Saint John Houghton Catholic Voluntary Academy

GCSE

Revision Booklet

Strategies and tips to help you revise effectively

Name:

Getting started…

Before you start it is really important you create the right environment to make sure your revision will be as effective as possible

Mindset Matters

Getting started is the hardest part – it's easy to put of revising because you think you haven't got time.

But the great news is you only need a small amount of motivation to begin to study. Once you see some success, your motivation levels will increase and you will begin to develop good revision habits. **Success breeds motivation.** Don't forget: when you do achieve success, however small, stop and celebrate it!

Preparing Your Study Space

The place where you do revision is crucial for your ability to concentrate. Your study space should be a **quiet** space away from any distractions (digital or human). You need to give your working memory* a chance to do its' job – you can't focus on your revision whilst singing along to your favourite song.

The main distraction you are likely to have while trying to study is your **mobile phone.** Even if you try really hard not to look at it, it will be nearly impossible to ignore all the notifications 'pinging' through. If you really want to maximise productivity while revising, remove your phone from the study space. This will require discipline but will be worth it.

*Your working memory has a limited capacity and can only hold a small amount of information at any one time

Wellbeing

Your diet is important. Don't skip meals and stay consistent with a healthy balance of meals and don't forget to **stay hydrated**!

Staying up late to revise is a bad idea. Sleep deprivation can have a negative impact on concentration, performance and memory.

Take **regular breaks** from revision with exercise. Take part in a sport you enjoy or go for a walk.

Relax. It is essential to make time to switch off and have a break. Watch Netflix, read or talk to your friends.

Planning

Planning your revision in advance will help you to stay on track with your revision. It is easier to commit to a plan when planning is done week-by-week (if we try to plan too far in advance – things arise and interfere with our best intentions). Make sure your plan is realistic or you won't stick to it.

Be focussed: 20 minutes work followed by a 10 minute break is a good starting point.
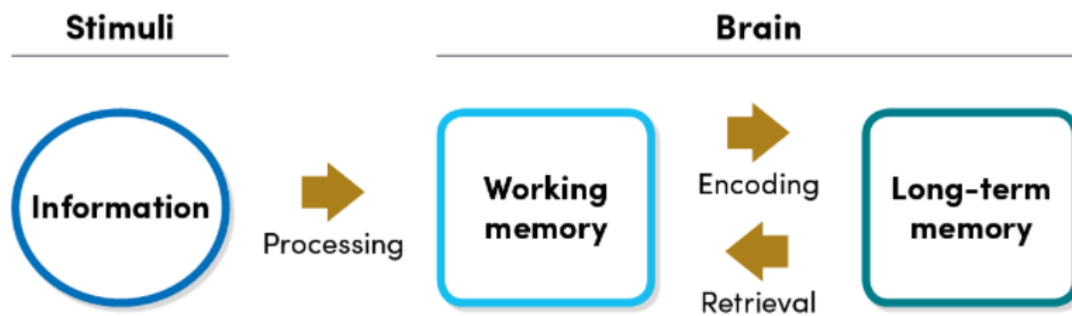
Mix and combine **multiple subjects** while you revise. This has been shown to be more effective than blocked practise when revising.

At the back of the booklet is a sample planner you could use to help plan your revision.

The science behind revision….

When we revise, we are trying to alter our memories (we want to remember what we are revising).
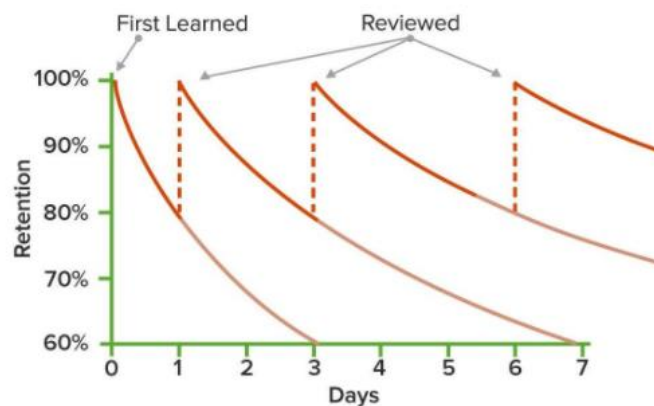
Our memory is divided into two areas - our working (or short-term) memory and our long-term memory.

Working memory has a limited capacity – it can only process and hold a small amount of information at a time. In fact, almost all information that is stored in your short-term memory that is not rehearsed is lost within 18 to 30 seconds!

Research show that if we don't revise or recap on material we will forget 50% of what we learn in the first 24 hours! Every time we revisit what we have learnt, it takes us longer to 'forget', until eventually, through consistent repetition at regular intervals*, called spaced repetition, the information is transferred to our long-term memory (where it can remain indefinitely until we need it).

Typical Forgetting Curve for Newly Learned Information

*Research suggests it is optimal to revisit learning after 24 hours, 3 days, 7 days and then 4 weeks.

Long term memory has an unlimited capacity and can process and store vast amounts of information indefinitely. Sometimes, because there is so much knowledge and information stored in your long-term memory it can be difficult to access some memories.

When we revise

- We are trying to **transfer knowledge** and information to our **long-term memory**
- We need to practise getting the information out of our long-term memory and into our working memory (this is called **retrieval**)

What do I need to revise?

It is important if you spend time revising that you are revising the right things! There is no point revising information that is already embedded in your long-term memory (for instance, you don't have to count to 10 every day just to make sure you remember this).

Even though it makes no sense, we are all guilty of hiding from what we don't know, from challenges, and sometimes we focus on the wrong things. We all like to practise things we are good at – because we know we will be successful. But, if we only revise what we already know and what we are already good at… how will that help us to **improve**?

Remember… when we revise we are trying to transfer as much knowledge and information as we can to our **long-term memory** – this takes effort and time!

When beginning your revision, the following can be really useful tools to help you work out what you already know and where you need to focus your revision;

- Previous tests and assessments – which topics/questions did you perform well in and where did you struggle? For example, if you got full marks on the question on osmosis in your science test there will be little benefit revising that topic further – you already know it! However, if you scored less well on the question on the reactivity of metals that would be a great place to focus some revision.

- Use the revision lists given to you by your teachers. RAG rate yourself on each topic and focus your revision on the amber and red topics.

Red – lots of revision needed as the content may be tricky and you do not remember/understand the topic well

Amber – some revision needed – you remember some aspects of the topic, but your knowledge is not secure

Green – no revision needed – you know and understand the topic well

- You will be doing lots of retrieval practise in your lessons – use these activities as an opportunity to help you identify what knowledge hasn't been transferred to your long-term memory… yet!

Revision Myths

The day before an exam is the best time to revise: By cramming, all you'll do is make your brain tired and lose whatever memories you did manage to build up. The memories in your brain **become stronger** through repeated, spaced study sessions (spaced repetition).

I revise better when I listen to music: Research has shown that students who revise in a quiet environment perform 60% better than students who revise when listening to music (with lyrics). When you listen to music with lyrics, you will be using some of your working memory to process the lyrics which means you have less capacity in your working memory to concentrate on what you are trying to revise

Rereading is an effective revision strategy: This is one of the most common strategies students use when revising. When you reread notes, you will **recognise** the information and fool yourself into thinking you **know** it. It is really important that you try to **recall** the information from your memory without using your noters or a textbook.

Highlighting text will help you remember information: Although we are attracted to bright colours, there is no evidence to suggest that <mark>highlighting material will help you to remember it</mark>. Using a highlighter will help you to trick you into thinking you're revising… but it won't actually help you to remember anything!

Revision Strategies

If you are going to give up your time to revise, it is important that you use that time as effectively as possible.

In this section we'll take a look at some revision strategies that you can use in all of your subjects to maximise the impact of your revision.

Total Recall

For this technique you will need

- A blank sheet of paper
- Pens
- Timer

(1) Choose a topic that you want to focus on. Set a timer for between 3 – 5 minutes (this will depend upon how much content there is)
(2) Put away all of your exercise books, notes, revision guides etc.
(3) Switch on your timer and begin to write down everything you know about your selected topic.
(4) Once finished, check what you have written down against your exercise books, notes and revision guides. Have you covered all of the key points? What did you miss?
(5) Fill in any information/content that you didn't recall in a different coloured pen. You will need to prioritise learning this information for next time.
(6) Build in another 'Total Recall' session on the same topic in the future

! If you struggle to write quickly you could always try recording voice notes instead and listen back to them to see what you missed.
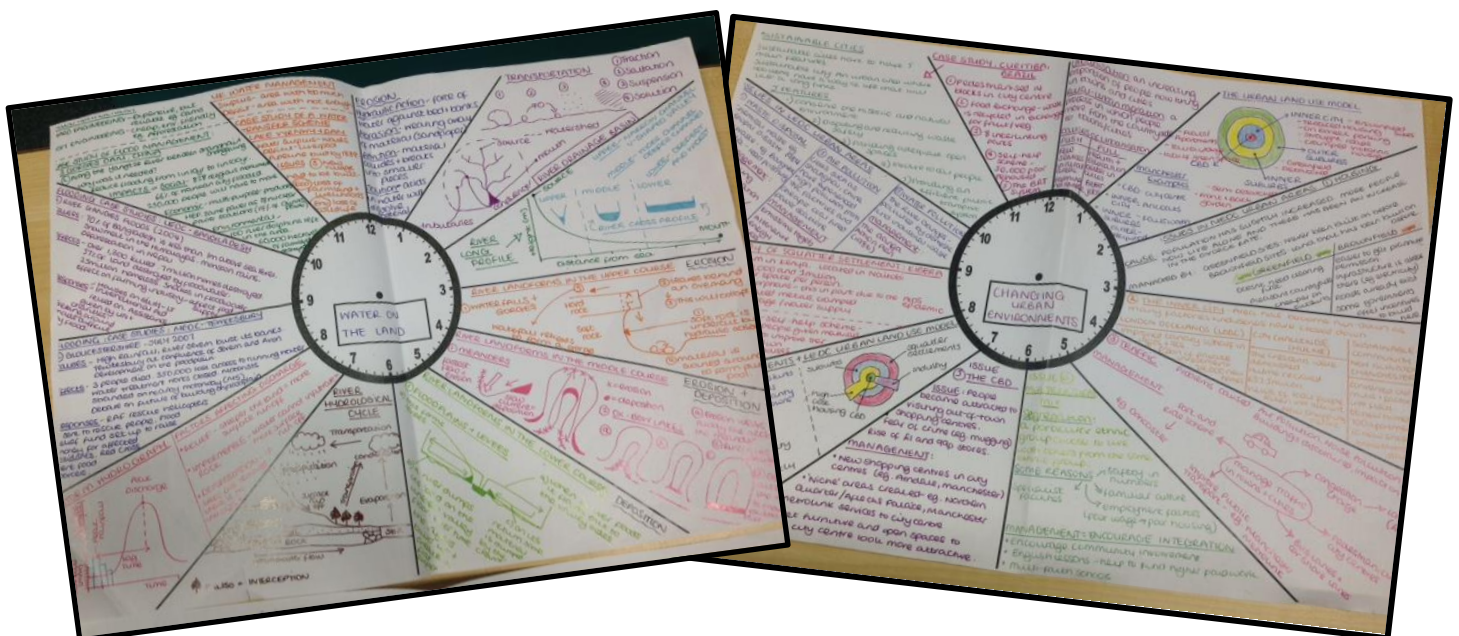
Supercharge your revision...

*There is a template for a revision clock at the back of this booklet

Try completing a 'Revision Clock'

This is essentially twelve different 'Total Recall' tasks that you complete in an hour.

Don't forget – when you've finished check back over your notes and add in any information you forgot in a different coloured pen

Flashcards

Flashcards are an excellent tool that can be used across all subjects. To create flashcards you will need

- Different coloured index cards (you can cut up coloured paper to A6/A7 size instead)
- Pens

A common error when using flash cards is to create cards full of detailed notes and diagrams. When you do this, you're actually just copying down your notes and re-reading (and we know this isn't an effective method of revising – you'll **recognise** the information which will trick your brain into thinking you **know** the information… but you don't)

To make effective flashcards…

- Choose a different colour flashcard for every subject (this will help with organisation)
- On one side of the card write a question and the answer on the other (or keywords or definitions etc)
- Aim to include a maximum of 3 questions on every flashcard (this will help to avoid confusion)
- Keep the questions simple! An essay question is not suitable for a flashcard. For example; 'How accurate is it to say that Stalin's use of terror in the 1930s was fundamentally similar to Lenin's use of terror in the years 1918-1924?' is not suitable at all. Instead, Summarise the main features of Stalin's use of terror in the 1930s' is a much better question for a flashcard. Keep them concise and clear.

! When you test yourself (or others) it is important that you either **say the answer out loud** or **write it down before** you turn over to check the answer (if you turn over to read the answer too soon – you'll **recognise** the answer but remember… that isn't the same as knowing the answer!)
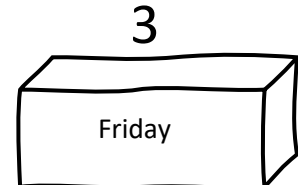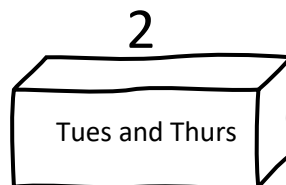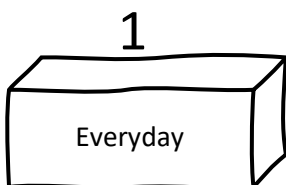
Some other useful strategies include

- Shuffle the cards every time you use them. You want to make sure you are remembering the answers to the questions… not just that the first answer is always '1945'!
- Mix flashcards from **different topics** or subjects together

Supercharge your revision… Try using the **Leitner** Method

The Leitner Method is a system that helps you to systematically revisit the cards and information that you have previously struggled to recall.

You will need three different boxes (plastic wallets or envelopes work well too). Label the boxes as shown;

1
Everyday

2
Tues and Thurs

3
Friday

You test yourself on the cards in box one every day. If you get the answer correct, the card moves to box two. If you don't get the answer correct it stays in box one.

Test yourself on the cards in box two every Tuesday and Thursday. If you get the answer correct, the card moves to box three. If you don't get the answer correct, it moves back to box one.
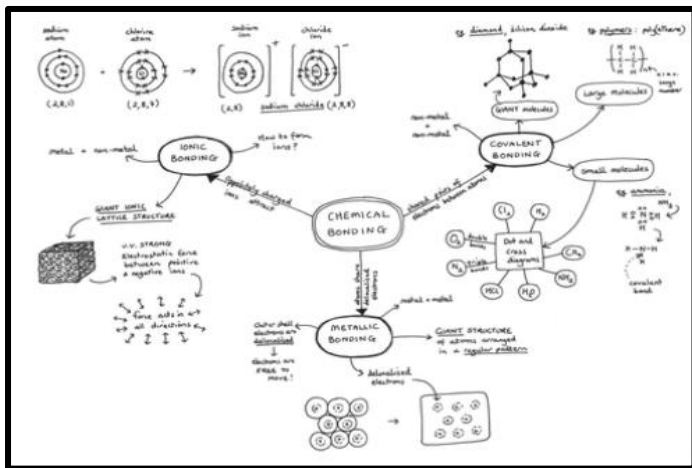
Only test yourself on the cards in box three every Friday. If you get the answer correct, the card stays in box three. If you don't get the answer correct, it moves back to box one.

Revision Menu

You will have a lot or revision to do for a lot of different subjects – it is really important you vary your revision strategies to make sure you stay on-track and engaged with your revision.

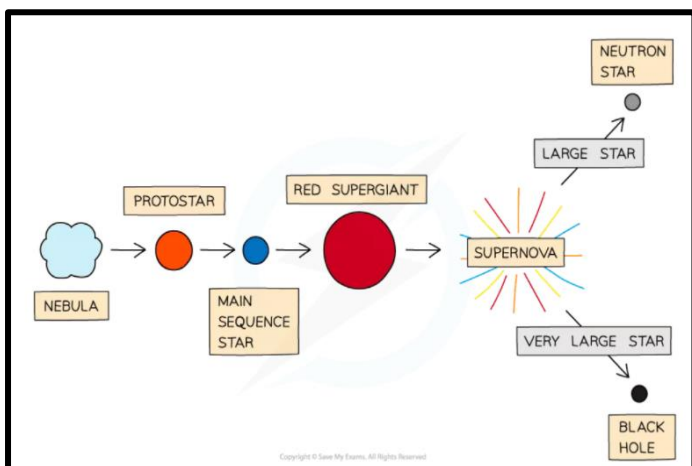Below is a summary of techniques you could use when revising

Quizzes	Flash cards	Past Papers
Use your notes to create a quiz that other people can use to test you	Create a set of flashcards with questions and answers, ready to test yourself	Complete a past exam paper and use the mark-scheme to self-assess (this is a great technique to identify topics that you need to revise)
Revision Clock	Total Recall	Mind Map
Break down a topic/subject into 12 sections and complete a revision clock	Write down everything you can **remember** on a topic (in 3-5 minutes) and the check your notes to see what you forgot	Create a mind map from **memory**, then check, review and add to your mind map
Infographic	Summarise it	Retrieve, Record and Review
Create an infographic with sketches and notes from **memory**	Write an overview of the key topics from **memory** then refer back to your notes	Record yourself retrieving as much as you can verbally then listen back and review

A mind-map is a visual diagram that provides an overview or summary of a topic or idea.

The main subject, topic or idea is written at the centre, with related ideas and information branching from it in many directions. Each related idea may have further information or ideas branching from them.

Both words and images can be used when creating a mind map (dual-coding)

An infographic combines visuals (diagrams and images) and text (notes)

This is a great strategy to use in Science and Geography

Week commencing:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9am							
10am							
11am							
12pm							
1pm							
2pm							
3pm							
4pm							
5pm							
6pm							
7pm							
8pm							
9pm							

Notes