



## **GOOD and BAD Revision - If you read nothing else READ THIS!!**



**What is revision?** It means literally "re-looking" at information that you have learnt previously. The aim is that you know the information you will be tested on and can remember it for the exam. Knowing something depends on understanding it.

**The aim of revision.** The aim is to reduce the amount of information relating to a subject to a series of key-points, any of which you can expand upon in an exam answer. The key point, phrase or word prompts your brain to retrieve the information stored in it. At the end of your revision, for each topic or sub-topic, aim to end up with a card or A4 sheet with the key points for that section.

**The structure of revision sessions.** Good revision techniques always include:

- An aim for the sessions. E.g. "By the end of this two hour revision session I will understand and be able to answer questions on photosynthesis".
- Thinking about what you know already and identifying the bits you need to spend more time on (usually by doing some sort of self-testing - many revision aids include opportunities for self-testing).
- Breaking each section down into "do-able" chunks. Revise each section - not just reading the information but doing something active with it (see below).
- Producing notes (shorter each time you revise a particular area) noting key points, phrases or words.
- Testing yourself to see what you have learnt.
- Ticking off the subject on your "overall list" so that you can see regular progress.
- Revisiting your notes briefly after one day, one week and one month, as well as just before the exam - THIS REALLY WORKS!

**The key to effective revision.** Useful revision involves DOING SOMETHING with the information you are trying to learn and

This is ESSENTIAL to allow your brain to learn, make connections and remember. Different people find different activities useful, and you need to find out how YOU revise best for each of your subjects. Some ideas are:

- Drawing "spider maps" on large pieces of paper - to show how different parts of a subject hang together.
- Use pictures and big flip chart sheets and colour to make posters with key points and display these on the walls or where you will see them regularly.
- Put revision aids up around the house - especially for any "rote learning" - chemical or mathematical formulae, French verbs - read them when sitting on the loo, brushing your teeth or eating breakfast.
- Record yourself making 10 key points about a particular topic, then play it back when you are travelling, running etc.
- Highlight key areas of notes or books (if they are yours), picking out the key points or summaries.
- Listen to tapes of e.g. books and plays and discuss them with another person.
- Watch revision DVDs but don't just sit passively - pause them and make notes of key or difficult areas, test yourself or get someone to watch with you and test each other.
- Read a page and shut the book - what can you remember? Try to visualise the layout of the page as this will help you to recall the details.
- Tell someone about what you have learned - explain how the heart works over a meal (or perhaps stick to something less gory at the table!).
- Get people around you to test you on "rote knowledge" - have a family quiz.

**Memory techniques.** Find out what helps you to remember stuff. Some ideas are:

**Acronyms** (using the first letter of each word to make a word to prompt your memory) e.g. you may find it hard to remember this sentence "Wholly Inadequate Needless Damned Outrageous Waste of Space". However, turn it into an acronym and it becomes much easier: WINDOWS.

**Picture stories** (thinking of a strong visual image to associate with each word and linking them together in an unlikely and silly story) e.g. you may find it hard to remember the facts in this sentence, simply by reading it through,

“the great Plague struck London in 1665, followed by the fire of London in 1666, starting in the shop of the baker to King Charles II in Pudding Lane”

Try this out: imagine a picture (for example) of a large rat (the plague) running around before being burnt (plague before the fire) in a bread oven (bakers shop) with the flames curling up around it like the curls of the number 666 (1666), and then being put into a pudding and eaten by two King Charles spaniels. Go through the picture sequence a couple of times, then see if you can remember the 7 facts in the sentence. Ask someone to test you, and see if it works for them. It's magic!

**Mnemonics** are also useful - make up a silly sentence to help you remember the order of something e.g. Never Eat Shredded Wheat (North, East, South, West).

**Review.** Take time occasionally to ask yourself how well your revision techniques are working for you. How much have you covered? Have you stuck to your timetable? Are you ending up with notes you can use for last minute revision? Congratulate yourself for all the subjects you have covered. Change your timetable plan if necessary.

**Later on.** When you have revised and revisited each topic, have a go at some old exam questions. Make sure you set an appropriate time limit, and try to work under exam conditions. Don't do this too early (although it is worth looking at them early on to get an idea of the sort of question you will be answering - essays, multiple choice etc.). Do these in time so that your teacher can mark them.