



REVISION:  
**Strategies, Approaches and  
the Science Behind It**





## **Taking Care of Yourself**

Just like ensuring the best results from your revision involves feeding your brain and making sure you actively revise, you need to take care of yourself!

- Keeping refreshed and focussed – getting fresh air and seeing friends and family doesn't stop because you're revising for your exams. Getting outside and socialising will help you ensure that you are getting the most out of your revision.
  - <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02225.x>
- Exercise is good for your body and mind! This is a refrain you will have heard many times before but there's evidence that clearly shows this is the case! A little bit of exercise, including going out for a walk, will help you...this is especially true if you start to feel stressed or anxious.
  - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2795619/>

## **Sleep**

Ensuring that you are getting enough sleep is vital for all our wellbeing, not only when revising for examinations. A regular sleep routine is essential for ensuring that you get a regular night's sleep; in doing so you ensure you're well rested and alert.

- Ensuring that you get enough sleep is proven to help your ability to recall information and make links with ideas.
- A good sleep pattern helps with managing stress and anxiety.
- When you're sleeping, your brain is still working. Research shows that your brain's prefrontal cortex 'tags' memories deemed relevant while awake and the hippocampus consolidates these memories during sleep.
- <http://www.sleepcouncil.org.uk/latest-news/revision-robs-teens-of-sleep/>
- <http://blog.innerdrive.co.uk/9-common-sleep-mistakes>

## **Ensure that you've had breakfast!**

27% of Boys and 39% Girls don't have breakfast and there is research to suggest that this can have a VERY negative impact upon your ability to focus and retain information (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0195666303001314>)

- Toast with Jam – Whole Grain toast is better than white and there are plenty of complex carbohydrates that will give your brain energy throughout the morning...although jam is mostly simple carbohydrates it will give you a quick energy boost to start your day!
- Porridge – plenty of complex carbohydrates to feed your brain with energy throughout the morning. Throw in some fruit to help with a more immediate energy boost.
- Cereal – taking care to avoid a cereal that is high in sugar will help keep your brain nourished...a small bowl of cereal is better than nothing!



## Dealing with Stress or Anxiety

NHS Choices suggests different things that can help you deal with stress or anxiety:

<b>Be Active</b>	Exercise won't make your stress disappear, but it will reduce some of the emotional intensity that you're feeling, clearing your thoughts and letting you deal with your problems more calmly.
<b>Take Control</b>	<p>There's a solution to any problem. "If you remain passive, thinking, 'I can't do anything about my problem', your stress will get worse," says Professor Cooper. "That feeling of loss of control is one of the main causes of stress and lack of wellbeing."</p> <p>The act of taking control is in itself empowering, and it's a crucial part of finding a solution that satisfies you and not someone else.</p>
<b>Connect with People</b>	<p>A good support network of colleagues, friends and family can ease your work troubles and help you see things in a different way.</p> <p>"If you don't connect with people, you won't have support to turn to when you need help," says Professor Cooper.</p> <p>The activities we do with friends help us relax. We often have a good laugh with them, which is an excellent stress reliever.</p>
<b>Have some 'me time'</b>	"We all need to take some time for socialising, relaxation or exercise," says Professor Cooper.
<b>Avoid unhealthy habits</b>	<p>"We call this avoidance behaviour," says Professor Cooper.</p> <p>Over the long term, crutches won't solve your problems. They'll just create new ones. "It's like putting your head in the sand," says Professor Cooper.</p> <p>"It might provide temporary relief, but it won't make the problems disappear. You need to tackle the cause of your stress."</p>
<b>Try to be positive</b>	<p>Look for the positives in life, and things for which you're grateful.</p> <p>Try writing down three things that went well, or for which you're grateful, at the end of every day.</p>
<b>Video Clips with strategies and advice</b>	<p>Breathing Exercise: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFcQpNr_KA4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFcQpNr_KA4</a></p> <p>Anxiety Control: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqcOqh9_ivl">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqcOqh9_ivl</a></p> <p>Unhelpful Thinking: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzPb9jT9aEE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzPb9jT9aEE</a></p> <p>Panic Attacks: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUVUaV_XDPA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUVUaV_XDPA</a></p>



## **Before Revising**

### **Getting the Study Space Right**

The simple act of clearing out your bedroom or study space of clutter is a quick, easy way of helping to create a sense of control and order. If you are constantly losing things, forgetting where you have put something, or writing notes in different places, space-clearing will help you to get better organised!

You need to be able to find what you want, when you want it...searching for a folder or book for 20 minutes is not a good use of time when you should be knuckling down to some revision.

You probably do not like having your room tidied up by somebody else, so it is only reasonable that you keep your own room / space in good order.

- Start with the floor and pick up all your clothes. Sort them into dirty piles and clean. Continue until everything in your room has a place and is in good working order. Anything that is broken or tatty needs to be chucked, mended or recycled!
- Get rid of everything you don't need or haven't used for a year or two. Open the windows every day for a few minutes at least to let light and fresh air in to the room.
- File everything that's important where you can get to it easily.
- Don't eat your meals in your room...if this is your revision hub, you're spending enough time working in there. Associate your room / study space with study and other spaces as a place to relax and unwind.

### **Put your phone away!**

There is evidence to suggest that just seeing a mobile phone is enough to distract you and limit your ability to concentrate (<http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/2014-52302-001/>) this isn't just one of those 'your teenage brain is different from an adult brain, the same is true for adults who get distracted by a text message or an email, research shows that it can take up to 25 minutes to refocus back on what you're doing.

- FOMO – Fear Of Missing Out...this is a real thing! Mobile phones are the most likely gateway to social media we all have but there is mounting evidence to suggest that we can get too distracted by the thinking about what others are doing and preoccupied by the need to share this on social media. (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563213000800>)
- Mobile Phones can impact upon your grades – Research in 2015 showed the more that undergraduate students used their mobile phones, the lower their grades were. (<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2158244015573169>)



Levels of anxiety are already high when exams are looming. The part of the brain that is addicted to your mobile or social media last thing at night and first thing in the morning needs the opportunity to switch off...you need to SWITCH OFF ALONG WITH YOUR MOBILE. Your brain definitely needs a well earned rest when revising and between examinations.

Charge your mobile outside your bedroom as research shows they interfere with sleep. It's a big ask but the bigger the ask the bigger the rewards.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/mobile-phone-radiation-wrecks-your-sleep-771262.html>

### **Peace and Quiet**

'Music helps me revise!' Well, that's what you might think but that's not what the research says! Whether it's through headphones or blaring out loud, listening to music doesn't help you revise!

Don't believe it, here's the evidence:

- <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/acp.2994/abstract>

If the leap to working in silence is too much, or you need something to drown out the sounds of younger siblings or a busy house, **don't** listen to the latest album or track; however the following links have been shown to have some positive impact on brain function...it's not music that you're necessarily used to listening to but the quality of the **sounds** might be beneficial:

#### **Study Music Alpha Waves: Relaxing Studying Music:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPni755-Krg>

#### **Study Music - SUPER Memory & Concentration:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uX6usZWIMAo>



## The Act of Revising

### Early, Active and Regular

It's all about space – all of the research says that spacing out your revision is a much more effective way of acquiring, storing and retaining the information and ideas that you are revising. This means that instead of revising a topic for 5 hours in one day, it's better to revise that topic for 1 hour over 5 days.

- Don't expect to remember everything in hour 2 that you revised in hour 1 – spacing is all about forgetting and relearning so that the information, ideas and details are retained for a longer time (<http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/What-Makes-Great-Teaching-REPORT.pdf>)
- Test and Quiz yourself – meaningful revision is all about staying active and engaged. If you simply read over your notes you're not necessarily firing up your brain in the best way you could; quizzing and testing yourself is the best way of finding out where those gaps remain that you need to work on and recognising where the information has stuck...celebrate those answers you get right to boost your confidence ahead of the exams!
- Don't just learn, teach! Once you have revised a topic and feel that you know it really well, there is evidence to suggest that if you teach someone else you can benefit massively. When you teach someone something, your brain has to organise information differently from learning information – this should help your recall and understanding.

### Where to quiz and test yourself:

- [www.quizlet.com](http://www.quizlet.com)
- [www.getrevising.com](http://www.getrevising.com)
- [www.mathswatch.co.uk](http://www.mathswatch.co.uk)
- [www.mymaths.co.uk](http://www.mymaths.co.uk)
- [www.doddle.co.uk](http://www.doddle.co.uk)
- [www.s-cool.co.uk](http://www.s-cool.co.uk)
- [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize)
- <http://www.podcastrevision.co.uk>

## Practical Tips / Approaches to Revision

### Mnemonics

As was shown in one of the ELEVATE sessions, mnemonics are a good way of helping you to remember key information. You come up with a short phrase or poem, the first letter of each word then acts as a prompt to help you recall information.

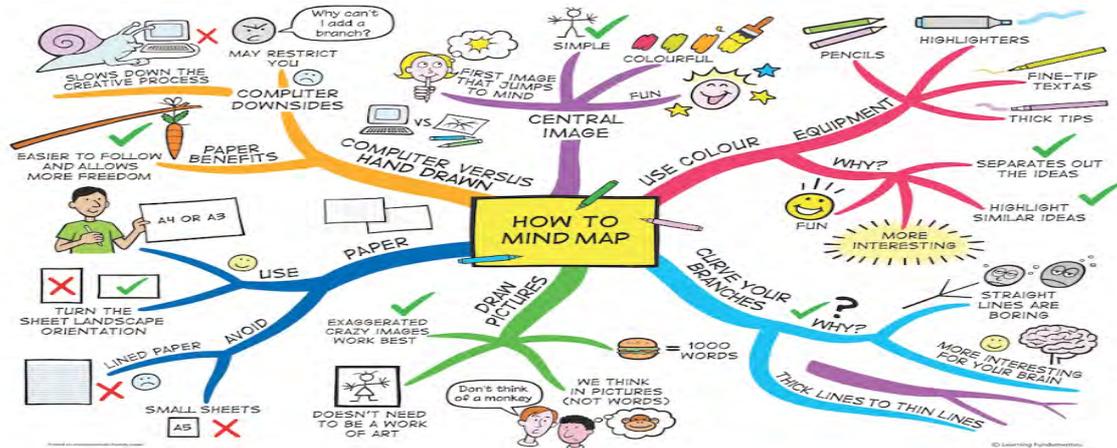
So, to remember the order of the planets, just think:

**My Very Excited Mother Just Served Us Nine Pies**  
(Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto)



## Mind Maps

A mind map is a diagram that charts all the information and ideas you need to learn for a topic. This is a good way to help you process information through the different branches related to a topic...but don't get too distracted by making it look pretty!



## Make Essay Plans

In your exams you will need to quickly process the question you are being asked to answer, identify the what you need to do and process the most relevant information for you to put across. As part of your revision process, look at a variety of past questions and plan how you would tackle that particular question in the exam. This doesn't involve having to write out a 2 page response but should enable you to test how well you know the topic or ideas in the question and ensure that, should a similar question come up in the exam, you know exactly what you would write.

## The Visual Journey

This was another strategy suggested in one of the ELEVATE revision sessions. You can use this approach to remember the areas of your notes / topics that you find most difficult to memorise.

Start with an easy example – 10 random words. You want to create an image which links each of these words with a room in your house to create a mini story for what the image is doing in the room. Try and picture the story as if it is a movie, and try and make the movie as weird or as funny as possible. An example for History is below:

Room in House	Points from notes	Mental Image
Front Door	Hitler Chancellor	You hear a knock on your front door and when you open, Hitler is standing there
Hallway	Reichstag Fire	You walk into the hallway and it is on fire
Bedroom	Dissolution of Parliament	You walk into your bedroom, your bed is dissolving and disappearing
Kitchen	Night of Long Knives	You walk into the kitchen and open the dishwasher...it only contains knives as long as swords
Garden	Hindenburg dies	You walk into your garden and the



		Hindenburg airship is crashing down and blows up on your lawn
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## Ensuring Your Mind and Memory Grows!

We can have two mindsets, a **fixed mindset** or a **growth mindset**, here's how they differ:

	 <b>Fixed Mindset</b>	 <b>Growth Mindset</b>
Feedback or Criticism	Ignores feedback or targets; these are seen as negative and also personal, the idea that they are intended to help the person get better is overlooked.	Considers and acts upon the feedback; applies the ideas in an effort to improve and get better.
Effort	Has the fixed idea that putting effort into something won't make things better or that any effort itself is pointless.	Sees effort and exertion as important in achieving the desired outcome; hard work is the best way to achieve the best results
Obstacles	Quickly gives up: the idea of working harder, starting sooner or trying for longer demotivates so doesn't try. Getting one answer wrong is reason enough to stop.	Embraces the idea of needing to persevere and try again; if the answer is wrong, they will want to find out where they went wrong to change the outcome next time
Challenges	Will avoid the unfamiliar and shy away from challenges.	Seeks out the new and unfamiliar; embraces challenges.

## Changing the fixed mindset to a growth mindset

<b>Fixed Mindset</b>	<b>Growth Mindset</b>
Are you sure you can do it? Maybe you don't have the talent.	I'm not sure I can do it now but I think I can learn to with time and effort.
If you don't try, you can protect yourself and keep your pride.	If I don't try, I automatically fail. Where's the pride in that?
It's not my fault. It was something or someone else's fault.	If I don't take responsibility, I can't fix it.