

Keeping active during Revision

Information for parents and carers

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Did you know?



Research shows that physically active students have more active brains. Even walking for just 20 minutes can significantly increase activity in the brain. This means that it is really important for students to take regular breaks in their learning.

Exercise triggers the release of various hormones and chemical compounds in the body and has many benefits to learning:

- It improves cognitive brain function
- It improves students' ability to focus for longer periods of time
- It can reduce stress levels
- It can improve memory retention

Studies have shown that exercise helps to oxygenate the brain and release tension, helping students to keep calm, mentally relax and study more efficiently. Productive people often work smarter rather than harder and exercise has a huge part to play in this.

What can you do?



Support your child to take regular breaks so they are less likely to get distracted whilst revising. It's much better to spend 60 minutes revising well and 10 minutes on a break than for your child to spend longer half revising and half playing with their phone! Suggest to your child that they take breaks every 60-90 minutes when revising.

Encourage your child to do something active with their break, such as getting some fresh air, playing sport, going for a walk or a run, or doing housework. Remind them that exercise doesn't have to last for hours to count.

Work with your child to help them work efficiently and find a routine that works for them. They need to be flexible to work around their timetables and could do some exercise early in the morning, at lunchtimes or early evenings. Alongside exercising, help your child to take care of themselves by eating well, sleeping well, relaxing, socialising and having some down time.

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The chunking technique

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Did you know?



Chunking is a technique which can improve the **memory**. Chunking is the process of taking individual pieces of information (**chunks**) and **grouping them into larger units**.

The chunking process encourages students to break down larger amounts of information into smaller units, identify similarities or patterns, organise information and group information into manageable units. Studies have shown that students have gone from remembering seven pieces of information to over 80 by using the chunking technique.

Research shows that chunking is useful because it can help students' memory system become far more efficient as they are able to retain information better. They will then be able to recall relevant information in their exams.



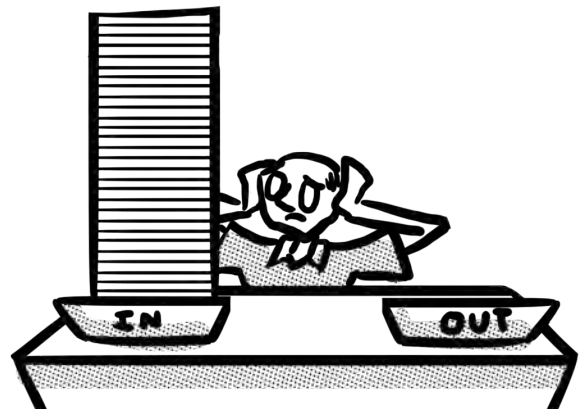
What can you do?

Support your child to **challenge themselves** to remember lists of things, whether it's a shopping list, vocabulary words or important topics they are learning about.

Help your child to **separate their revision into relevant sections** as this will help them digest everything and remember the information more easily. Encourage them to create links between different bits of information and put them into meaningful categories because it can help them remember them better.

Chunking works well if work is **organised and neat**, so help your child to use headings and titles

for different sections, use tables to summarise data, bullet points to summarise key points and also combine illustrations with text to create visual associations.

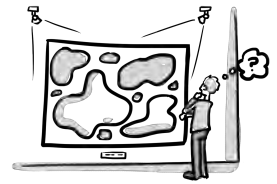


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Cognitive Load Theory

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Cognitive load theory is a handy model to understand challenge and how to learn information which isn't too hard, or too easy, but just right. (Sweller 1998) Cognitive load is the amount of information our working memory can hold at any one time. The capacity of our working load is limited and therefore students can maximise their working memory by practising a range of strategies.

Research shows that strategies for reducing cognitive load can assist the human brain to learn and store knowledge, boost confidence and improve memory retention.

Further research has identified that reducing the cognitive load can reduce stress and anxiety and the feeling of being overwhelmed with tasks.



What can you do?

Support your child to try out strategies to reduce the cognitive load. Examples include:

- Breaking down problems into smaller parts. This reduces the problem space and lightens the cognitive load, making learning more effective.
- Helping them to understand worked examples in order to work out how to complete tasks.
- Encouraging them to take advantage of auditory and visual channels in their working memory and supporting them to create stories to help remember information in accessible chunks.
- Working with them to simplify information and build on it. Students should avoid overloading their brain with too much information at any one time.

The learning environment is crucial to reducing cognitive load. Help your child to create a calming environment to work in with as few distractions as possible. Encourage them to turn off their phone, music or the TV whilst revising or doing homework. Distractions only add to our working memory.

Help and encourage your child to review information from their lessons as they go along because this will help improve their retention, adding knowledge to their long-term memory. Help them get into a routine which works for them.

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Using Flashcards

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Did you know?



Using flashcards is a repetition strategy. They are a simple 'cue' on the front and an 'answer' on the back. Flashcards engage students in "active recall", which means they are creating connections with their memory.

Research shows that using flashcards can enhance long-term learning and help students to memorise facts quickly. Flashcards are not an effective method for last-minute cramming!

Studies have found that it's more effective to review a whole stack of cards in one sitting rather than to carry them around and have students glance at them every so often.

What can you do?

Encourage your child to make flashcards as part of their revision strategy. The key is to have a question or key term on one side and the answer or definition on the other. Suggest using different colours for topics to help categorise information and to keep them neat. Flashcards containing just notes are not effective.

Try testing your child using the flashcards and give them time to digest the question before answering. If they get the answer right, don't discard the card – they need to keep repeating it again and over time.

When using the flashcards, help your child review their cards using a system. With your child, read

through this article which explains how to use flashcards effectively using a system approach:
<https://www.parent24.com/Learn/School-exams/watch-how-to-study-using-flashcards-20160825>



The Interleaving technique

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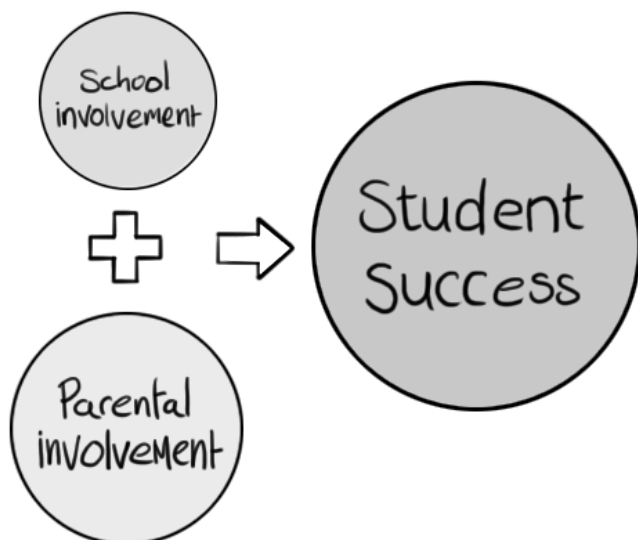
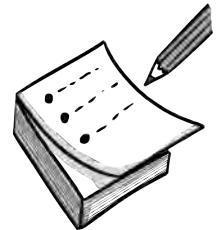


Interleaving is a method used to help students revise and remember more for the exam. It is about what students do with their time when they revise. With the interleaving technique, learning is spread over time, in smaller chunks, rather than dedicating a whole day for one subject or topic.

Research says 'Mixing it up boosts learning' when compared to more traditional methods of block learning where students master one topic before moving on to the next in preparation for exams. Studies have highlighted that students who use interleaving perform better on the examination if the examination was more than one day away.

Evidence highlights that interleaving strengthens memory recall because by revisiting material from each topic several times, in short bursts, students can increase the amount they remember in exams.

What can you do?



Watch this video with your child to understand more about how interleaving works - <https://youtu.be/WbDpYMp8F6o>

Help your child to decide on the key topics they need to learn for each subject. Work with your child to create a revision timetable which spaces their topics out across a good period of time.

Short bursts of revision are more effective than long sessions so encourage your child to mix topics up and do little and often as quality is better than quantity. Encourage them to take regular breaks in their revision and not to focus on the same topic for a whole day!

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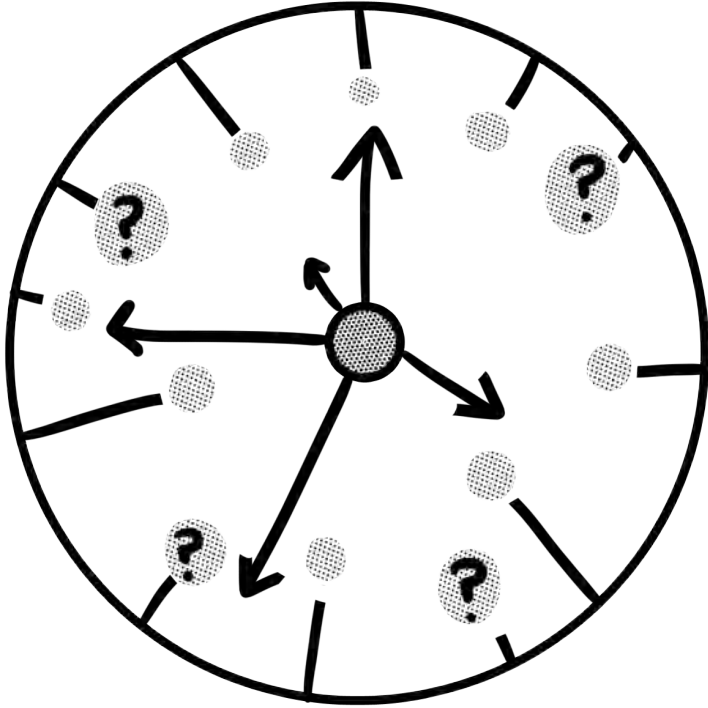
Spacing and Timing of Revision

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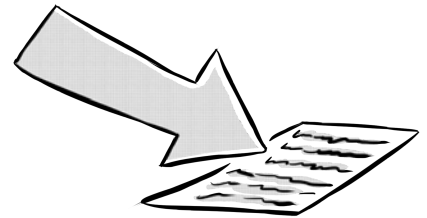


Spacing is a revision technique which is all about spacing revision so students don't get swamped and overwhelmed. It means introducing time intervals into their revision sessions as well as spacing out the days on which they revise for topics.

Research shows that doing something little and often is better than doing it at once, or cramming. For example, revising for eight hours in one day is not as effective as doing one hour of revision for eight days. This is because the time in between revising allows students to forget and re-learn the information, which cements it in their long-term memory.

The 'Spacing Effect' is one of the longest and most enduring findings in cognitive psychology. Research suggests there is an 'optimal gap' between revision sessions for students to retain information. In some studies, using spacing instead of cramming has resulted in a 10% to 30% difference in final test results.

What can you do?



Help your child create a revision plan which maps out what they are going to revise and when. Help them to choose a mixture of subject topics to focus on each day to make sure they are spacing them out.

Encourage them to review information using different revision techniques to help them carry out some 5-10-minute reviews of topics, such as reading through notes, highlighting information or making post-it notes. Students can also transform their learning by doing 30-minute activities, such as writing summary sheets, flash cards or mind maps for topics.

Work with your child to practise testing them on different topics and to help them complete exam questions. Remind your child that five hours of time, spent in smaller chunks and spaced periodically, is a far more effective way to learn something than five hours spent the night before.



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STRESS MANAGEMENT

STRESS IS A STATE OF MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL STRAIN OR TENSION RESULTING FROM ADVERSE OR DEMANDING CIRCUMSTANCES.

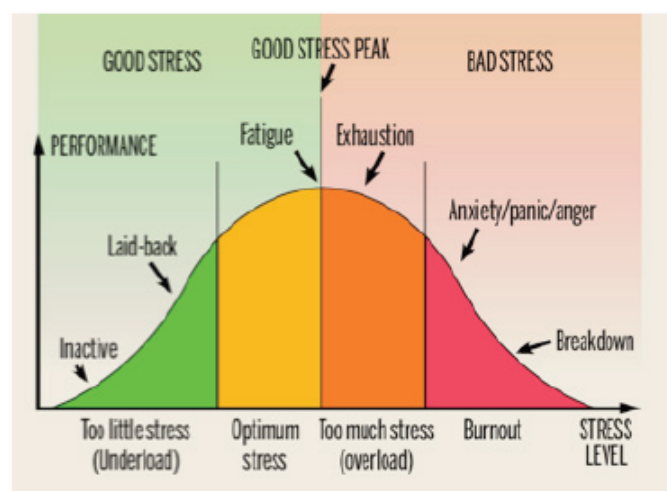
WHY SHOULD YOU MANAGE YOUR STRESS LEVELS?

Everyone gets stressed during exams but it's important not to let it get out of control. Some stress can be a good thing as it motivates us to work hard, can make you feel mentally alert and ready to tackle exam challenges. However, if stress levels get out of hand, it can stop us from learning and performing at our best, so it's important to address your stress to keep it under control.

You'll be less stressed if you've got an idea of how the lead-up to your exams is going to look, so plan what you're going to study and when, and stick it up on the wall. Break it down into manageable chunks and start working through it at the rate you planned.

WHAT IS EXAM ANXIETY?

- Butterflies in your stomach
- Headaches, tiredness or shakiness
- Excessive worry about upcoming exams
- Exam fear
- Apprehension about the consequences
- Difficulty concentrating
- Inability to recall information
- Panic attacks or rapid breathing



MANAGING YOUR STRESS LEVELS:

It is completely possible to manage some of the stress that's brought on by exams if you use different strategies. The four main areas which can contribute to your exam stress / anxiety are:

1. LIFESTYLE FACTORS

- inadequate rest
- poor nutrition
- too many stimulants
- insufficient exercise
- not scheduling available time
- not prioritising commitments

2. INFORMATION NEEDS

- strategies for exam-taking
- exam information, dates and exam locations
- knowledge of how to apply anxiety reduction techniques

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

- feeling little or no control
- negative thinking and self-criticism
- irrational thinking about exams and outcomes
- pressuring yourself

4. POOR STUDYING STYLES

- Inefficient: inconsistent content coverage; trying to memorise the textbook; binge studying; all-night studying before exams
- Ineffective: reading without understanding; cannot recall the material; not making revision notes; not revising

STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

USE THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES TO HELP MANAGE YOUR STRESS LEVELS:

POSITIVE SELF-TALK - IT'S AS SIMPLE AS A-B-C:

A = Activating Event - While taking a difficult test you begin to feel physically tense.

B = Belief - "I know I can do this, I will do some deep breaths to re-focus myself and feel more relaxed."

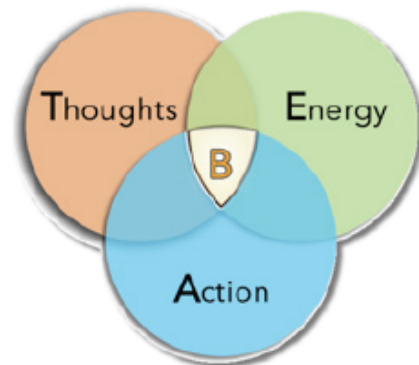
C = Consequences - You calm yourself down, feel a lot better and feel able to complete the test.



A - Plan in advance what you will do when the activating event occurs.

B - Develop a set of positive or rational self-statements which you can practice.

C - You will help calm yourself down and re-divert your energy to being more positive.



B = Best You Can Be

HOW TO CALM DOWN IN UNDER A MINUTE

- Breathe in through your nose and on a slow count of three.
- Push your stomach out as you breathe in.
- Breathe out through your mouth on a slow count of six.
- Repeat two more times



THE MINDFUL UNPLUG

- ☐ Try to unplug from technology everyday
- ☐ Switch off from technology at least 30 mins to 1 hr before going to sleep
- ☐ Appreciate the world around you and what you are doing rather than being governed by your phone
- ☐ Put your phone away and on silent while you are concentrating on tasks / revision / homework
- ☐ Learn to have the control to not be obsessed with your phone!
- ☐ Choose some time each day and week to switch off and unplug from technology