ELLIS GUILFORD SCHOOL
Creative Education Trust

Where **EGScellence** thrives, and the **EGSceptional** shine

REVISION SKILLS HANDBOOK

A guide to help learn how to revise knowledge effectively for your GCSE exams.



2026

What this booklet is for

This booklet is designed to help you learn how to prepare for your exams in a way that actually works.

Many people think revision means rereading notes or highlighting pages, but these methods don't always help information stick in your **long-term memory.**

To do well in your exams, you need to use strategies that help you remember knowledge for the long term.

Inside this booklet, you'll find a simple explanation of how your memory works and why we forget things.

You'll also learn the most effective ways to revise, so you can make the knowledge stay in your brain and feel more confident in your subjects.

There is also advice on how to look after yourself during exam season, helping you stay healthy, focused, and calm.

Finally, there's guidance for parents and carers on how they can support you at home.

"Tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today."

Kalpana Chawla



How does memory work?

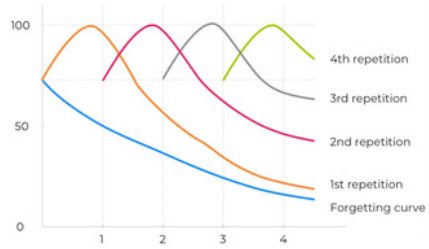
Why We Forget: Understanding Your Memory

Have you ever walked out of a lesson and realised you can't remember half of what you were just taught? That's not because you're "bad at remembering", it's because all humans forget.

Everyone does it, and it's completely normal.

Your memory has two main parts. **Working memory** is what you use right now, in the moment. It's what you use when you listen to your teacher, plan what you're doing after school, or try to solve a maths problem. But working memory is small, and it fills up quickly.

The 'Forgetting Curve'



The image shows how your memory drops quickly after learning, but each time you revise, you remember more for longer, slowing the forgetting curve.

Long-term memory is where you keep information for a long time, like the names of your friends, your times tables, or the words to your favourite songs. The amazing thing is that **long-term memory never runs out of space.** If you study in the right way, you can store huge amounts of knowledge there.

The problem is that your brain naturally forgets things over time. After a lesson, the longer you wait, the more you forget. This is why revision matters. When you revise something again and again (even for a few minutes) you **interrupt the forgetting**. Each time you revisit the information, you remember more of it and keep it for longer.

This is what exam preparation is really about: **practising remembering**, so the knowledge stays in your long-term memory instead of fading away.

What are the most effective revision methods?

Many children *like* to use things like reading, highlighting and writing out notes to revise knowledge. These methods all feel easy and safe, and give us the feeling of being prepared, as the knowledge looks familiar. However, when children are tested on knowledge they've revised using these methods, they can't remember very much.

Evidence from cognitive psychology (the science of thinking and learning) shows us that the methods that involve ***retrieval*** (pulling information from our memory) are much more helpful in helping us to get the learning into our long-term memories, and therefore remember it for exams.
Spacing out our revision time into short bursts over a long period of time, rather than cramming for hours the day before an exam, is also a much more effective way to get knowledge into your long-term memory.

It is important to recognise that these more effective methods that involve ***retrieval*** are challenging, and might at first make you feel like you are failing. But over time, you will learn and remember much more, you'll be able to apply the knowledge to exams better, and will ultimately succeed in your exams and achieve much higher grades.

MOST EFFECTIVE

- Practice testing
- Elaborative interrogation
- Self-explanation
- Spacing out your revision
- Reading
- Highlighting
- Summarising
- Cramming before an exam
- Mnemonics

LEAST EFFECTIVE

What is retrieval and what methods can I use?

Dictionary

Definitions from Oxford Languages · Learn more

retrieve

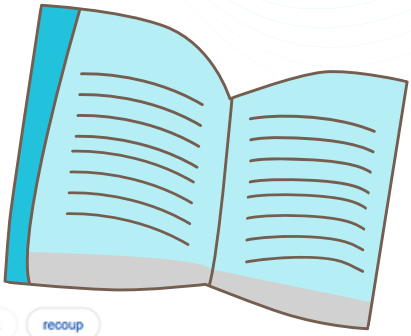
/rɪˈtriːv/

verb

1. get or bring (something) back from somewhere.

"I was sent to retrieve the balls from his garden"

Similar: get back | recover | regain (possession of) | win back | recoup



EXAMPLES OF RETRIEVAL

PRACTICE TESTING

- Online quizzes
- Past exam questions
- Quizzing yourself with flashcards
- Complete homework such as Sparx and retrieval question grids

SELF-EXPLANATION

- Read a bit of your knowledge organiser, then explain to yourself in your head or in writing with no notes.
- Watch a video then explain the knowledge to yourself or to a friend with no notes.

ELABORATIVE INTERROGATION

- Meet with a friend and ask each other 'explain'-type questions.
- Attend intervention where teachers will ask you questions.

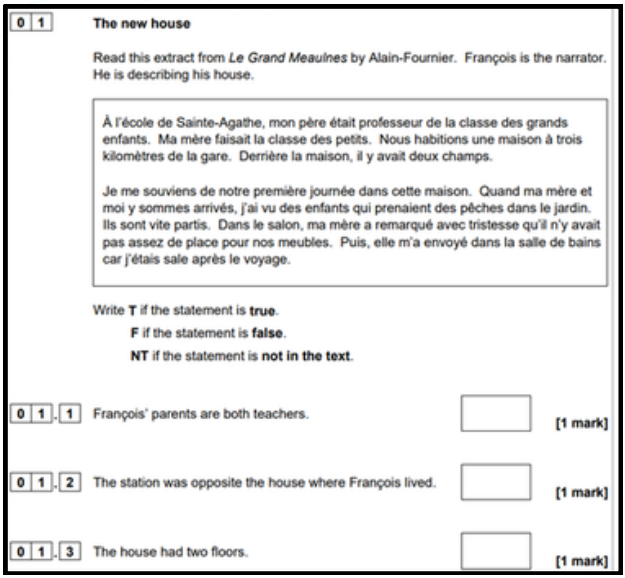
Attend Interventions

Use past exam questions and mark schemes

One of the best ways of preparing for exams is to do past exam paper questions and check your answers against the mark schemes. Remember to search for the correct exam board (e.g. AQA, Edexcel...) and title of your course. Check the Exam Board sheet at the back of this booklet if you're unsure.

Checking your answers with the mark scheme will fill in any gaps in your knowledge and give you important feedback about how you can improve your answers.

If using exam papers online, it's a good idea to have the paper open on one tab and the mark scheme on another. Are there any questions you didn't get right? Turn the question and answer into a flashcard to help learn that key piece of knowledge.



0 1 **The new house**

Read this extract from *Le Grand Meaulnes* by Alain-Fournier. François is the narrator. He is describing his house.

À l'école de Sainte-Agathe, mon père était professeur de la classe des grands enfants. Ma mère faisait la classe des petits. Nous habitions une maison à trois kilomètres de la gare. Derrière la maison, il y avait deux champs.

Je me souviens de notre première journée dans cette maison. Quand ma mère et moi y sommes arrivés, j'ai vu des enfants qui prenaient des pêches dans le jardin. Ils sont vite partis. Dans le salon, ma mère a remarqué avec tristesse qu'il n'y avait pas assez de place pour nos meubles. Puis, elle m'a envoyé dans la salle de bains car j'étais sale après le voyage.

Write **T** if the statement is **true**.
F if the statement is **false**.
NT if the statement is **not in the text**.

0 1 . 1 François' parents are both teachers. **[1 mark]**

0 1 . 2 The station was opposite the house where François lived. **[1 mark]**

0 1 . 3 The house had two floors. **[1 mark]**

Question	Accept	Mark
01.1	**T** (true)	1

Question	Accept	Mark
01.2	**F** (false)	1

Question	Accept	Mark
01.3	**NT** (not in the text)	1

Check your answers

Use AI as a tutor or quiz partner

Artificial Intelligence can be used for practice testing, self-explanation and elaborative interrogation. Make sure you ask it for your specific exam specification, tier, grade and topic you wish to be tested upon.



The command is important:

"Ask me questions, one at a time, about the nervous system topic in **AQA combined science biology**, to a **grade 5 standard**. Give me feedback."

NOTES

- Make sure to state your exam specification
- Ask it for your target grade

Be specific

Making the best of your revision time

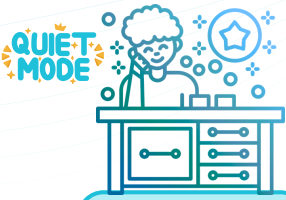
A healthy lifestyle leads to good learning! Make sure to work in a quiet space with no distractions. Put any phones or devices in another room. Studies show that students who revise with a phone next to them have a 20% decline in their learning.



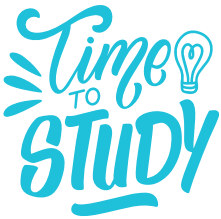
and enough



Get enough sleep

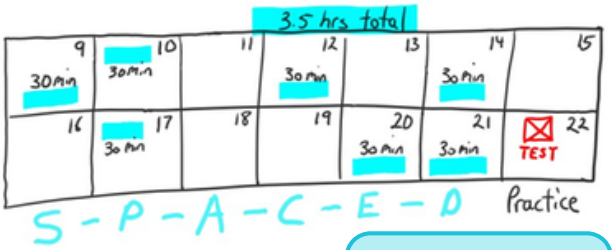


Find a quiet study space





Avoid Cramming



Space out revision



Exercise regularly

No distractions



How those at home can help

- Arrange a quiet, tidy space for your child to work. Agree a place to put any phone or device so that it does not cause distraction. If a device is needed for revision, encourage your child to set it to 'do not disturb' and turn off notifications for social media.
- Read this booklet to learn what methods are most effective, and ask your child what methods they are using. Make sure they are not only reading or watching videos. Instead, help them to practice remembering information e.g. take their revision guide and quiz them.
- Help your child to plan a revision timetable so that their exam preparation is spaced out over the months before their exams. 'Cramming' revision into the night before the exam might be more effective than doing no revision, but it's likely to lead to feelings of panic and lack of sleep.
- Encourage your child to eat well and enough, drink plenty of water and get enough sleep.





Eat well and enough

GOOD REVISERS

by @Inner_Drive
www.innerdrive.co.uk

POOR REVISERS

GOOD REVISERS	POOR REVISERS
Eat breakfast	Skip breakfast
Sleep 8–10 hours a night	Get little sleep
Have regular bedtimes	Have inconsistent bedtimes
Get fresh air each day	Stay indoors all day
Exercise regularly	Do no exercise
Do past papers	Mostly revise highlighting 'key' passages
Spread out their revision	Cram their revision
Keep a diary to capture negative thoughts	Dwell on worst case scenarios
Revise in a quiet environment	Revise whilst listening to music or TV
Drink water regularly	Forget to stay hydrated
Put their phone away during revision	Revise with their mobile phone next to them

Revision reminders at EGS

Interrupt the forgetting - use retrieval

Practice getting it OUT of your head, as well as getting it into your head

To revise, we practice remembering

Each time we revisit the information, we remember more of it and keep it for longer



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HELP IS ALWAYS AT HAND

This booklet will help you learn how to revise for your GCSE exams in the most effective way. Remember that staff are always on hand if you'd like to reach out.



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