

Revision Strategies

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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.

Activity	Learning pay-off		
	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>
1. Reading your lecture notes, handouts, books and articles over and over again.			
2. Making summaries of your source materials as you read them.			
3. Writing important things out over and over again.			
4. Practising writing out full essay answers.			
5. Making essay plans for essay question possibilities.			
6. Practising writing out answers to old exam questions.			
7. Working out hundreds of short, sharp questions of your own and practising writing out answers to these.			
8. Practising <i>speaking</i> the answers to past questions and to short, sharp questions that you have written for yourself.			
9. Practising <i>thinking</i> through how you would answer questions.			
10. Practising solving problems.			
11. Getting fellow students to quiz you and quizzing them.			

Revision: seven-point action plan

<p>1. Positive state of mind e.g. checking my motivation; giving myself positive messages; working in stress; accepting the challenge. <i>Things I will do to stay positive:</i></p>
<p>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>I will:</i></p>
<p>3. Variety e.g. working in many short spells; using varied and interesting ways of going over my material. <i>I will:</i></p>
<p>4. Over-learning e.g. rewriting notes, index cards, new essay plans, memory triggers. <i>I will:</i></p>
<p>5. Practice e.g. doing past questions; working under exam conditions; having a trial run. <i>I will:</i></p>
<p>6. People e.g. sharing revision with other people where possible. <i>I will:</i></p>
<p>7. Selection What topics will I revise? What level of detail can I really use under exam conditions? <i>I will:</i></p>