

Revising Effectively



There is no single 'correct' way to revise. Effective revision involves you **engaging** with your work in an active, imaginative and varied way, since different types of information lend themselves to being memorised and recalled in different ways. What works well for one person won't necessarily work well for another; so, developing effective revision techniques of your own will involve a degree of experimentation. If it works, use it; if it doesn't, try something else. But what is true, as a general rule, is that our brains work much more effectively when seeking answers to questions than from passive reading. *Attempting to revise by simply reading and re-reading your notes is dull, tiring and ineffective.*

What you should instead do is process your notes: for example, by converting them into short, punchy, and portable revision notes that give pointers to possible answers for exam questions. These revision notes should consist of concise summaries or outlines of topics covered, lists of essential information, etc. Some students aim to end up with flashcards showing the minimum amount of information necessary to trigger recall of what they have learned. Other students will create mind-maps or spider-grams that show how different ideas and information fit together within a topic. The use of colour, images and shapes provides additional meaning, while the visual imagery serves as a powerful tool for recalling and making sense of information during the exam. And the time spent in producing such revision aids is an extremely effective investment of your time as it requires you to **engage** actively with the subject matter.

The process of memorising information should be balanced with time spent monitoring your progress. Test yourself on what you have read, maybe by devising a question and seeing if you can answer it, using brief notes, diagrams or orally (use your phone to record your answers). Check out your answer in the text, looking for any omissions.

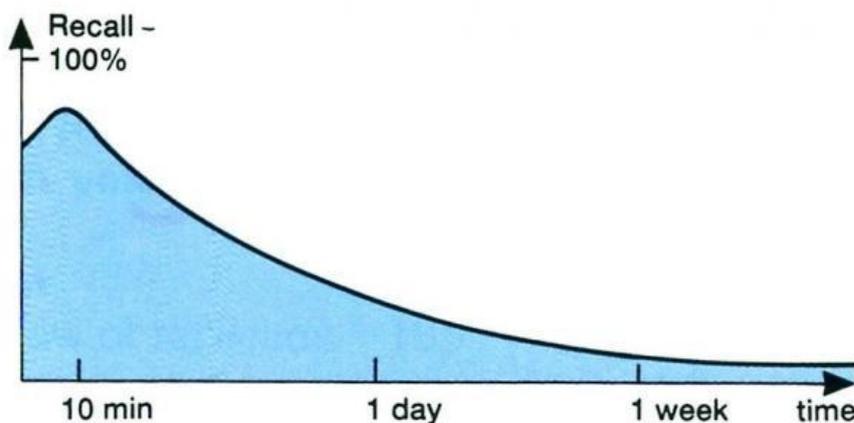
Alternatively, test yourself by answering questions from past exam papers. A brief outline answer, as a list of points that could be covered or a spider diagram, is enough. Answer one or two questions from each paper in full. This will help you to check out your timing and style. Look again at these answers after a couple of days from an examiner's point of view. Try to be as honest with yourself as you can: how many good points have you made? How many have you omitted? Have you answered the question fully? Is your style OK? Is your handwriting legible, etc? Working on past papers also means that the format will also become familiar to you, and so less intimidating.

Maintain your **engagement** in the revision process by varying activities. For example:

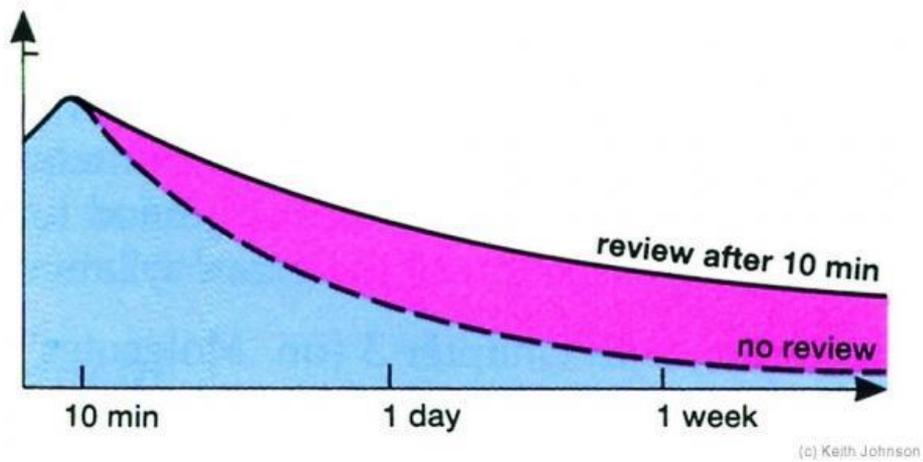
- Create written lists; structure your notes with headings, sub-headings, titles, categories, chronologies, etc;
- Arrange information diagrammatically – into flow diagrams, hierarchies, groupings and relationships;
- Personalise your information, using metaphor, synthesis, images, shapes, colours, Patterns, tune, rhythm, intuition, emotion – in other words, engage your imagination...
- Create your own mnemonics (e.g., Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain = colours of the rainbow)...

REVISION – Rapid - Regular -Reinforcement – the benefits

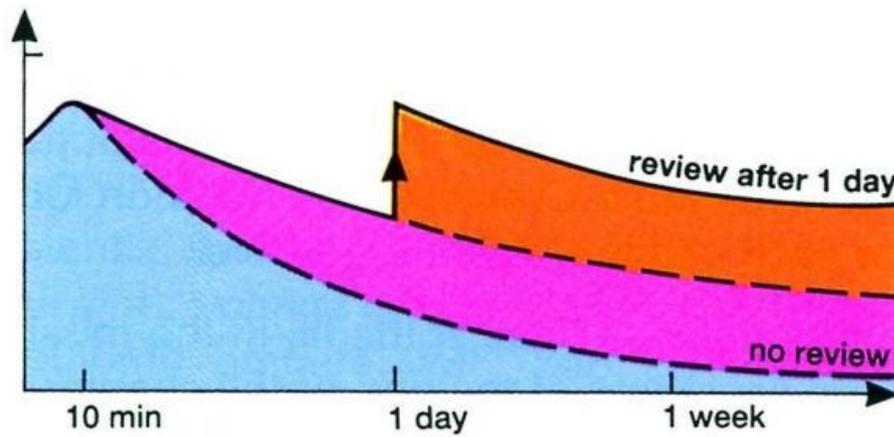
Revision ideally happens for a short amount of time, but very frequently. **If no revision of revision material is done, the recall of this material falls dramatically:**



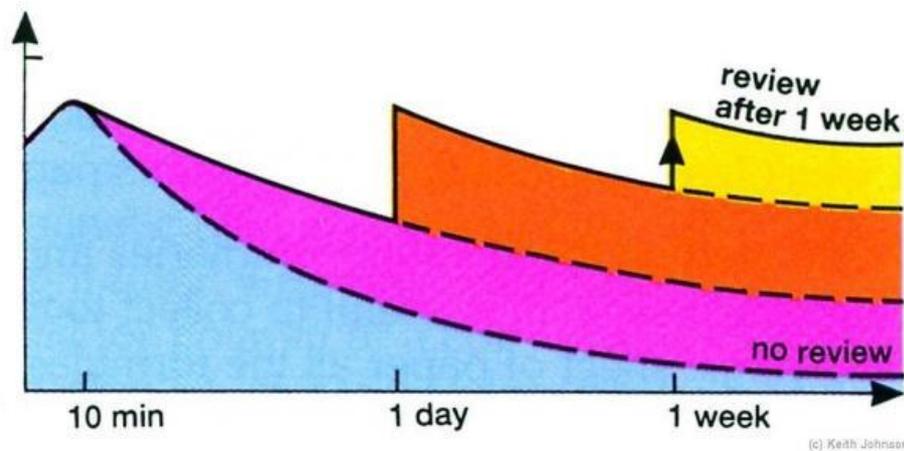
- If, however, material is reviewed, recall improves:



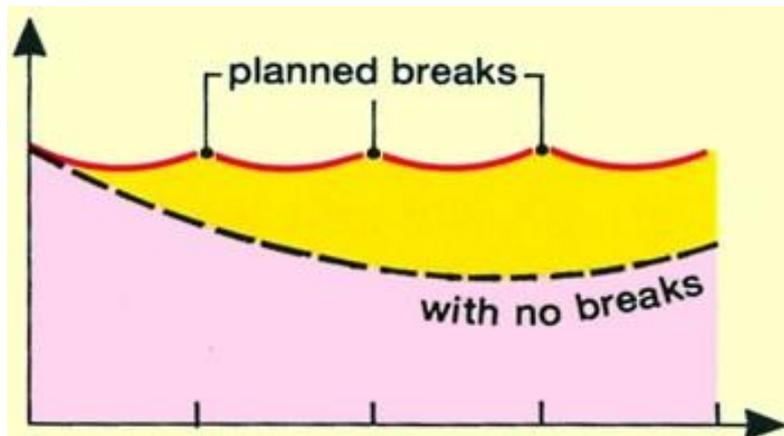
- With each additional review, recall improves:



- Below clearly shows the benefits of RAPID - REGULAR - REINFORCEMENT:



- Revision is also more effective if planned breaks are taken during revision sessions, rather than trying to complete one marathon session.



Ten Tips for Maintaining Concentration

1. Prepare a revision timetable, and start each revision session on time.
2. Study in an area free from distractions and interruptions.
3. Work in a comfortable area – good light, fresh air, seating, etc.
4. Undertake demanding tasks when at your best; do more straightforward tasks at other times.
5. Actively **engage** with your revision rather than just reading passively (as mentioned above)
6. Complete each task within the time allocated.
7. Review each task for a few minutes before moving on to the next.
8. Don't work for too long on any one task.
9. Mix up different kinds of activity.
10. Take frequent breaks. As a minimum, take a few deep breaths, stand up, flex your arms, have a brief walk about.