



Effective Revision Habits and Strategies: A Study Guide for Pupils and Parents

In this study guide, we aim to give you some practical ideas of how you can support your son or daughter all the way through their time at St James'. Some of the information is more relevant to Key Stage 4 but we hope you will find the ideas useful.

A Retrieval Practice

Retrieval practice is a learning strategy that focuses on getting information out. When we 'retrieve' information, our memory for that information is strengthened and we are less likely to forget it. It is a powerful tool for improving learning.

To use retrieval practice at home, you can:

- Use class notes and textbooks to make a list of important information and content you need to know.
- Then you need to close your books and test yourself. You can create quizzes, use flash cards or complete past papers; you could even reuse activities you have completed in class. Don't use your notes!
- Retrieve as much information as you can then check your answers. It's important to find out what you do and don't know so that you can plug the learning gaps.
- Use your answers to inform the next stage of your revision, focus on the areas that you struggled to recall from memory and complete activities to strengthen your understanding.

B Spaced Practice

"Start planning early for exams and set aside a little bit of time everyday. Five hours spread out over two weeks is better than the same five hours all at once."

This is spaced practice & it is regarded as one of the most effective revision strategies.

- Divide up your revision into short manageable chunks of time . When revising aim for 30 minutes per session.
- Cramming for exams and studying intensely for a short period of time is not effective & can be stressful.
- You need to plan your time carefully to ensure all subjects & topics are covered in shorter chunks over a longer period of time.
- Dividing up your revision into smaller, manageable sections will benefit you in the long term.



C Concrete Examples

What are concrete examples?

“Students often gain a false sense of confidence in their abilities to memorise new material. Using concrete, relevant, real life examples can help students understand abstract ideas and extend information retention.”

Concrete examples involve finding & using specific examples to help develop & deepen understanding of more abstract ideas.

Abstract ideas can be difficult to understand & explain. Our memories find it easier to remember concrete examples better than abstract information.

- Foreshadowing can be explained with a very specific concrete example - in Romeo & Juliet the tragic ending is subtly foreshadowed in the very first act of the play.
- Look through your books & class notes searching for concrete examples that are relevant to the idea you are studying or create your own if you can.

D Elaboration

“The term elaboration can be used to mean a lot of different things. However, when we are talking about studying using elaboration, it involves explaining and describing ideas with many details. Elaboration also involves making connections among ideas you are trying to learn.”

Elaboration involves asking further questions & making links to help you connect new information with what you know already.

- Ask yourself questions about a topic to find out more. The more information you have about a specific topic the stronger your understanding and ability to recall will be.
- When you learn about the causes of WW1 you could ask: Which causes are linked together? Which causes are short or long term? What was the major cause?
- Another way to elaborate is to take two ideas or concepts & think about the various ways they are similar & how they are different.

E Interleaving

“Interleaving is a process where students mix & combine multiple subjects & topics while they study in order to improve their learning. Blocked practice on the other hand, involves studying one topic very thoroughly before moving to another. Interleaving has been shown to be more effective than blocked practice leading to better long-term retention.”



Here is an example of how to interleave different topics in Maths:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Algebra	Ratio	Statistics	Ratio	Algebra
Geometry	Statistics	Algebra	Geometry	Statistics

An interleaving approach aids long term retention and because you are constantly revisiting topics, allows you to recall information on a regular basis and strengthens your knowledge and understanding.

F Dual Coding

“Dual coding is the process of combining verbal materials with visual materials. There are many ways to visually represent materials, such as with infographics, timelines, cartoon/comic strips, diagrams and graphic organisers.”

Dual coding involves the learner drawing images, graphs, diagrams or timelines to support your revision notes.

- When you are revising using your class materials, find or create visuals that link with the information. Compare & combine the visuals with the words.
- Make sure your images/diagrams are relevant. Be careful when using photos as too many background images can detract from the main points.

G Exam vocabulary - Command words

There will be subject specific key terms that you need to learn for each subject. Below are a range of command words that could be used in your exams. Do you understand what the exam question is asking you?

These can vary from subject to subject so do check with your teacher to make sure you understand the definition correctly.

Analyse

Examine something in detail and try to explain or interpret it.

Annotate

Add to a diagram, image or piece of text to illustrate or describe features rather than just identify them..



Assess

Consider different options/arguments/factors and weigh them up to reach a conclusion about their effectiveness or validity.

Calculate

Work out the value of something.

Compare

Give a point by point identification of similarities and differences.

Define

Give the precise meaning of a term or concept.

Describe

Provide an account in detail of an event/individual/concept etc.

Discuss

Set out both sides of an argument & reach a conclusion, including evidence.

Evaluate

Consider different options/factors & reach a conclusion about their importance/impact/value/worth.

Examine

Consider carefully & provide a detailed account of the topic.

Explain

Provide a detailed description or interpretation of a term/concept etc.

Identify

Point out & name from a number of possibilities.

Illustrate

Refer to a specific case study or example).

Label

Point out specific features on a diagram, image or piece of text.

Justify

Explain why your selected choice/judgement is better than other options.

Summarise

Sum up the main points/arguments; this can be similar to outline.



H Wellbeing Strategies

The exam period can be stressful so it is important that you revise & prepare as this can help to reduce exam anxiety. In addition to revising there are other strategies you can do to look after your mental & physical health.

- **Eat.** Diet is important so don't neglect it during the exam period. Don't skip meals, stay consistent with a healthy balance of meals & stay hydrated.
- **Sleep.** Staying up late to revise is a bad idea! Sleep deprivation can have a very negative impact on concentration, performance & memory.
- **Exercise.** Take regular breaks from revision with exercise. Take part in a sport you enjoy, go for a walk or do any activity that is active & part of your daily routine.

I Useful Websites

The internet can be a great source of revision support. For subject specific examples of useful websites and YouTube videos ask your teachers for recommendations because the quality of revision materials online varies considerably.