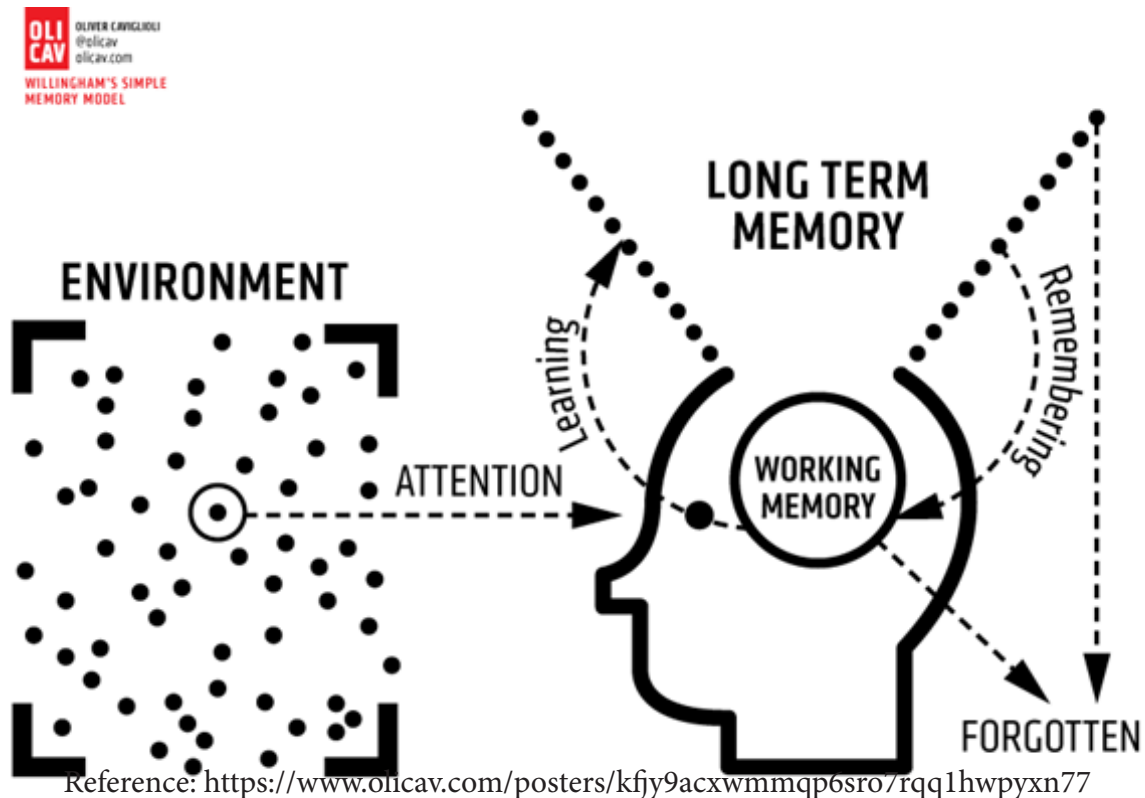


A Guide to Revision

1. How do you learn and why is revision important?

In order to revise effectively you need to apply the principles of 'Retrieval Practice'. This focuses on you working hard to remember information you have previously learnt. As you try to retrieve information over and over again over a period of time, you will remember more and more until it becomes effortless.

You have 3 key elements to learning, associated with your brain:



1. The environment – everything around you when you are learning, what the teacher wants you to focus on, your book, noise, an example of an exam question and so on.
2. Working memory – The part of your brain that allows you to interpret an amount of information at one time, with some of it stored in your long-term memory.
3. Long term memory – This is where you store information that you have learnt, however if you do not try and access this information, you will lose the majority of it. So, it is important to keep pushing yourself to remember key information, or how to do something.

An example of accessing your long-term memory until something becomes effortless is playing a song on the guitar. To start with you have to look at the music again and again, you will keep making mistakes and have to try playing it again and again. Eventually however, with practice and hard work, you will be able to play the song effortlessly, with no

music and simply play it, to a high standard, from memory. The principles are exactly the same for learning in your subjects!

The next few pages will show you effective ways of completing retrieval practice, that will help you remember all of the information you need to answer your exam questions!

2. The key principles of revising effectively.

SPACING, TESTING, STRUGGLING, REVIEWING are the four key ingredients to successful revision.

The first important point to make is that you should be SPACING out and mixing up your revision of different subjects. This is why a revision timetable is important to avoid focusing too much on one topic in the months, weeks and days before your exams.

You also need to use assessments (e.g. mock exams and in class tests) and your own revision techniques to identify your strengths and weaknesses with your subject knowledge. This is why using different ways of TESTING your memory is so important, rather than just reading and highlighting your notes.

You will have access to your books, textbooks, revision guides, other supporting documents from your teachers, and online resources such as Seneca Learning and BBC Bitesize. Having the information to look over is an important part of the revision process – but it is what you do with this information that is the crucial bit. You will have to read over it a few times, but you have to create something as a result that will support your revision. The key bit here is that you have to be STRUGGLING to remember or apply the information you have looked over in a new context.

Examples includes:

- Quizzes
- Flash cards
- Mind maps or brain dumps from memory
- Past paper questions

Once you have created or attempted these, use the notes and information you have used previously to ensure you are REVIEWING the strengths and weaknesses of your knowledge, and what to focus more revision on moving forward.

Below are explanations of the most effective methods to revise. The key is to test yourself, don't just read over the information you need to remember!

3. How to use the best revision strategies

Mind Maps

1. Identify the topic/topics that you want to revise.
2. Identify any sub topics that belong to the main topic (putting this in the centre of your page).
3. Summarise the key information of each sub topic, condensing the information

you have used, therefore reminding yourself of what you read the first time.

4. Do not overload your page with too much information. You want to be able to visualise the information when trying to remember it.
5. Use different colours and images to help remind you of key elements.
6. Use the completed mind map effectively by asking someone to test you on the information included in it. Keep reviewing it, or make notes about it from memory.

Flash Cards

1. Identify the knowledge that you are making questions for – look for previous misconceptions first (mistakes you made).
2. Colour code the cards for different subjects to help with organisation. You should however mix the colours up when revising to keep interleaving the subjects and topics you are revising.
3. Design your flash cards so that there is one question on the card – make sure the question challenges you e.g. one word prompts to recall information, or questions such as: explain the importance of.....Describe 3 ways...and so on.
4. When you are asking yourself the questions, or a friend is asking you, make sure you speak the answer out loud, or write it down. **DO NOT JUST COPY AND RE-READ THE CARDS.**
5. Once you have answered all of the cards, identify which ones you know well, and the ones you need to repeat or focus on more the next time you answer them.
6. Always shuffle the order of the cards.

Self Quizzes

1. Identify the knowledge you want to focus on – what are your weaknesses in a subject?
2. Read your notes or exercise book/revision guide and create a series of questions (with the answer next to it!)
3. Attempt to answer each question from memory, or ask a friend or relative to ask you the question.
4. Always answer the question in writing or speaking out loud – it is proven to help you remember it!
5. Self-mark your answers if they are written, if they are verbal, get some feedback on what you got correct and what you didn't include in your answer.

Brain Dumps

1. Identify the knowledge you want to focus on, get a blank piece of paper.
2. Write as much information down as you can remember about the topic.
3. Then start to organise or group the information you have remembered into key elements, or themes.
4. Check your understanding compared to the information you have in your book/revision guide/online programmes.
5. Keep your final copy of your brain dump until you attempt it again, so that you can compare how much you remembered.

Past papers

1. Search for past papers on the internet, or ask your teacher for some – make sure you have access to the mark scheme.
2. Attempt to complete as many of the questions as possible.
3. Use the mark scheme to mark your answers.
4. Identify your strengths and weaknesses – then look over your weaknesses in your book/revision resources.
5. Re-attempt another past paper, or the same one a day or two later – did you do better?