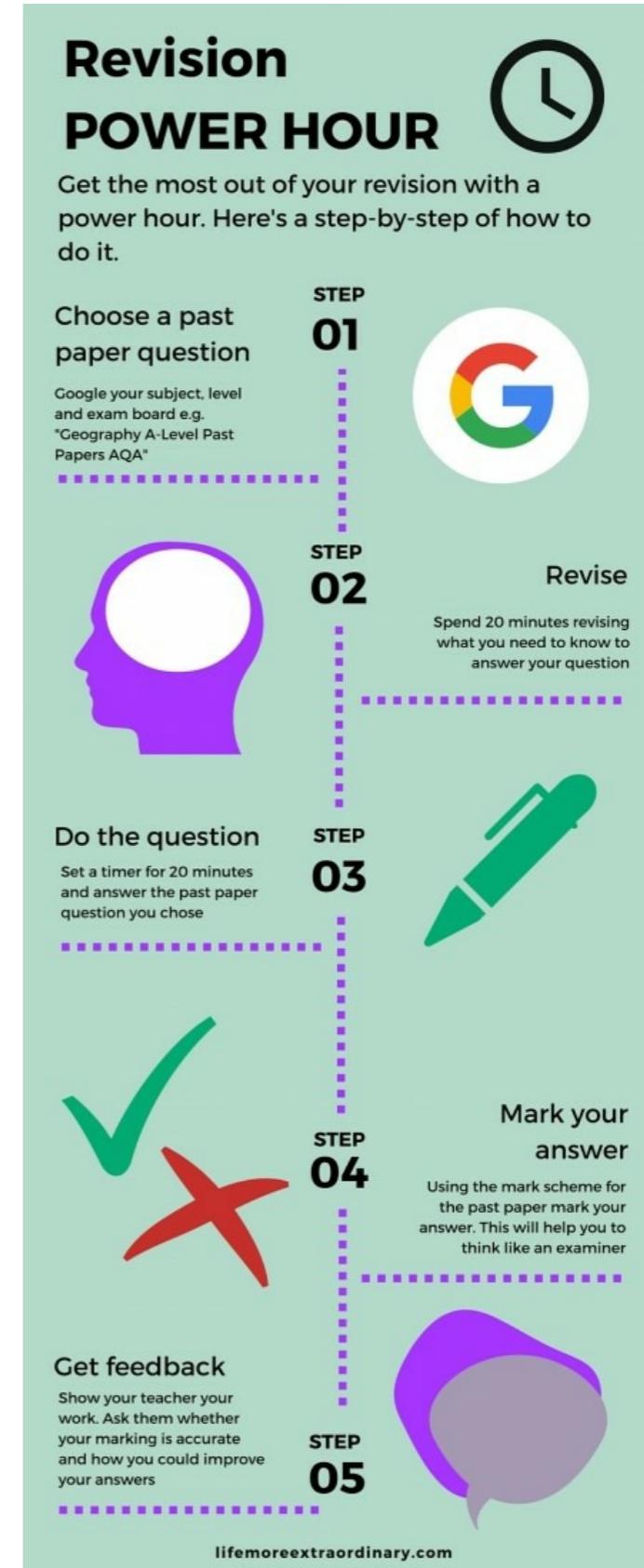
Term time example

Time	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
9-11 am	English	Maths	Art	French	English		
11am-1pm	Chem Lunch	History Lunch	Geog Lunch	English Lunch	Maths Lunch	am Free time	am English French Maths
1-3pm	Geog	English	Comp	Chem	Art		
3-5pm	Art	Chem	Maths	History	French		
5-7pm	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	pm Free time	pm Free time
7-9pm	French	Geog	English	Maths	Comp		
	Free time	French	History	Comp	Free time		

Revision Tips

Each department offers subject specific advice, tips and tricks. These can be located on the school website under study skills. Remember you can also talk to department staff about any individual queries you may have.

Here is another example of getting the best of your revision within a time allocation of 1 hour.



Finding your path to successful revision

We are all unique and everyone has their own learning style. The key to success is finding the methods that work for you.

Here are some strategies to help you identify your learning style. You might find you fall into more than one category. Mix and match the tips that work best for you to create your own toolkit.

If you are not keen on reading and prefer diagrams, sketches and visual information.

- Imagine vivid images and scenes of the idea you are trying to memorise
- Rewrite your notes as mind maps or posters
- Use colour to highlight important things
- Draw diagrams and sketches to help you remember key points.

If you respond well to group discussions in class, listening and talking to others.

- Read your notes aloud
- Record yourself reading your key points then listen back to the recordings – use your iPhone, iPad or smartphone to record your notes.
- Revise with other students if you can, but don't let chat stray to other things.
- Teach what you know to a real or imaginary audience.

If you get respond well to reading textbooks, using websites and writing notes.

- Copy out your notes condensing the information as you go.
- Reading your notes silently
- Rewriting the key points using different words
- Writing down key points from memory

Study Leave

During study leave you can be more flexible with your time. If you have a part time job or a regular weekly commitment remember to factor this into your planning timetable.

Study Leave example

Time	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
9-11 am	English	Maths	Art	French	English		
11am-1pm	Chem Lunch	History Lunch	Geog Lunch	English Lunch	Maths Lunch	Free time	am English French Maths
1-3pm	Geog	English	Comp	Chem	Art		
3-5pm	Art	Chem	Maths	History	French		
5-7pm	Dinner French	Dinner Geog	Dinner English	Dinner Maths	Dinner Comp	pm Free time	pm Free time
7-9pm	Free time	French	History	Comp	Free time		

How to use your time smartly.

Try to stick to your agreed timings and build in planned breaks.

A useful method to try is the **Pomodoro** technique which sections study sessions into focused blocks of 25 minutes or 'Pomodoro cycles'

After every 25 minute session take a break for 5-10 minutes and go back for another 25 minutes. Repeat four times and then have a longer break of 30 minutes



Regular breaks help you to maintain learning efficiency. This technique is particularly useful if you are struggling to motivate yourself to start studying, as it is in short bursts. It helps break large daunting tasks down into more manageable and achievable chunks.

Remember this is just a suggested method, others may find that working for longer spells of time work better for them. As a general guide for study session timings, don't exceed 45 minutes without a break as it has been shown that your brain will no longer absorb the information you are trying to learn, in fact it can be detrimental to your learning. So remember to take breaks.

Past Papers

Past papers are an essential tool in exam preparation. Many are available on the Scottish Qualifications Authority website here along with marking schemes and answers.

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/pastpapers>

The most effective way of using the papers is to replicate the exam experience and work again the clock. Set a timer for the same time allocated in the exam.

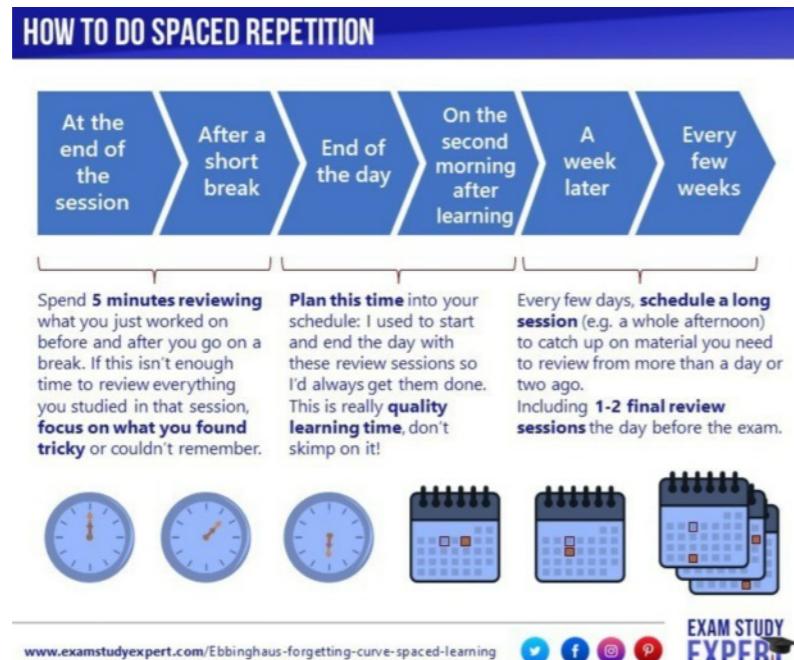
Use the marking scheme to mark your own paper, incorrect answers will help you to see the areas you need to improve on. Make a note of these and use this as next steps in revision for that subject, or to open dialogue for support from your teacher. The more points available the more content is required.

Understand the mark breakdown for each paper; this will vary from subject to subject. If you know how marks are allocated it will be easier to structure your responses.

Learn the command word terminology. Questions beginning with 'Describe' and 'Explain' are looking for expanded responses. Subject specific terminology should also be learned, if you understand the language in the question paper, you are more likely to produce better quality answers.

Sometimes working with others can be useful. Work with friends in small groups to answer questions together. Each write your own response to the question and discuss everyone's response before checking the marking scheme. Stay focused though; it's easy for conversation to divert to other things. If this happens often then this isn't the study group for you.

Complete the same paper a few times; practising with the same paper a few times at spaced intervals will help strengthen your responses if you take the time to revise your weak areas.



Mnemonics

Mnemonics are an effective study and recall technique; this method is particularly effective for information that has to be remembered as a list, specific facts or steps in a procedure.

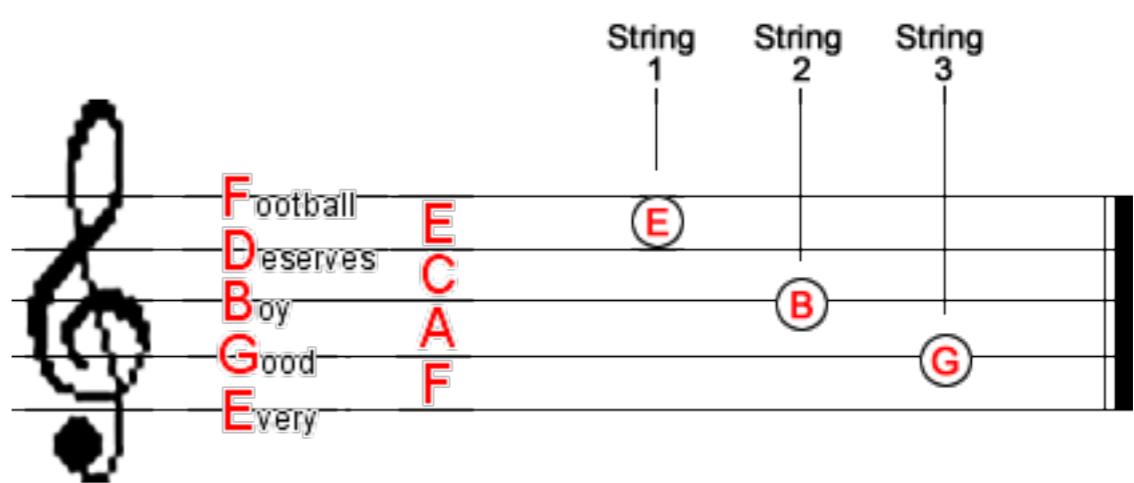
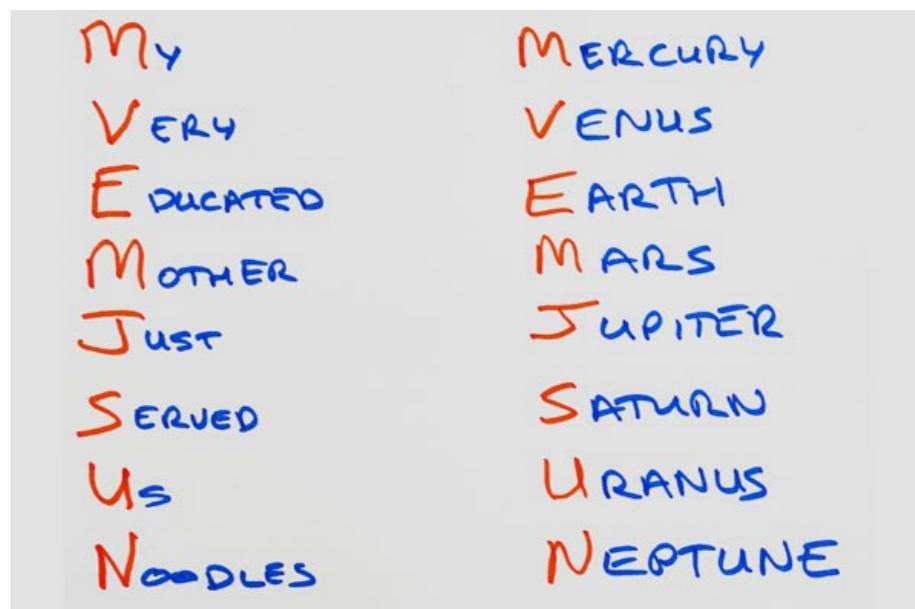
Mnemonics are memory techniques that help your brain to establish simple shortcuts that help you encode and recall information. The mnemonic devices are usually images, words or phrases.

Mnemonic devices use association and cues to recall information. You associate the item you want to remember with something else such as an image, word or phrase. You then use that image, word or phrase as a retrieval cue for the item you wish to remember.

Here are some popular mnemonic devices that can help you to remember information

- Acronyms
- Acrostics
- Rhymes
- Chunking
- Clustering
- Imagery or Visualisation

Examples of mnemonics

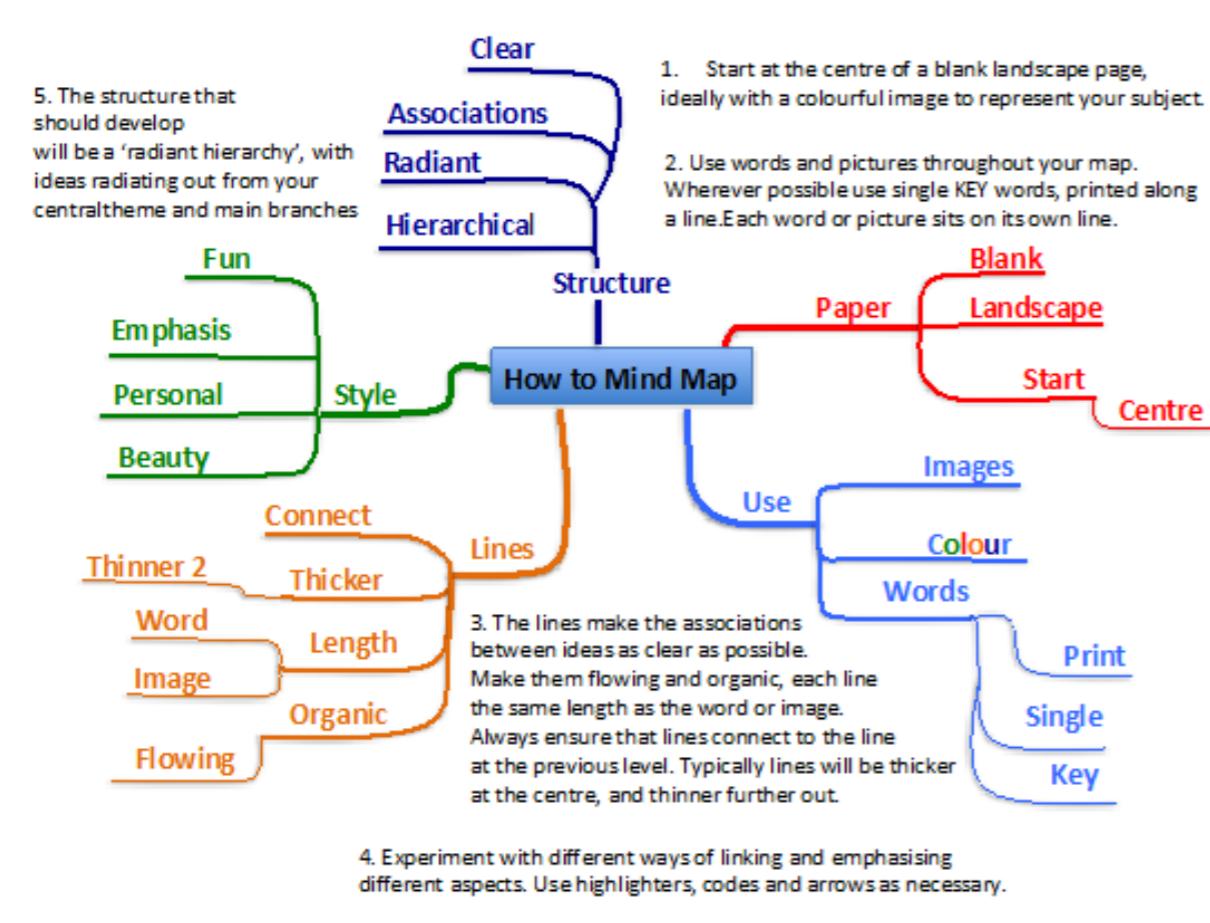


Mind Maps

Mind maps are a highly effective visual way of making notes. It organises topics by creating pathways with keywords, symbols, drawings, colours and numbers.

The most effective way of creating a mind map is to draw it out on paper using colours to denote different branches within the theme. The key topic area for a mind map is normally located in the centre of the paper. The main branches of the theme are often shown as thicker lines, with sub headings and key words branching out in thinner lines.

This method of revision is an excellent example of active learning. Creating revision materials in a visual way.



Reading

Your type of reading should suit your task

Skimming – you are only making a quick survey of the passage

Search - you are looking for a single piece of information

Selective – you are focusing on parts of the text

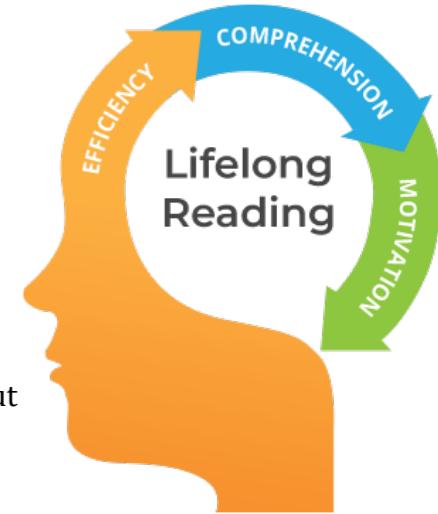
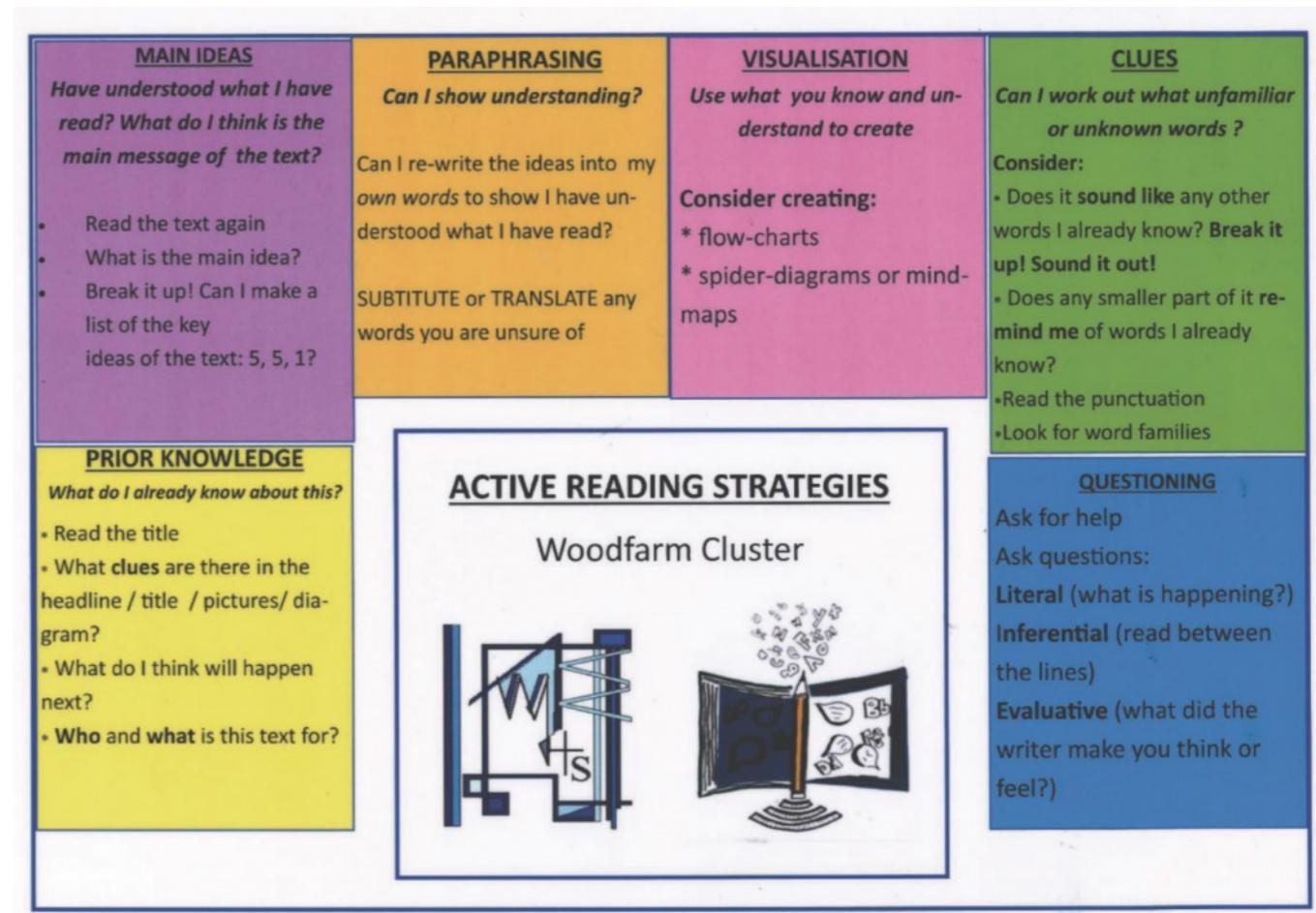
Study – you are reading thoroughly to understand the content

Close – you read in great detail

1. To improve your reading concentration you should only start out with short periods of reading and slowly build up
2. Take notes as you go along
3. Read with a strong light directed onto the paper
4. Take special care to read thoroughly if you need to memorise information

Read over material more than once.

Active Reading – Here is a reminder of Woodfarm's Active Reading Strategies guide.



Expanding your vocabulary

Your understanding of language is a key factor in how successful you will be in some SQA examinations.

If you don't understand the words used in the paper, you are more likely to freeze, panic and not perform well.

There is no easy way around this, if you have a better grasp of language you will feel more confident about answering questions and it will provide you with the skills to do this.

You need to read more...read books, quality newspapers (not tabloids) and try to build this into your free time activities. Build literacy into your downtime, game apps such as Words with friends, and board games like Scrabble are a great way of learning new words and it will improve your spelling.

When you encounter a word you don't know examine the word in the context of the sentence, often you will be able to work out its meaning. If not use a thesaurus, either a hard copy or online version. Find a word from the list that you do know and re-read the sentence, hopefully this time you will understand the meaning of the unfamiliar word.

You may not enjoy reading, however it is a proven fact that reading improves your language skills, both verbally and in written responses. The more articulate you become, your confidence in communication will be enhanced, and your responses to exam questions will improve.

Note taking

During lessons remember to take notes; don't rely solely on class handouts and teacher power points. This is a common mistake, creating your own notes in your own words is much more effective. Think about it, you will need to write in your own words in an exam, so practise this skill early.

Engage in **active learning**, this gives you a much deeper understanding of the information you need to know.

It is good practice to rewrite your class notes after lessons. You will need to convert notes that you have made in jotters or textbooks into concise clear notes.

The sooner you do this the better chance your notes will be good quality, if you leave it too long you will quickly forget the essence of the lesson.

Effective note taking is not copying; if you are just copying your notes out again your brain will not take in the information, this is NOT studying.

The aim is to condense the information into key facts. You are aiming to make a **shorter** version of your class notes. These will be easier to remember, some students choose to highlight key words, phrases or themes that are important so that they can be easily located at a later date.

Short notes can be used with other revision techniques to consolidate your learning.

- Create a mind map
- Create flashcards
- Highlight key words and create a bullet point list, write key words/phrases on post-it notes and place them in areas where you will see them everyday.
- Read notes aloud and record them, then play them back on your mp3 player or phone.
- Turn notes into a series of questions, these can be used to test your memory about a particular topic or theme.

Remember it is important to convert textbook or teacher revision material into your own words. Get into this habit as early as possible. Read your responses aloud, grammatical and sentence structure errors are often easier to spot if they are heard rather than read.

Condense material as much as you can, this makes information easier to digest. You are aiming to concentrate information down into the least amount of words possible so that key words or bullet points will serve as prompts to expanded information.

It is possible to condense pages of information down into a single page or less.

Once you have simplified your topic test yourself.

- Cover everything up
- Get a blank piece of paper and write out as much about the topic as you can. This technique is known as blurring.
- Use your simplified notes to add things you missed and correct things you got wrong

Flash Cards

Flash cards are a simple, and portable way of creating revision notes. You can pick up blank record cards in stationery stores and supermarkets. These can be hole punched in one corner and fed onto a key ring loop. Some students opt to colour code their cards to denote subjects or make different bundles for each subject.

The technique of making flash cards is very simple; write a statement or question on one side with the answer or short list of information on the other side. Remember the aim is to keep the information brief. The cards should act as an 'memory aid', a prompt to remember other information.

Some students opt to condense information into symbols or pictures to represent larger pieces of information. Your brain is more likely to remember a visual image than text.

Create a pile of flash cards for each subject but remember that making the cards isn't studying; this is the preparation for revision.

Using flash cards for revision

There are many ways to use the revision cards for testing yourself.. They are great for quizzing yourself, or getting others involved.

Here is a highly effective method for testing yourself with flash cards which identifies further gaps in your knowledge.

- Take the time to read over the card information on each side, repeat this process a few times for each card.
- Read the question on each card and try to answer the question in your head.
- Check the answer, were you correct? Did you miss anything out?
- If you answered correctly place this on the table, this will be the correct pile
- If you answered incorrectly start a different pile, the incorrect pile.
- Re-read all the information on the incorrect pile cards
- Take a short break and repeat the process of answering the cards. Repeat the process until there is no longer an incorrect pile.

Flash cards can also be used with family members and friends to test you, or share your good practice with friends studying the same subject.