

**SUCCESS DOES NOT
COME. YOU HAVE TO
GO AFTER IT.**

hello-academy.com

Preparing for Success

Effective revision and exam preparation is key to success in your AS and A2 exams. You will have learnt lots of content during your course but it is crucial that you can a) recall it in an exam and b) apply it to a question in the exam paper.

Planning your Revision

You need to plan your time effectively to ensure that you are sufficiently prepared for each exam. The main purpose of revision timetable is to help you use time efficiently and effectively. This will also help you assess your progress and make realistic plans. This is the framework of your revision process, for time matters the most.

There are websites that will help you plan a revision timetable or you can download a template [here](#) for you to complete manually.

<http://getrevising.co.uk/timetable/intro>

When planning your timetable, consider the following:

- When are your exams?
- How many topics do you have to revise for each one?
- How much space do you have between exams? When should you start the revision for each one to ensure you cover everything for each exam?

How to put together a revision timetable

1. List all necessary things that you need to know. It should include the subjects that you're good at and not. This is to ensure the right time allotment you need to make. You should allot longer time to difficult subjects to have a good focus on those.
2. List all the important activities you have. It may include expected meetings, daily routines like workouts and other miscellaneous things to do. Of course, recreation must not be forgotten. It is important to unwind, revising is not an easy task to do and stress is inevitable.

3. On the time table you have, fill in the time of your exams, paid works if you have, lectures and seminars, as well as any revision sessions. Other fixed and predictable activities and commitments must be also included.
4. Decide on the period you'll use for revision and fill it in. Never put all difficult subjects on the same day. That is a very stressful activity. Make your timetable looks realistic.
5. Review the time you allotted, is it reasonable enough? Don't forget to allow yourself for breaks like meals and snacks, as well as a little rest.
6. Allocate your major revision topics to the periods you've marked.
7. Major revision topics must be broken down into smaller units to make planning more precise. With this, better indication of your progress will be determined while it is underway.
8. After completing a revision period cross it off from your timetable. This will help to instil a sense of accomplishment.
9. At the end of each week assess your performance and change your plans accordingly.
10. Consider using different coloured pens to highlight specific classes or rank subjects according to importance. However if you feel you may be changing things around then use a simple pencil.
11. Keep your timetable flexible and be ready to change it if circumstances change.
12. Try not to spend the whole day revising one subject.
13. Most experts suggest studying in slots of 40 minutes and then taking a break before your next session.

Revision – Techniques and Strategies

There are lots of different ways in which you can revise – the key to successful revision is doing it in ways that suit you best.

Here are some popular ways in which to revise subject content:

- Create **study checklists** - Identify all of the material that you will be tested on - list notes, formulas, ideas, and text assignments you are accountable for. This checklist will enable you to break your studying into organized, manageable chunks, which should allow for a comprehensive revision plan with minimal anxiety.
- Create **summary notes and "maps"** - Briefly map out the important ideas of the course and the relationships of these ideas. Summary notes should display lists and hierarchies of ideas. Creativity and a visual framework will help you recall these ideas.
- Create **flashcards** - for definitions, formulas, or lists that you need to have memorized. Put topics on one side of the card, answers on the other. Flashcards will enable you to test your ability to not only to recognize important information, but also your ability to retrieve information from memory.

Mind Mapping

Many of us have learned to outline subjects in our studies, as follows :

- i. First item
- ii. Second item
 - a. sub item
 - b. sub item
 1. sub sub item
 2. sub sub item
- iii. Third item

This is a very linear approach, **but not the way our minds work**. Instead, **our minds work rather like this web site** groups of pages/ideas or concepts are linked together to form webs of knowledge in our mind. **The way you Learn** combines what you already know with what you want to know, and links this new information within our store of knowledge. Our memories then process these new "links" and associations for later recall.

Often to recall specific information we first recall associated knowledge/ideas and then work through the links in our mind to that which we need to remember. When you recognise someones face before you recall that persons name, this is your visual memory of their face being recalled first, before you then link that with memory of their name.

Mind Maps use both the power of your visual memory, and the way we learn and remember facts, to provide, for many of us, a very effective revision tool.

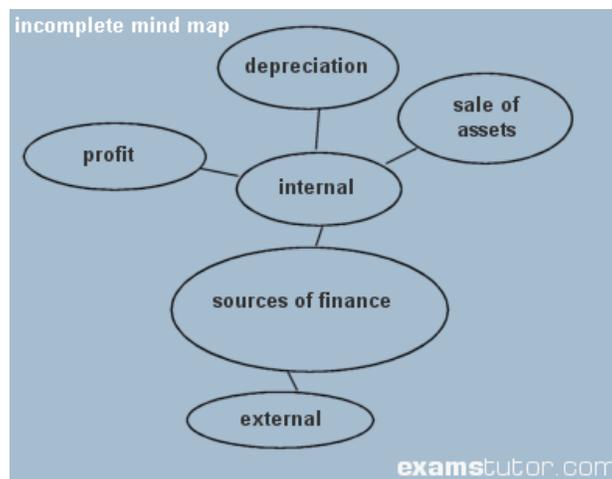
Creating Mind Maps

1. First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences. Now think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words.
2. Take a pencil (you'll be erasing!) and a blank (non-lined) big piece of paper or use a blackboard and (coloured) chalk and write down the most important word or short phrase or symbol in the centre. Think about it; circle it.
3. Write other important words outside the circle. Draw over-lapping circles to connect items, or use arrows to connect them (think of linking pages in a web site). Leave white space to grow your map for :
 - o further development
 - o explanations
 - o action items
4. Work quickly, without analyzing your work.
5. Edit this first phase. Think about the relation of outside items to the centre. Erase and replace and shorten words to these key ideas. Relocate important items closer to each other for better organization. If possible, use colour to organize information. Linking concepts with words to clarify the relationship.
6. Continue working outward. Freely and quickly add other key words and ideas (you can always erase!). Think weird: tape pages together to expand your map; break boundaries. Develop in directions the topic takes you, not limited by the size of the paper. As you expand your map, you will tend to become more specific or detailed.
7. Set the map aside. Later, continue development and revision. Stop and think about relationships you are developing. Expand the map over time (right up to an exam!)

This map is your personal learning document. It combines what you knew with what you are learning, and what you may need to complete your "picture"

If this technique works for you, in the exam you will be able to recall associated knowledge more effectively. If you have a strong visual memory you may even be able to recall where on the Map you wrote the information you now require, and visualise this in your mind.

To test this, spend a few moments studying the very basic Mind Map below, and then continue to read through this article, we will test your memory of this Map at the end of this section.



The Index Study System

Here is a method of studying that gives you, an accurate perception of how well you know the material, and forces you to think about it, rather than just look over it.

1. Review your notes and readings frequently, so the material is "fresh"
2. As you're reading your text or reviewing your notes, generate and write down questions about the material. Imagine you're teaching the course. What questions would you ask on the exam?
3. Keep track of any terms you need to know
4. Write each question or term on the back of an index card
5. On the front of each index card, write an answer or an explanation for the question or term on the back. Use your notes and text for a reference, but put the answer or explanation in your own words whenever possible.
6. Shuffle the index cards, so you can't figure out any answers based on their location in the deck.
7. Look at the card on the top of the deck. Try to answer the question or explain the term. If you know it, great! Put it on the bottom of the deck. If you don't know it, look at the answer, and put it a few cards down in the deck, so you'll come back to it shortly.
8. Proceed through the deck of cards until you know all of the information.

Just like the Mind Mapping technique, this method will not work for everyone, that said the following tips may help in using this revision tool.

- Carry your cards with you everywhere. Take advantage of little pockets of time. Test yourself while you're waiting on line, riding the bus, etc.
- If you think you know an answer, but can't put it into words, you probably don't know it well enough. Being able to explain the information is the only way to be sure that you know it. It's also the best way to prevent test anxiety.
- Consider testing yourself someplace where nobody can see you (and think you're crazy), and reciting the answers out loud. That's the best way to be sure that you can explain them.
- Study with a friend from your class. You can share ideas and help each other out with concepts. Also, you can use each other to make sure that you're explaining your answers adequately.

Other techniques you might want to try:

- at the end of each topic revision session, test yourself – do you remember the key words and what they represent?
- use post-it notes or posters around your house/room for spot testing
- imagine key words being underlined

- use mind maps or diagrams
- try explaining ideas to a friend or to yourself without using your notes
- Look at your notes for a topic on three or four occasions. This will fix them in your mind better than a once and for all approach.
- Predict a page of notes in your mind before you look at it. What you have forgotten will bring itself to your attention as you read.
- Mnemonics. Use the letters of a word, or the initial letters of a phrase, to trigger associations.
 - For example, the key elements in the topic 'Hitler's Rise to Power' could be remembered by the word 'VIEW', which stands for:
 - V** = Versailles (the treaty signed at the end of World War I)
 - I** = Individual personality of Hitler
 - E** = Economic collapse
 - W** = Weimar
- Think of a picture of the topic.
- To continue the previous example, a mental picture of one of Hitler's rallies might suggest Crowds, Regimentation, Technology, Scapegoats, etc...

Applying what you know

The best way to test whether or not you are prepared for the exam is to complete past papers. Give yourself the required time limit in exam conditions and see how well you can answer the questions.

Even better, then have a go at marking your paper or ask your parent/carer or teacher to do this.

You can access past papers and mark schemes on the exam boards' websites:

www.aqa.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

www.edexcel.org.uk

Drafting Model Answers

Working out model answers to anticipated questions should be central to your revision process. It will work on you remembering your material, developing your critical skills and practising for the exam.

The following stages could all be used to help you to apply what you have learned:

1. **Analyse the question**

Using past exam papers, think about the wording of questions. What are the problem or key words? What approach is being asked for? You could practice rephrasing the question in your own words to highlight the exact meaning.

2. **Generate ideas**

You are going to need at least five or six major points or arguments with which to answer most questions. Often these will be fairly obvious from your seminar/lecture notes, and from your reading. If not, try to generate ideas based on who, what, why, where and when.

3. **Authors and controversies**

What are the main schools of thoughts on a given topic? Are there any major developments between them? If you can summarise these briefly it will improve your essay, especially if you can work out a position for yourself.

4. **Other angles**

Some topics are dealt with from one particular perspective. You could improve your essay and catch the examiners eye by introducing an alternative perspective, where relevant.

5. **Check**

Go over your outline answers looking for errors and irrelevant points and ways to improve the argument.

6. **Write under exam conditions**

Practice writing at speed under exam conditions. It is useful to get someone else's opinion on these fully written answers afterwards. Your tutor may be prepared to do this, otherwise, ask a friend or parent/carer to look at them.