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Revision Strategies

Key Activities

• Know yourself – habits, patterns
• Be flexible and realistic
• Keep in control
• Reflect – if it’s not going well, make changes

Making a timetable or plan

Making a plan takes time, but it’s a very important part of revision– it means having to make a lot of decisions about how you are going to spend your time.

It helps to be as realistic as possible when you plan. Make a plan that fits with your likes/dislikes, not something so ambitious that it is bound to fail.

• Work in small ‘chunks’ of time
• Plan which topics you will study on which days
• List tasks involved (checking notes, focus on questions, quick essay plans)
• Build in definite breaks – and when they finish
• Don’t try to cover too much too fast – be realistic, small chunks are best
• Keep half and whole days when you don’t revise – so they are available for emergencies
How do you revise?
Pro-active strategies

Revision takes a lot of concentration and is intense – find strategies that help you keep ‘on track’ and alert. Short periods of revision are usually best for this.

- Plan how to use the time even if it's 15 minutes – make a ‘tick list’
- Use notes – see below
- Identify a key topic, mindmap what you know, identify what you don’t know and find it
- Only use books/articles to ‘fill gaps’ – scan for info. you need
- Revision works best when you really engage with the subject, if only for ten minutes at a time! Find what suits you
- Keep asking yourself questions
- Put things in your own words

Useful revision activities

- **Re-write notes**, to clarify ideas (but don’t overdo it!)
- **Organise notes** around particular questions, issues, themes
- **Practise** using your material flexibly ie to suit different exam questions
- **Talk through** an answer to a question – takes less time than writing
- **Make up** lots of short questions on a topic – and plan your answers
- **Talk to students** on your course – talking through/discussing topics really helps!
Organising and using notes

Don’t just re-read notes (passive learning) but think about what you can do with them (active learning)

- Sort through and highlight what’s essential
- Make notes on notes to help recall
- Reduce notes to key headings, points and references
- Make ‘master’ cards with key points and memory triggers
- Focus- ask questions, keep engaged e.g. ‘What does this mean? How does it relate to x? What is important about this theory/point?’ etc.

Use past exam questions

Look at these at the early stages of revising – that way, you will find out what you need to revise, and can look at notes with more focus on particular issues.

- Use as a focus for your note organising
- Practise ‘de-coding’ the question
- Find links between exam questions and areas of study
- Check questions carefully –highlight key words, decode ‘jargon’
- Do quick plans/mindmaps for exam essays-time yourself
- Check/add points you can’t recall
- Practise prioritising-make decisions about what to leave out/put in
- Do at least one timed ‘exam’ essay – do with a friend, then discuss each other’s essay….very good for seeing how you get on in exam conditions
Finally...keep positive

- Revision is tiring – give yourself lots of short breaks and rewards for getting things done.
- Studies suggest that we retain more at the start and finish of study sessions – so the more short sessions you have revising, the more you will remember…that’s the theory, anyway!
- Try to get enough sleep, a bit of exercise, and enough energy food. It helps concentration and state of mind.

Extra ideas

Look at the ‘Learning Pay-Off’ sheet attached. Think about the ‘pay-off’ of the different revision activities. It’s a useful way of reflecting on revision – what’s effective and what isn’t. Bear in mind that a lot depends on your own style of learning…and build a revision plan that suits your style.

Use the ‘Revision: seven-point action plan’ sheet to develop your own methods and goals for revision – this can be a useful ‘focusing’ exercise, but be realistic – you can always change your action plan if it isn’t working as well as you hoped.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Learning pay-off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reading your lecture notes, handouts, books and articles over and over again.</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Making summaries of your source materials as you read them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Writing important things out over and over again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Practising writing out full essay answers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Making essay plans for essay question possibilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Practising writing out answers to old exam questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Working out hundreds of short, sharp questions of your own and practising writing out answers to these.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Practising <strong>speaking</strong> the answers to past questions and to short, sharp questions that you have written for yourself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Practising <strong>thinking</strong> through how you would answer questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Getting fellow students to quiz you and quizzing them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Revision: seven-point action plan

1. **Positive state of mind** e.g. checking my motivation; giving myself positive messages; working in stress; accepting the challenge.  
   *Things I will do to stay positive:*

2. **Time** e.g. going over my work from early in the year in different ways; organising a timetable, *Priority organiser* (page 82) or *Time circle for revision* (page 80); dealing with my excuses for not revising; using spare moments.  
   *I will:*

3. **Variety** e.g. working in many short spells; using varied and interesting ways of going over my material.  
   *I will:*

4. **Over-learning** e.g. rewriting notes, index cards, new essay plans, memory triggers.  
   *I will:*

5. **Practice** e.g. doing past questions; working under exam conditions; having a trial run.  
   *I will:*

6. **People** e.g. sharing revision with other people where possible.  
   *I will:*

7. **Selection** What topics will I revise? What level of detail can I really use under exam conditions?  
   *I will:*