

Strathaven Academy



Skills for learning

A guide to study, assessment and examination techniques

ABOUT LEARNING



Research shows that people remember:

- 10% of what they read
- 20% of what they hear
- 30% of what they see
- 50% of what they both see and hear
- 70% of what they say
- 90% of what they simultaneously say and do

Research also shows that the best way to study is as actively as possible. Here are some suggestions:

- summarise your notes
- work through examples
- identify key words
- use mnemonics
- draw spidergrams or mind maps
- watch or listen and make notes
- stick revision notes up around your study area
- record yourself making key points and listen to them while you go for a walk
- talk to your parent/carer about what you have learned/explain something you have just studied to them
- ask people around you to test your recall

MEMORY AND REVISION TECHNIQUES

Key Words

Identifying key words in a piece of text will help you to remember the main points more easily. Take this example:

"Napoleon was the emperor of France and the many other countries in Europe that he invaded. His empire collapsed after he over-stretched his forces and tried to invade Russia. His final defeat came at the hands of the Duke of Wellington at the battle of Waterloo."

To remember the important parts of the above passage, we should take the time to identify key points by either underlining or **highlighting** certain words, e.g.

"Napoleon was the emperor of France and the many other countries in Europe that he invaded. His empire collapsed after he over-stretched his forces and tried to invade Russia. His final defeat came at the hands of the Duke of Wellington at the battle of Waterloo."

NAPOLEON REMINDERS

Napoleon, emperor of France, Europe, invaded, empire collapsed, invade Russia, final defeat, Duke of Wellington, Waterloo

When summarising your notes, you should concentrate on the key words in order to remember the facts more easily.

Summarise

Summarising involves extracting key information from sources/paragraphs of information.

Many historians argue that women's war efforts were vital in them gaining the vote in 1918. During the war women took over the jobs of men as bus drivers and conductors and tram drivers. Also, over 700,000 women took on extremely dangerous jobs in ammunition factories. Without women taking over these previously male dominated jobs, Britain would have struggled to have been prepared for war. Historians argue that women were given the vote in 1918 as a "thank you" for their efforts.

Key points of information from paragraph

- Women took over the jobs of men as bus drivers and conductors and tram drivers.
- 700,000 women took on extremely dangerous jobs in ammunition factories.
- Without women taking over these jobs, Britain would have struggled to have been prepared for war.
- Women were given the vote in 1918 as a "thank you" for their efforts.

MNEMONICS (pronounced NEM-ON-ICS)

A mnemonic is a made-up word that helps you to remember things more easily.

For example, there is a mnemonic which makes it easier to remember the seven colours of the rainbow:

Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet

If you use the mnemonic **ROY G BIV**, remembering becomes much easier.

Another way to remember things with mnemonics is to use each of the letters in a made-up sentence. You only have to remember the sentence and you have the key points for your answer, e.g.

Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain is an easy way to remember the seven colours of the rainbow.

This is especially useful in subjects where you have to remember a sequence of events. Memorise each of these mnemonics and you will remember them under exam pressure.

Creative Thinking

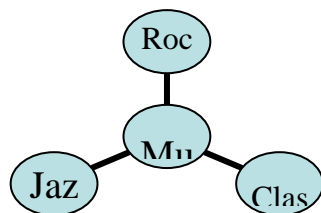
This is a good technique to use when you are having difficulty solving a problem. Perhaps you have to write an essay on a tricky subject? Creative thinking involves you taking just ten minutes to write down everything you know about the topic on a blank piece of paper.

It's important not to take too much time over this: you must work against the clock. Try it - it works!

Spidergrams

These are best done in colour and with pictures. Imagine you are trying to make notes on all the different kinds of music.

- Step 1 Write the word 'music' in the middle of the sheet of paper.
- Step 2 Write the main types of music around this word, adding in more and more layers as you go.
- Step 3 Divide each type as in the example below:

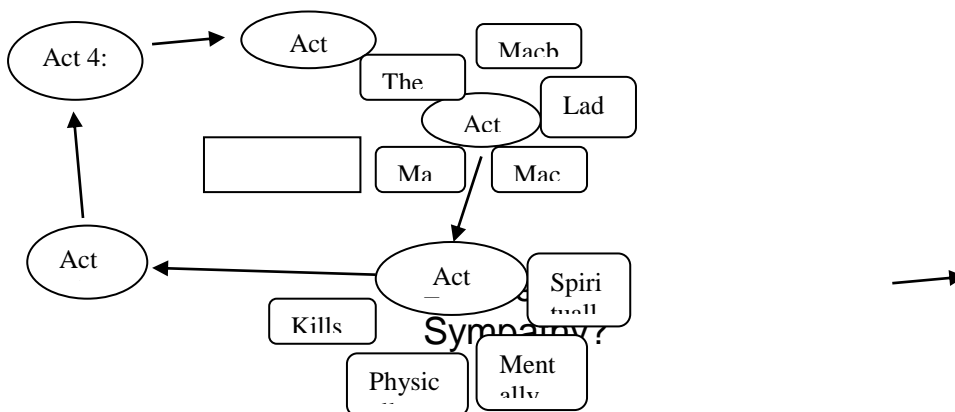


Mind-mapping

Imagine you have to write an essay on the play *Macbeth*. One way of planning this would be to take ten minutes to create a mind-map of ideas as shown here:

- Step 1** In the centre of a blank piece of paper write down the focus of the essay question (for example an essay on how far we can sympathise with *Macbeth*).
- Step 2** Draw a maximum of six lines coming out from this title.
- Step 3** On each of the lines, write down words/ideas that relate to the focus of the essay e.g. actions, fate, other characters, setting, staging...
- Step 4** Now you have a map of the central ideas for your essay. Each idea or theme could be one paragraph of the essay.

Mind-mapping is a very powerful technique for generating lots of ideas.



Speed-reading

Studying involves reading. Reading takes time.

You can use speed-reading techniques to help speed up the process of learning.

When we read a sentence, we tend to read every word. This slows us down. Our brains are so clever that we do not need to concentrate on every word and we can still understand the meaning of the sentence.

Read the following sentence one word at a time:

“The cat sat on the mat.”

Now concentrate on reading only every **second** word whilst skimming over the other words. You will find that you can read much more quickly without losing the meaning of the sentence. Practise this and eventually you will be able to read every fourth word and still understand what you are reading. This technique will save you a lot of time, and practice makes perfect.

TIPS FOR PUPILS

- *Make yourself* start to study, however much you don't want to – then the hardest bit is over!
- Use a study plan to identify what you will study during each session.
- Use a planner to make sure you devote time to all of your subjects.
- Study for short periods of time: 30-40 minutes of studying and then a five-minute break.
- Organise your notes and study materials *before* you start studying.
- Do frequent short physical exercises – walk around, stretch, do neck and shoulder rolls.
- Drink water, eat 'brain food' and get lots of fresh air.
- Don't leave difficult bits or things you really don't enjoy to the end – get them over with!
- Take a break if you feel frustrated, angry or overwhelmed. Make a note of the problem and ask your teacher to help.
- Focus on what you *have* done, not all the things that you haven't.
- At the end of each session leave your notes tidy and organised so your work area is ready for the next session.
- Do something relaxing between study and sleep.
- Reward yourself after each session - watch TV, meet friends, etc.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Talk to your child about how you can support them and what they would find helpful.
- Provide a quiet place to study and ensure they are organised with folders, paper, pens etc.
- Consider buying a good revision guide, the SQA endorsed Specimen Papers and Past Papers.
- Make sure revision notes and coursework are organised and easy to access.
- Help your child to plan a revision timetable. This may take considerable time but will help with effective revision.
- Support your child in keeping to the start and finish times of their study plan. However, it's okay to be flexible on the odd occasion!
- Provide favourite snacks and water for revision periods.
- Be sensitive to the pressures they are facing: support them on the odd day when they are not feeling up to studying, and remind them of all the good work they have done - and will continue to do - when they are feeling better.
- Continue to show an interest in what they are doing, talk through difficulties and be prepared to help - but don't nag!
- Keep a perspective – your child may not do things your way or as often as you would like, but they are doing the best they can at this stage in their development.