

Study Skills Workshops

Rehoboth Christian College



1. Study Habits Workshop

Workshops Overview



1 – Study Habits Workshop

An overview of Study Techniques; Motivation; Setting Goals; Getting Organized; Time Management and Revision Techniques.

2 – Revision Workshop

Ideas for Planning your time, Putting together a Revision Timetable, Getting the most out of Revision; Simple techniques, Tips to help you Revise in a way that suits; Memory tools, Mnemonics and much, much, more.



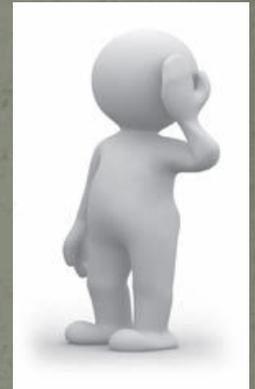
3 – Exams Workshop

This covers Understanding Exams; Instructions, Command and Keywords; Preparing for Exams; During the Exam; Managing Exam Stress; Exam Techniques and Stirling's Tips.

Keys for EFFECTIVE and SUCCESSFUL STUDY

Successful students have good study habits. They apply these to all of their classes. Work to develop any study habits that you do not have. Successful students:

1. Try not to do too much studying at one time.
2. Plan specific times for studying.
3. Try to study at the same time each day.
4. Set specific goals for their study time.
5. Start studying when planned.
6. Work on the assignment they find most difficult first.
7. Review their notes before beginning an assignment.
8. Tell their friends not to call them during study times.
9. Ask for help when they have difficulty with an assignment.
10. Review their homework over the weekend.



Have a **GOOD PLACE** to **STUDY**

You need a good study place to be prepared to study.

You should be able to answer **YES** to ***ALL*** of the following questions:

1. Is my study place available to me whenever I need it?
2. Is my study place free from interruptions?
3. Is my study place free from distractions?
4. Does my study place contain all the study materials that I need?
5. Does my study place contain a large enough desk or table?
6. Does my study place have enough storage space?
7. Does my study place have a comfortable chair?
8. Does my study place have enough light?
9. Does my study place have a comfortable temperature?

Getting Motivated

If you find you lack motivation to study, welcome to the club. Just about every student feels this way at one time or another. When motivated, you will find it easy to stay focused over a period of time. When you are not, it is difficult even to get started. Here are some ways to increase your motivation to study:

- Reward yourself for studying
- Study with your friends
- Remind yourself of your long-term goals
- Eliminate distractions
- Develop interest in what you have to study
- Take breaks
- Establish a comfortable environment
- Establish reasonable goals for a study session
- Use a motivational poster
- JUST DO IT



Study Techniques

The best way to get started is to have a plan and just do it. There are no tricks or formulas; it takes willpower.



Active Study

A large number of students mistake reading their textbook for the act of study. Most of what you read does **NOT** wind its way into your memory.

According to William Glasser,

We learn:

10% of what we read

20% of what we hear

30% of what we see

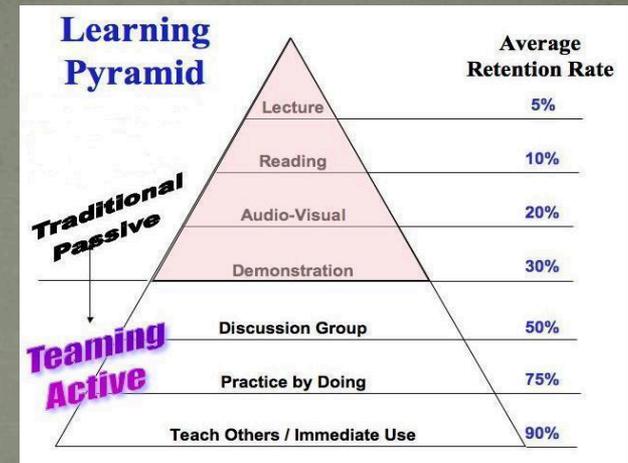
50% of what we both see and hear

70% of what is discussed with others

80% of what we experience personally

95% of what we TEACH to someone else.

You must do something to successfully plant information into your mind so that you can use it later. Different techniques apply better to different subjects, but the key is *regular use*.



Look, Cover, Write, Check

Practise Examples

This allows you to become familiar with the different types of problems and different ways that questions can be asked.

Say Things Aloud

Read passages out and try making audio notes. This helps to learn difficult terms, and you can listen to your notes in the car or bus.

Go Over Assessed Work

Use the markers comments as a guide. Learn from your previous attempts; what can you do better?

Summarize Topics

Make a summary of the whole topic on a single sheet. Think of the sheet as the one page that you be allowed into the test. Only the **absolute essentials** should be written down.

Make Definition and Formula Cards

Put the terms or formulas on one side and the definitions on the other.

Practise Drawing Diagrams

Draw the diagrams on scrap paper several times, check and throw away.

Active Reading

Your reading should include taking notes, underlining, using highlighters. This way you will remember far more of what you are reading.

4 Step Study Formula

Step 1: Initial Notes

These are the ***initial summaries***; usually very detailed; they include examples to illustrate the points; they state the date and have clear headings. They consist of in class notes; chapter summaries; topic outlines; homework or textbook questions.



Step 2: Summary Notes

These are ***written under topics with headings; then sub-headings***. They include only relevant information; and use point form. Maintain the same system throughout all of your notes.

Step 3: Executive Summary

These are summaries of your summaries. They *only include the main points*. These key words are far easier to remember and look like an essay plan for an exam question.

Step 4: Memorise

Try *look, cover, write, check* or use the *rapid repetitive memory technique*. This is where you take a clean sheet of paper; review the executive summary; write down 1-5 down a page in several columns; begin to list the 5 main points as quickly as you can on the first set of numbers; and compare against the original list, adding any points missed. Covering up the list, repeat with all sets of numbers. Repeat the next day to see if you can remember all the points.

Study Groups

A study group is a group of students who share study notes and ideas. You ***learn something really well when you have to teach it to someone else.***

Study groups work best when:

1. Members study the same subject.
2. Members are of the same ability or higher ability than you.
3. 2-4 people are enough (too many gets confusing)

How do study groups work?

1. Each week, each member gives a talk on a subject (as though they were teaching it); subjects could be a chapter from a text.
2. Discuss the topics and texts.
3. Practise tests and essays and mark each other's work.
4. Invite a teacher to sit in.

Setting Goals



... or how to work out what you are aiming for

A goal is something you want to achieve. A **short-term goal** is something you want to achieve soon. Examples of short-term goals are finishing your homework and doing well on tomorrow's test. A **long-term goal** is something you want to achieve at some later date. Examples of long-term goals are writing a paper and passing a class.



To set appropriate goals, you must know what is important for you to accomplish. Then you must set specific and clearly stated goals. If you do not have clearly stated goals, your effort will lack direction and focus.

Write your goals to have a record of them.

Characteristics of Appropriate Goals

Each goal you set should state WHAT you will do and WHEN you will accomplish it.

Implied in each goal you set is your WILL (determination) to do it.



For example, a goal for a research paper might be stated as follows: I will (**your determination**) finish gathering information for my research paper (**what you will do**) by November 20 (**when you will accomplish it**).

Your Goals should be:

1. Within your skills and abilities

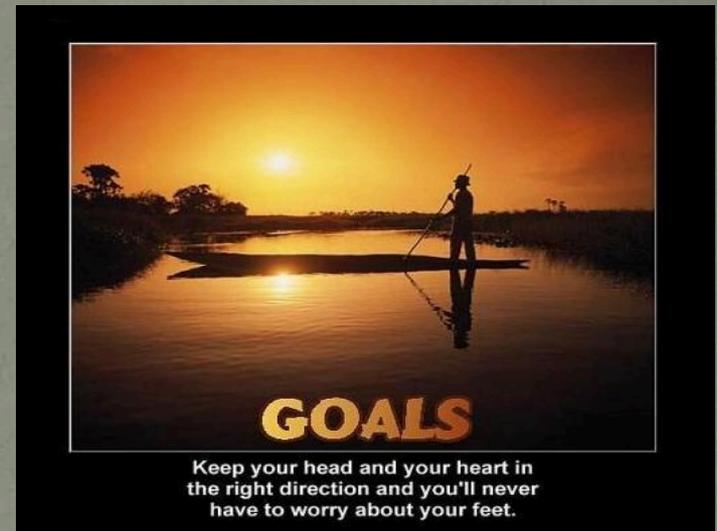
Knowing your strengths and weaknesses will help you set goals you can accomplish.

2. Realistic

Setting a goal to learn the spelling of three new words a day is realistic. Trying to learn the spelling of fifty new words a day is not realistic.

3. Flexible

Sometimes things will not go the way you anticipate and you may need to change your goal. Stay flexible so when you realize a change is necessary you will be ready to make the change.



4. Measurable

It is important to be able to **measure** your progress toward a goal. It is important to recognize when you have accomplished your goal and need to go no further. Failure to measure your progress toward a goal and recognize its accomplishment will result in effort that is misdirected and wasted.

5. Within your control

Other than when working as part of a group, accomplishment of your goal should not depend on other students. You can control what you do, but you have little or no control over what others do. You may do what you have to do, but if others don't, you will not accomplish your goal.

Many times your parents, teachers, and counselors will set goals for you. Be accepting when they do. These are people who know what is important for you and are very concerned with your success. They can also help you accomplish the goals they set.

Regularly review your goals and keep them before you

You should **have your goals written in big letters** (or cut out some pictures if you are a more visual person) over your study desk, if not on the wall of your bedroom. This will constantly remind you of what you are trying to achieve, and why.



If you have given yourself enough reasons why you should achieve your goal, it will show you why you need to sacrifice the time to go back to sitting at your desk, and get on with it.

Prioritize

What often holds people back is not knowing where to start. Sometimes it is so overwhelming that you just don't bother doing anything at all. If you ever get to that point, ask yourself what is the most important thing you have to do, and do that one thing.

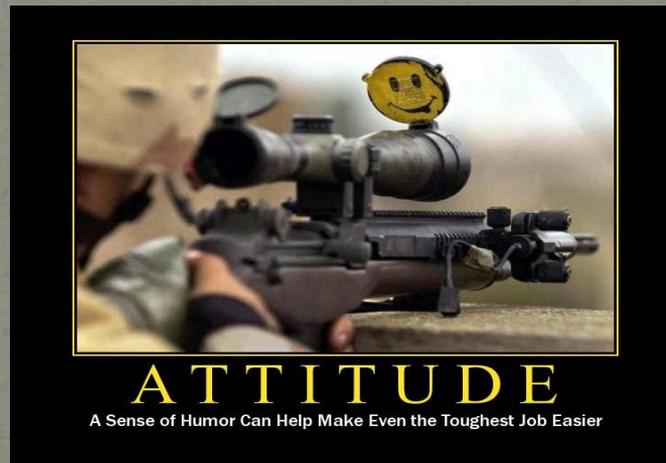
When you have completed this, stop again and ask the same question and then do that one thing. **Even the tallest mountain is climbed the same way as every other one: *one step at a time.***

Break down your tasks or assignments or study sessions into individual steps and simply deal with them one at a time.



Start small and build your way up

There is no need to start with three hours of studying at a time straight away. Why not increase by 20 minutes each day? Within two weeks, you will have eased your way up to your target. Just start your momentum moving in a positive direction.

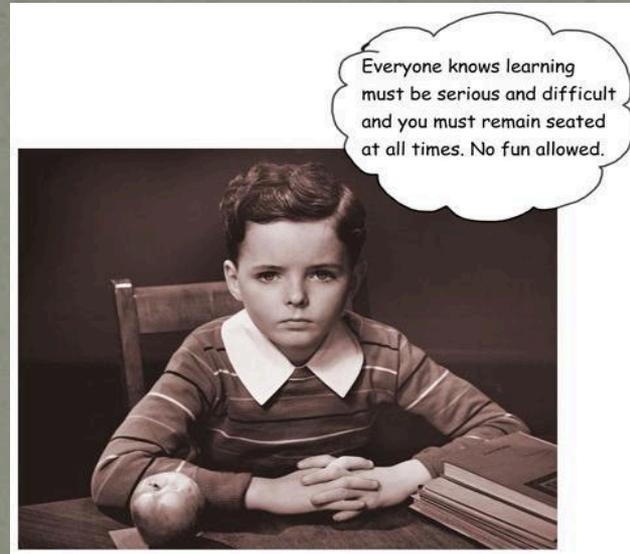


It is never too late

Just get started right away. Even if you are only one month away from exams, putting in a solid effort for the next month is heaps better than not putting in any effort at all. You have nothing to lose.

Plan your study time (have a schedule)

Having a set time and a 'to do' list really helps you to stay on track.



Reward your efforts

When you set a small goal, like 'complete all the Human Biology summaries by Friday night', give yourself a reward if you complete it on time. It is good fun coming up with the rewards, and gives you something to work towards.

Getting Organized



... or how do I stay on top of everything

The difference between a good result and a great result are the little things. Here is a list of some of the little things that you can do to maximize your study performance.

Make the most of your class time

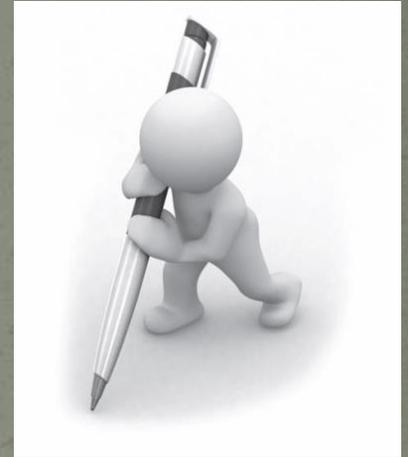
To achieve this you should:

1. Listen and take notes

Especially when you hear things like:

“You’ll need to know this for your exams” or “This will be in the assessment task” or “This is critical” or “You need to know this”.

It is often in the in-class discussions that teachers give you **hints** on what to expect in exams and assessments.



Taking good notes is a **three-stage process** in which there are certain things you should do before class, during class, and after class. Here are the three stages of note taking and what you should do during each stage.



■ **Get Ready to Take Notes (Before Class)**

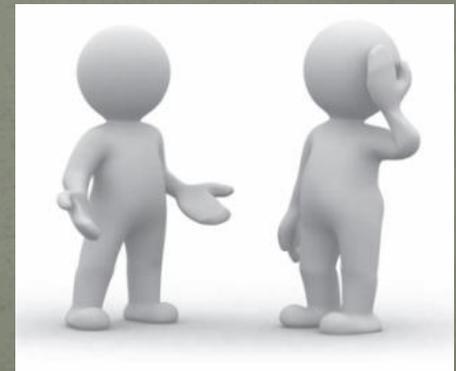
Review your notes from the previous class session before you come to class. This will help you remember what was covered and get you ready to understand new information your teacher provides. Complete all assigned readings before you come to class. Your teacher will expect that you have done this and will use and build upon this information. Bring all note taking materials with you to class. Have several pens and pencils as well as your notebook.

■ Take Notes (During Class)

Keep your attention focused on what your teacher is saying. Listen for "signal statements" that tell you that what your teacher is about to say is important to write in your notes. Examples of signal statements are "*The most important point ...*" and "*Remember that ...*." Be sure to include in your notes information that your teacher repeats or writes on the board.

Write quickly so that you can include all the important information in your notes. Do this by writing abbreviated words such as med for medicine, using symbols such as % for percent, and writing short sentences.

Place a **?** next to the information in your notes which you are unsure about, or where you are unclear about the meaning.



■ Rewrite Your Notes (After Class)

Rewrite your notes to make them more complete by changing abbreviated words into whole words, symbols into words, and shortened sentences into longer sentences. Make your notes more accurate by answering any questions you had when writing your notes in class. Use your textbook and reference sources to obtain the information you need to answer your questions. If necessary, ask your teacher or other students for help. Check with other students to be sure you did not leave out important information. Having good class notes will help you to be better prepared for tests.

Research indicates that the amount of information you retain after 30 days when you listen is only 10%; when you take notes it goes up to 40-50%; when you are actively involved AND take notes is up to 90%.

■ If you don't understand something, ask

If you don't understand the answer, ask again or see the teacher after class.

2. Create an ideal study environment

To be more effective when you study you should:

■ **Have a good attitude**

Approach your study from a positive frame of mind. Focus on what you want to achieve and how you'll feel when you have achieved it.

■ **Study in a quiet environment**

Research shows that today's music (which beats up to 140 beats per minute) lowers your brain's ability to retain information. So unless the music has a rhythm of 60 beats per minute (e.g. classical baroque) which can actually help study, background music is not advised. Don't study in front of the TV, but try to find a quiet, private place.

■ **Be organized**

Have all the equipment and material that you need, and have a place for everything, AND keep it there.

■ Your study place

This should have good lighting, good ventilation, and a comfortable chair. Use good pens. Find out whatever works for you. Pens are the tools of the trade, so spend the extra dollars and get the pens you like. If you regularly use a computer, get a good keyboard.

3. Take study breaks

You should take breaks when you study. Most people can concentrate for about **45 minutes to one hour**. That is about the time frame to study and then take a break. Five minutes is a good break time as taking them too often or too long may cause you to lose momentum. If you go on for too long, you will burn out, and feel like your brain is going numb. You need to keep fresh, or you will not take the information in. The same thing can occur when you work too late at night. Try working earlier if you can, or getting up early in the morning to study.

4. Study for the right amount of time

Set a **minimum** amount of time you will study each school night and on weekends, but also set a maximum. Here is a plan that would be suitable for Year 12 University entrance students:

In normal school nights:

- **Monday to Friday:** A minimum of three hours and a maximum of four.
- **Saturday:** Study in your normal school hours and have the night off.
- **Sunday:** Maintain a day of rest

During school holidays:

- **One week** – Monday to Saturday: Normal school hours
- **Second week:** Have a week's break

Be organized enough not to need to do an 'all nighter' in the lead up to the exams. These usually do more harm than good.

5. Make use of all available resources

Your teachers are your most valuable resource. Teachers know the material, they know the problems and they know the little things that will give you the edge. ***Always ask for help*** when you need it. Teachers are absolutely committed to helping you achieve. They are nearly always happy to help, if they can. Libraries, newspapers and study groups are valuable resources.

6. Keep up to date

It is very important to ***keep-up-to-date*** with all your assignments and with making your summary notes and your executive summaries. Allow time each week or each night to update these sets of notes.

It's far too difficult to do these sets of notes the month before exams. Do them as you go because once you get behind, it is very difficult to catch up.

7. Get the big picture

Don't be satisfied with just remembering your texts. Develop an ***understanding*** of your work. This understanding will massively improve your exam performance because your answer will flow better.

8. An easy way to begin

Start by reading the ***syllabus***. See your teacher if they haven't already given you one. Examiners use these when constructing exam questions.

9. Get real life examples

Stay up-to-date with current events and issues, especially for subjects like English or Geography. Put a plastic sleeve at the start of each subject and place relevant newspaper clippings in it. Read the ***newspaper*** when you can and spend just 5 minutes scanning it for articles.

10. Organize your study notes

There are different ways to store your notes, including the purchase of note books, already divided into different sections (available from Officeworks, for example). This can work well, particularly if you are not the most organized person, and you tend to lose pieces of paper.

You do need several of these notebooks (one for each subject); it is more expensive; probably heavier; and a little more restrictive. The following method is recommended as it is the most versatile and works best for most students.

All your notes should be ***on loose leaf and stored in large two-ring lever-arch folders.***

If you type your notes and print them, hole punch them and store them in the same way.

You should have the following:



■ One folder, with dividers for all your subjects

Keep your initial notes, handouts and assignments on all the topics you are currently working on at school in this folder. ***This is the folder that you take to and from school.*** It is better to have the one folder to reduce the weight of things that you need to carry around with you, and it keeps everything in the one location.

■ One folder per subject at home with all your previous initial notes in it

Use the dividers to keep them organized in topics, with handouts and returned assignments in topics, and a section for tests and exams. Don't forget to have a look at these prior to your next test or exam.

No matter how well or how badly you have done in the past, you can always reinforce the good things you have accomplished in the past, and learn something about how to do something better by looking back over previous papers.

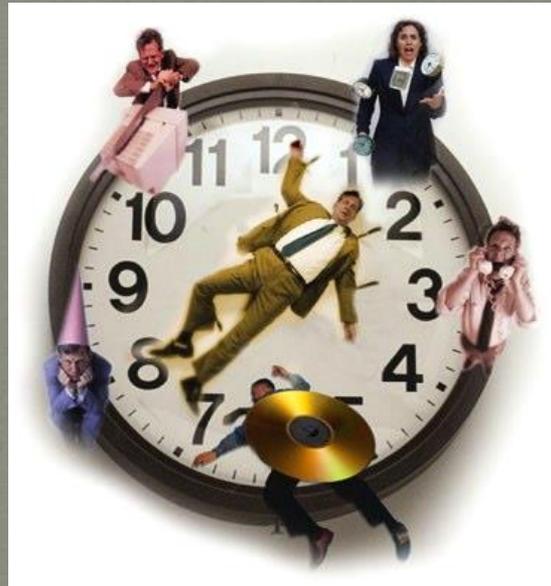
■ One folder per subject at home for your summary notes and exam preparation

Keep these organized and **use file dividers** as well. Put a large divider behind your summary notes and store your executive summary here (for the difference between these, refer to 'The Four Step Study Formula'). Store copies of practice papers and other revision material here, in a designated section.



You may not need as many folders as this. Come up with your own system, if you like. The most important thing is that you **have a system** and that it is clearly and uniformly labelled. However, the use of folders and dividers is highly recommended.

Time Management



... or how to make the best use of your time

Your ability to manage your time and stay organised is fundamental to success in all areas of life, as well as in studying. No system of time management, no matter how fancy it is, will ever work **if you don't use it consistently.** ***Time is an INVESTMENT; it needs be invested purposefully and wisely (i.e. you are investing in a future return).***

Most people waste an extraordinary amount of time. Even if you add up all the things in your life, and added other 'essential' activities that you could think of, you would find that you would be losing a few hours every day. Two questions should be considered:

- 1. Do I always get as much study done each week as I set out to do? YES / NO**
- 2. Could I get more done in the hours that I have put aside to study? YES / NO**

You might like to try the following simple **four-step time management system**:

1. Map out the year
2. Map out each week
 - a) Set out the ideal week
 - b) Plan each week
3. Map out each day
4. Evaluate and update

Requirements

1. Your school diary
2. Your assessment schedule
3. A weekly planner (create your own)
4. A yearly wall planner
(Officeworks sells these)
5. A pen and a few highlighters



Step 1: Map out the year

- Using your assessment schedules, mark all the **assessment dates that you can, and your exam blocks, on your yearly wall planner**. Include the subject and nature of the task as well as the weighting percentage.
- Mark **each assessment in your diary** on the corresponding page, including all relevant information about that task.
- Put a **two week reminder** on the appropriate page for all your major assessments. Include the subject the assessment is for and the weighting (the percentage it contributes to your total assessment mark).
- With a highlighter, clearly **mark all your exam periods** on your wall planner.
- With a different highlighter, **mark all the holiday periods** on your wall planner.

Step 2: Map out each week

Using the weekly schedule, plan out what you would consider to be ***the ideal week***. Be sure to include: school; study; sport; relaxation; social activities; Church/Youth Group; daily routines.

You will need to do the ideal week routine exercise a few different times throughout the year, as demands change. Most likely, you will need to be allocating more study time in the last month leading up to any exam blocks.

If you don't reach your weekly study target in any one given week, make up the time on Saturday. You should also use the planner for holiday periods. In Year 12 you should be allocating one week of these holiday break weeks to study/revision/revision courses.

Plan each Week

Every weekend, you should sit down and plan the following week. Using your yearly planner and your daily diary, ***identify the tasks that need to be done for that week.*** Make sure that you include study (revision) time each week (right from the start in Year 11 and 12). One hour per subject per week might be a good target in terms of the time that should be regularly put aside.

Take out your 'ideal week' and a blank weekly planner and begin to map out the coming week. Try to fit the week's tasks into the same time slots that you have allowed for these types of activities in your 'ideal week'.

Keep this weekly planner in your diary and stick to it.
A sample of an 'ideal week' plan might look like this:

<i>Time</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Fri</i>
6-7	Sleep In	Get ready	Get ready	Get ready	Get ready
7-8	Get ready	Study/Rev	Study/Rev	Study/Rev	Study/Rev
8-9	Travel & read				
9-3	School Time				
3-4	B/ball Train	Travel & read	B/ball Game	Maths tutor	Travel & read
4-5	Travel & read	Study	Travel & read	Study	Study
5-6	Spare Time	Study	Spare time	Study	Study
6-7	Dinner/Spare	Dinner/Spare	Dinner/Spare	Dinner/Spare	Dinner/Spare
7-8	Study	Study	Study	Shops	Youth Group
8-9	Study	Study	Study	Shops	Youth Group
9-10	Study/Rev	TV	Study	Travel/TV	Travel/TV

Each Saturday would have a ***planned study slot between 9.00 and 1.00pm (or 2.00 til 6.00pm)***, depending on other activities, with more time devoted if needed (i.e. when deadlines occur or if the weekly timetable was interrupted). The rest of the day would be free. ***Sunday is put down as a family day/Church/day of rest.***

What is the Killer of Effective Study Habits?

It's called ***procrastination***. This is when we put off doing our study and find other things to do. We are all guilty of doing this from time to time. However, excessive procrastination can result in guilt feelings about not doing a task when it should be done. It can also cause anxiety since the task still needs to be done. Further, excessive procrastination can cause poor performance if the task is completed without sufficient time to do it well.

Why do Students Procrastinate?

There are many reasons – here are the most common:

1. Perfectionism

A student's standard of performance may be so high for a task that it does not seem possible to meet that standard.

2. Fear of Failure

A student may lack confidence and fear that he/she will be unable to accomplish a task successfully.

3. Confusion

A student may be unsure about how to start a task or how it should be completed. No clear direction.

4. Task Difficulty

A student may lack the skills and abilities needed to accomplish a task or may lack the knowledge about how to study.

5. Poor Motivation

A student may have little or no interest in completing a task because he/she finds the task boring or lacking in relevance or may lack the discipline.

6. Difficulty Concentrating

A student may have too many things around that distract him/her from doing a task.

7. Task Unpleasantness

A student may dislike doing what a task requires.

8. Lack of Priorities

A student may have little or no sense about which tasks are most important to do. This can occur by looking at all the tasks as one big challenge, rather than breaking them down into smaller, manageable ones.

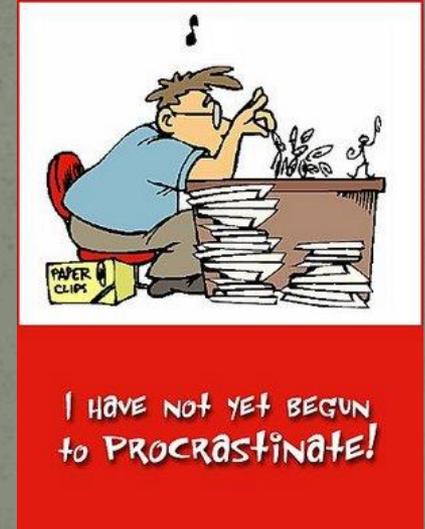
So what most often leads to procrastination?

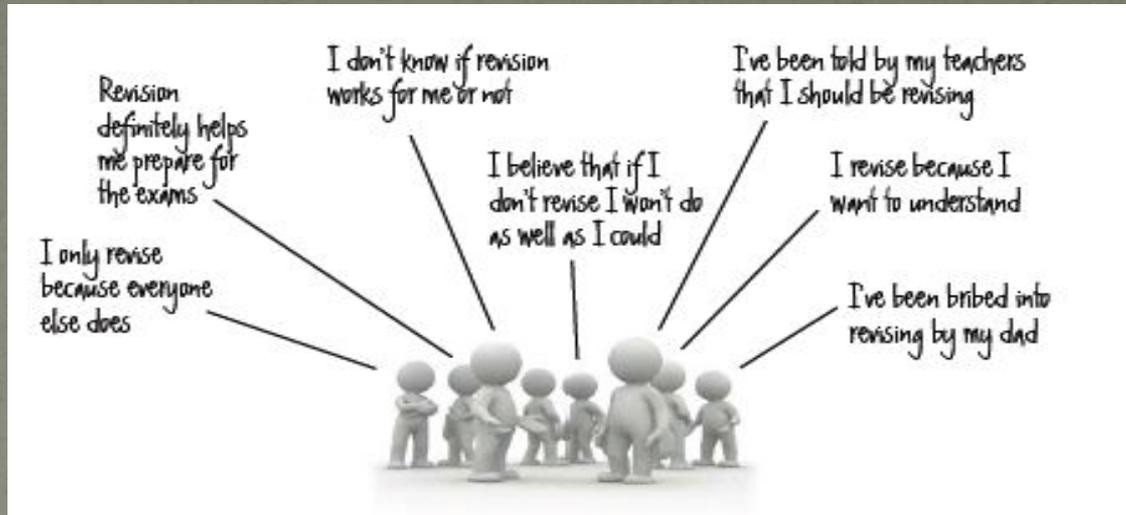
Disorganization

This would be the number one characteristic of unsuccessful people.

Disorganization is apparent in three main areas:

1. Poor time management and a lack of routine.
2. Forgetfulness.
3. Poor study environment.





Revision Techniques

... or how to pass exams

Let's start with what *not* to do!

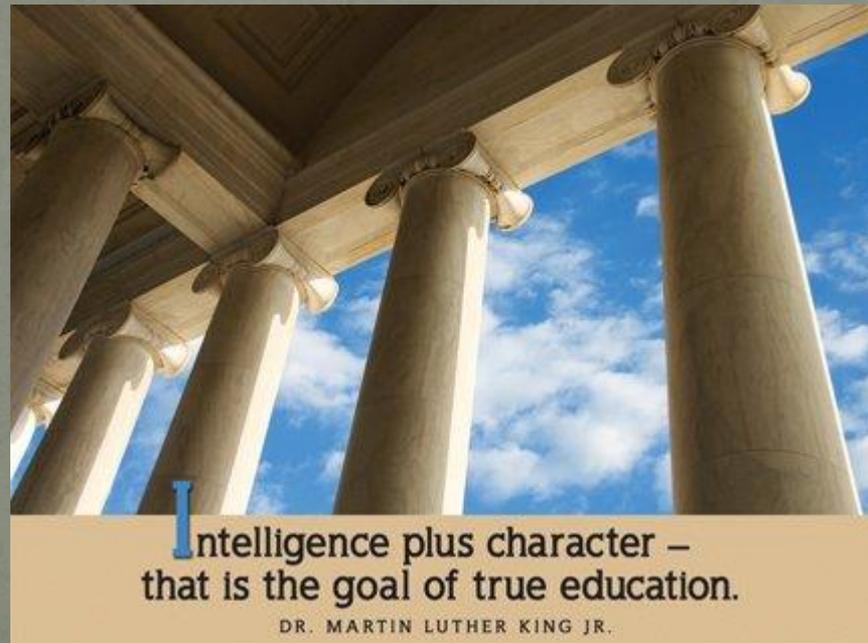


- Don't imagine you can learn everything you need to know *the night before* the exam.

Your memory won't cope and, apart from anything else, it may well turn out that you have more than one exam on the same day. What then?

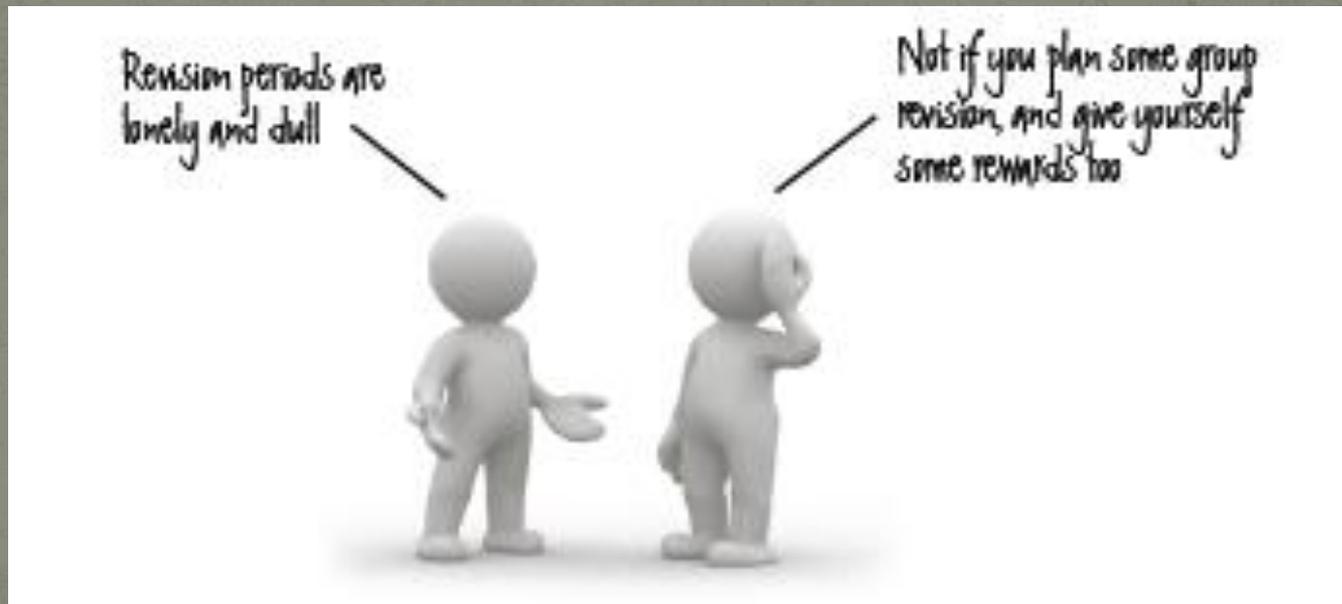
- Don't imagine that life will go on as 'normal' during important examinations. It won't. This is a critical time in your life, possibly with HUGE implications for your future.

You must be ***prepared to make some sacrifices*** to make sure that you do the very best that you can.



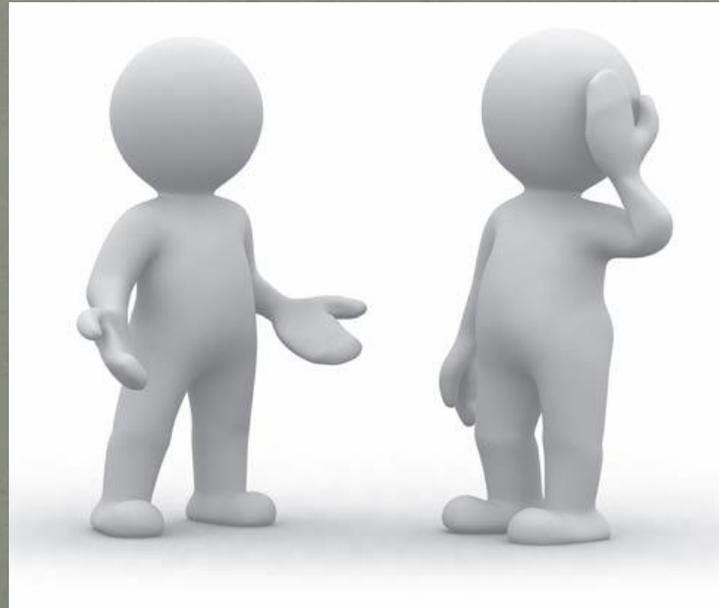
- ***Don't be negative*** about what you think you can achieve. Revising thoroughly and receiving the help and support of the people around you will make all the difference.

So, don't tell yourself you "can't do it anyway" – that's just opting out.



- ***Don't think it will be enough simply to read through your notes.*** It won't.

Very few of us have a photographic memory. You will need to employ other techniques.



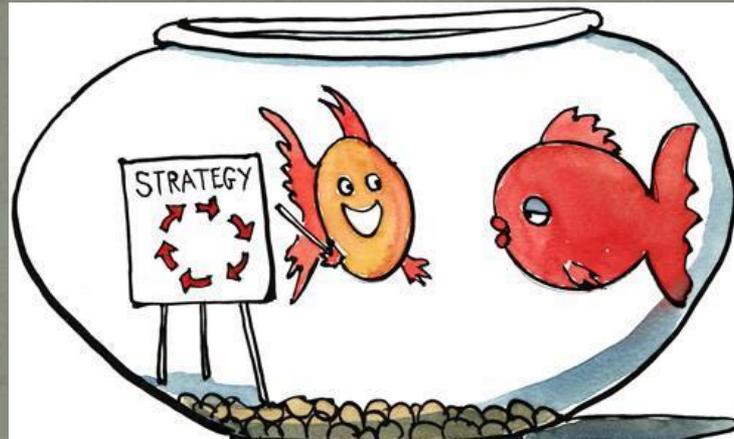


- Make sure that you know what ***your target grades or levels are*** and, most importantly, *what you need to do to achieve them.*
- Check this against your own work. Identify with your teacher ***what you need to focus on*** to improve your work and increase your chances of improving your target grade.

Give yourself the *best* chance you can

- ***Go to revision classes*** offered by your teachers!
- ***Revision needs to be planned.*** As soon as you know when your examinations will take place, draw up a revision timetable. Be specific: don't just write in '*maths*' – write in '*maths, algebra*', for example.
- Stick to your ***timetable***, but build in room for manoeuvre. Make sure that all areas of each subject are covered within your timetable.

Make a plan and *stick* to it



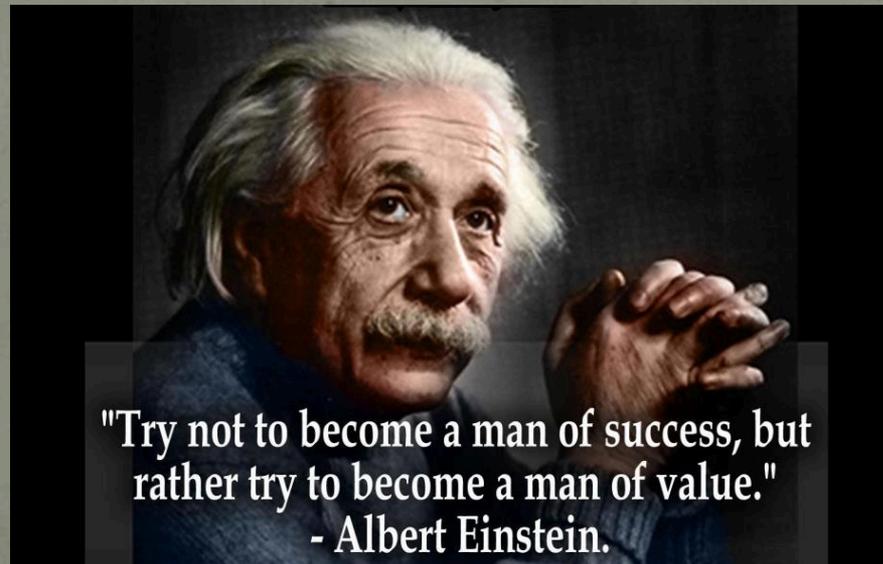
Do some exam questions

This can be very effective, especially if you have access to someone who can mark them or if you are good at using a mark scheme. If you have planned your revision effectively you should have time to set yourself a mock exam.



- Plan your revision in ***half hour chunks*** with built-in breaks of at least 5 minutes. Every couple of hours, take a slightly longer break of, say, 15 minutes. During your break, forget about revision – have a drink and a snack. Talk to your family.

After all, your friends will be unavailable ... they'll all be revising!



So, how will you learn?

What techniques will you use?



- We all have different learning styles, but a mixture of all of them suits most of us best. Here are some you might like to try:
- You will need to ***write things down***. You may need to do this more than once to get it into your head.
- Complete ***practice papers***. Your teachers will be only too happy to mark them and give you advice.

- Learn and use the **key words** for each of your subjects. It is important to spell these words correctly, so take time to learn them if you need to.

Use the 'look, say, cover, write, check' method.

Look, cover, test, check

If you've made resources such as revision cards, you can study them, cover them, and try to reproduce what was there (either in your mind, speaking it, or writing it down again).



For really tricky words, write your own ***mnemonic*** to help you remember.

- **B**ig
- **E**lephants
- **C**an
- **A**lways
- **U**nderstand
- **S**mall
- **E**lephants



- Use ***post-it notes*** strategically placed around your home to remind you of tricky facts.



- Don't forget the internet! If you have a computer at home, there are many ***excellent revision websites***. Your teachers will be able to advise you of the best places to look.

- Ask someone in your family to **test** you.
- Be the teacher! Once you have revised a topic, try **teaching** it to someone else.

Quiz time

Give your revision materials to a friend or member of the family and ask them to make up questions to test you. There is something of an art to this (see the activity below) – so you may need to train your quiz master.

- You might try **recording** your own notes and listening to them last thing at night.
- Upload your recording to your MP3 or MP4 and **listen to it** on the way to and from school etc.