

## Exam Preparation

1. Organising Information
2. Absorbing Information
3. Preferred Learning styles
4. Ways to Learn
5. Retaining Information
6. Memory fade
7. Recalling Information

## Exam Technique

1. Preparation
2. In the Exam Room
3. During the Exam
4. What the examiner means...



## Exam Preparation

### 1. Organising Information

There are 3 ways to organise your information before you try to absorb (learn or register) it :-

1. Skimming -

Read through the headings in a piece of work or notes or the chapter headings in a book.

Flick through the pages and let your eye wander over the text from left to right and top to bottom.

Repeat this from the back of the book to the front.

Stick coloured stickers on the pages that seem important to you - remember you are not reading every word.

Start off revising these pages or parts.

2. Slicing -

Group the information in a few headings (cut and paste)

Rule off or highlight important parts

3. Simplifying -

Making complicated ideas into language that you easily understand. This can be done in a number of ways

- Re -writing notes or using abbreviations
- Bullet points
- Again highlighting
- Turn written notes into a simple diagram or flow chart

**Activity 1 :- Organising Information**

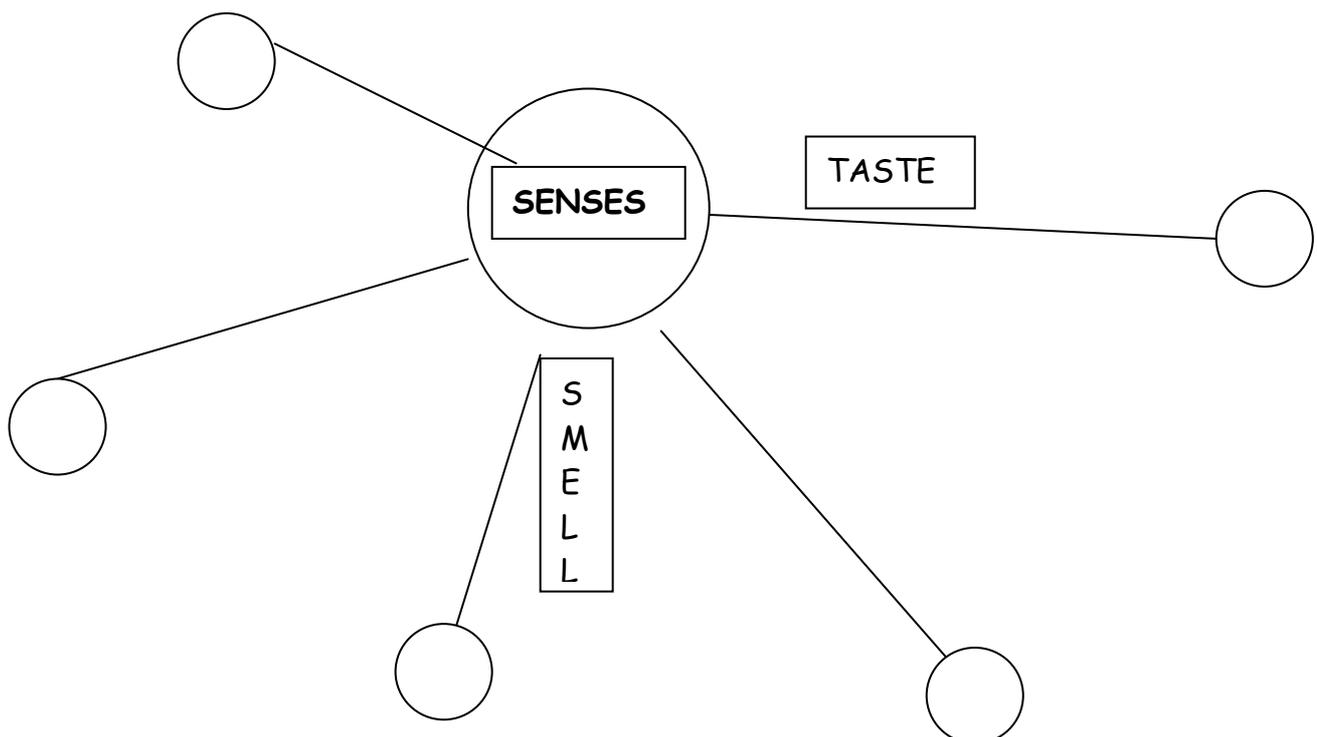
Look at the page of notes on a Science subject that will be examined in your exams in June (Double Award and Single Award). READ THROUGH IT AND ON THE PAGE HIGHLIGHT THE MAIN POINTS/ PHRASES THAT YOU THINK AN EXAMINER MIGHT ASK YOU TO WRITE IN AN ANSWER.



**2. Absorbing information**

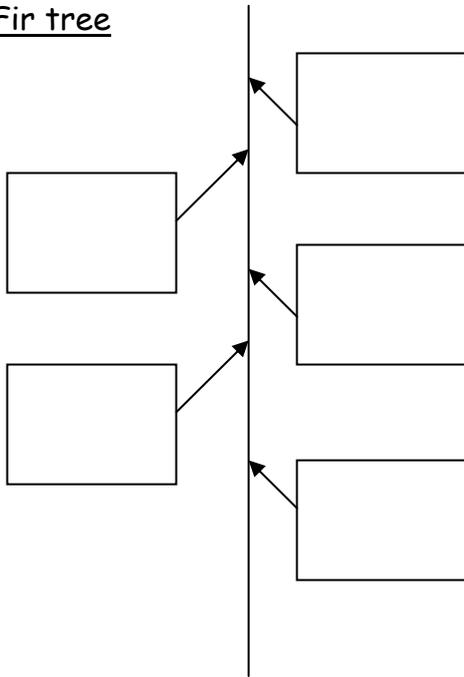
Networked notes

a) Mind Maps - central idea and branched important topics or ideas

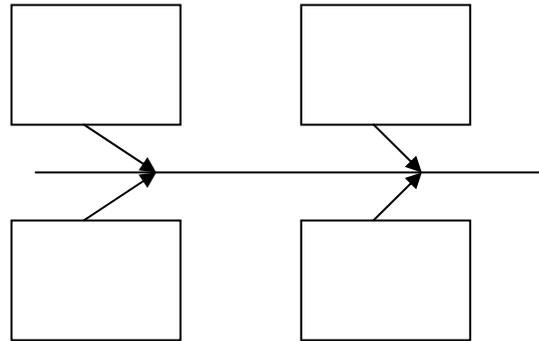


b) Networked notes - make notes at different angles or in different styles to try make them easier to retain and recall

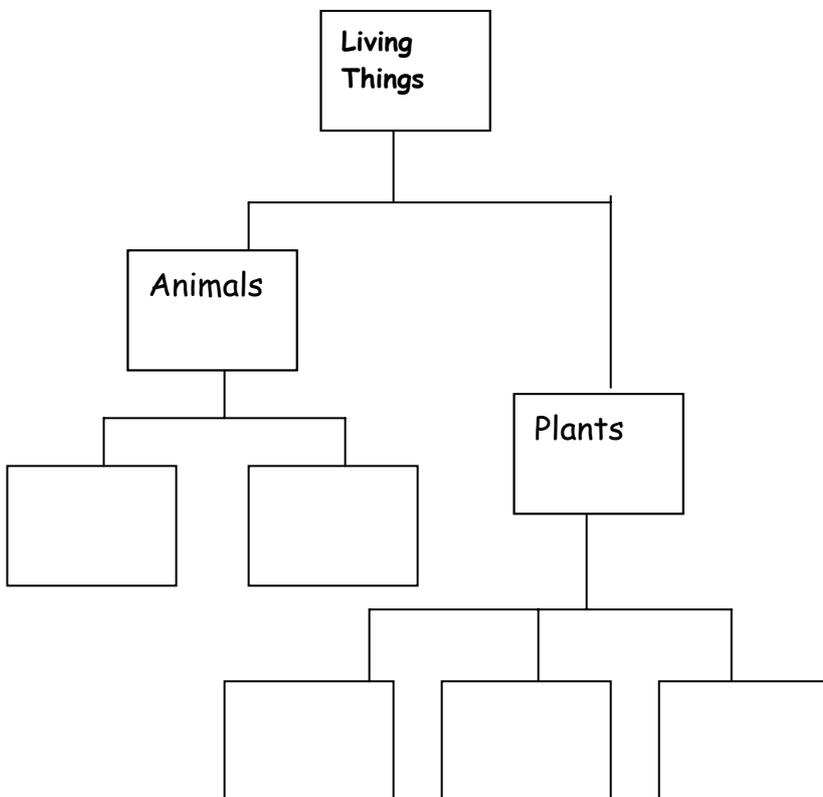
1. Fir tree



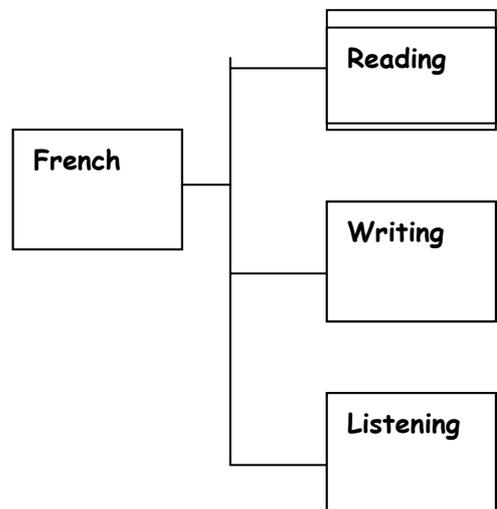
2. Herring bone



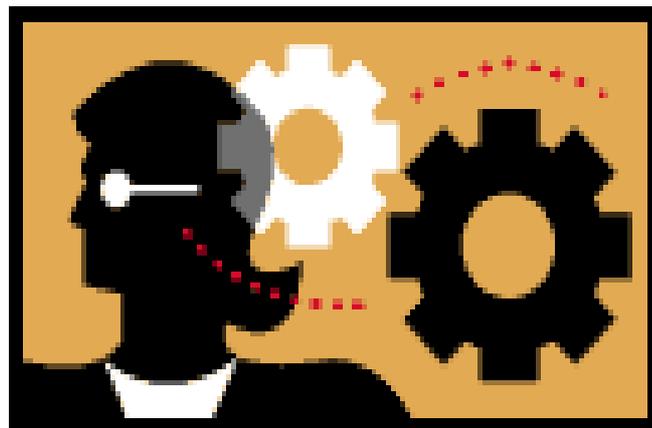
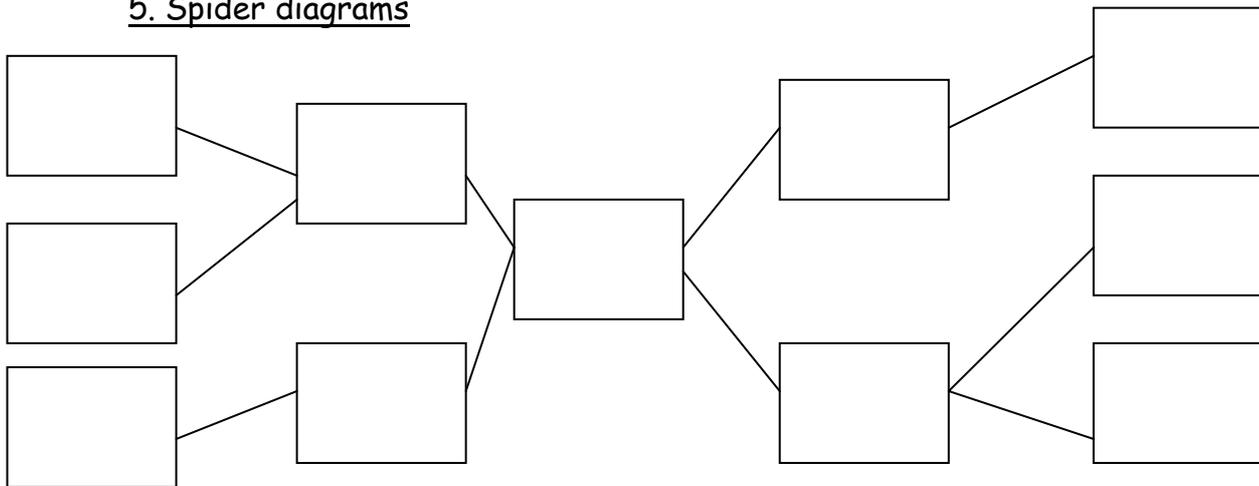
3. Stepped notes



4. Filter notes



5. Spider diagrams



3. Preferred Learning Style

Everyone learns in their own way however most people learn the basics of any subject through one sense or a mixture of these three - visual, auditory (hearing) or kinaesthetic (doing). These are referred to as the 3 **learning styles** and all of us have a preferred way to learn best. It may be mainly by a marked preference for one style, a small preference for one style or an even spread. Everyone is different, although it is useful to know which style will help your learning.

**ACTIVITY 2 - A quick test to find out your learning style!**

- Read through each question
- Rate each question by putting a number beside each question. 1 is first choice, 2 is second three is third.
- Use all three numbers against the three alternatives for each question.

Question	Answer	Score		
		A	B	C
1) When you are praised for doing something well, which do you prefer?	Get a written note/sticker		■	■
	Teacher praises you out loud	■		■
	Given a pat on the back or hug	■	■	
2) Given a choice, how do you prefer to relax?	Watching T.V, video, reading		■	■
	Listening to music, radio	■		■
	Playing sport/computer games	■	■	
3) If you are sorting out a problem with someone, which would you do?	Talk, face to face		■	■
	Phone them	■		■
	Discuss it while doing something else, walking, shopping etc.	■	■	
4) Which phrase best describes you?	I talk quickly and sometimes do not listen		■	■
	I listen but like to talk	■		■
	I talk slowly and move my hands a lot	■	■	
5) When you recognise someone in the street, what do you do?	Remember the face then the name		■	■
	Remember the name then the face	■		■
	Remember where you met them or what you did	■	■	
6) If you get lost or need to get somewhere what helps the most?	A map		■	■
	Someone telling you directions	■		■
	Someone showing you the way	■	■	
7) When you are trying to spell a difficult word, what do you do?	See the word		■	■
	Spell it out loud	■		■
	Write it down and see if it looks right.	■	■	
8) When you are angry with someone what do you do?	Go quiet, sulk or bottle it up		■	■
	Tell them what you think	■		■
	Storm off, slam the door	■	■	
9) When you are trying to concentrate what distracts you the most?	Untidiness/ clutter		■	■
	Noise	■		■
	Movement	■	■	
Add up the numbers in each column		<b>Totals</b>		

**How to understand the results;**

You will have three totals, one for each column A,B and C. All three added together must add up to 54, if they do not check your answers.

If column A is **LOWEST** you have a preference for VISUAL LEARNING.

If column B is **LOWEST** you have a preference for AUDITORY LEARNING.

If column C is **LOWEST** you have a preference for KINAESTHETIC LEARNING.

If all three are similar then you learn by a mixture of styles.

**4. What ways do these styles learn best?****Visual Learners**

- Write down key facts from notes.
- Try to create a picture in your mind of what you are trying to learn
- Write important facts on post-it type notes and stick them on a board or mirror
- Use mind maps ( see previous notes)
- Watch DVD's, videos, computer video clips of the topic
- Use cartoon type revision guides

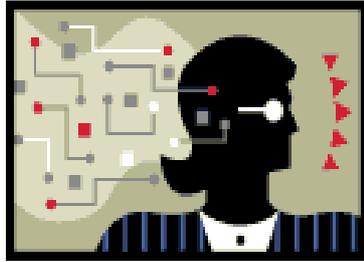
**Auditory Learners**

- Change notes to your own words
- Read notes out loud
- Rehearse your notes like a speech
- Make a tape of notes and play it back to yourself
- Explain the notes to other people e.g. parents , brothers, revision pals
- Turn the information into a rap or rhyme

**Kinaesthetic Learners**

- Move about as you revise, in the room or if you can't do this in school move your fingers
- Use actions for example in French clap/ click your fingers once for masculine nouns as you memorise them and twice for feminine
- Retype the information on your computer or rewrite the notes
- Shuffle your key facts cards like a pack of cards and reread them
- When you have a break from revision move about

NOW LOOK AT THE PAGE OF NOTES YOU HIGHLIGHTED IN ACTIVITY 1.  
NOW THAT YOU KNOW YOUR LEARNING STYLE - CAN YOU SEE A BETTER WAY  
FOR YOU TO ORGANISE THAT INFORMATION!



## **5. Retaining Information**

There are 6 keys to memory. We remember things that are:-

1. Outstanding
2. Funny
3. Personal
4. Emotional
5. Linked to our senses ( learning styles again)
6. The first and last thing we learn in any lesson or revision period

It follows that if you want to remember anything then it must register with you in one of these 6 ways or you must process it by using one of them.

**Scientists tell us that the brain can easily hold up to seven pieces of information at a time - plus or minus two. This means that all of us can remember 5 facts - so memorise things in blocks of 5.**

Here are some useful ways of retaining/remembering things:-

### **Mnemonics** (pronounced ne-mon-icks)

You use the first letter of a list you need to remember to make a word or rhyme or phrase that is easy for **you** to remember e.g. memorising trigonometry of right angled triangles

**Sun On Holidays** (sine = opposite/ adjacent)

**Can Always Help** (cosine = adjacent/ hypotenuse)

**The Old Aged** (tangent = opposite/adjacent)

### **Consistent images**

In this method you always attach an image to particular concepts - this works well for foreign languages

In French associate feminine words with diamond earrings - therefore **la bougie** ( candle) sounds like budgie so I picture a budgie in a cage with earrings nibbling a candle. The masculine words are associated with a pipe so **le trottoir** ( pavement) I visualise the Trotter family from Only Fools and Horses driving their 3 wheeled van along the pavement.

### Patterns and Prices

Remembering numbers or lists of figures is not easy unless we make them meaningful to us. Ways to do this are :-

- Look for patterns, associations or rhythms e.g. if my boss's birth date is 8<sup>th</sup> August 1964 , I will never remember it.  
However if I remember that it has an 8 in it I can use the pattern  $8 \times 8 = 64$  so it is 8/8/64.
- Chunk the sequence so remember telephone numbers in 2 digit chunks (or 3).  
The French write all of their numbers as 2 digits e.g. 90 47 17 44.
- Remember numbers as prices e.g. your pin number might be 4550 so always think you are withdrawing £45.50
- Put a tune to a string of numbers - adverts on T.V. often use this method.

### 6. Memory Fade

Information fades after a few days because of what is called the Ebbinghaus Decay Curve - IT SHOWS THAT UP TO 80% OF INFORMATION WILL BE LOST WITHIN 24 HOURS.



### 7. So what is the point of revising?- Reviewing Information

You must review the information at regular intervals - not re-learn!

There are 4 ways to review what you have learned and recall it in tests.

1. Transforming
2. Verbalising
3. Reducing
4. Snowballing

#### Transforming

Turning the information into something else, this makes your brain focus on the task and by doing this you concentrate harder and retain more of the information.

Force yourself to use a different sense to communicate the idea to someone else e.g. try to explain to someone how to tie their shoelaces when you are sitting on your hands.

### Verbalising

Describe the info to someone else, you force your brain to make connections and remember it. The less someone knows about the info the better this is. We take in 10% of what we see, 20% of what we hear, 50% of what we see and hear and 95% of what we teach others.

### Reducing

Set yourself crazy time limits e.g. list the plot of Macbeth in 1 minute, list the nine characteristics of living things in 15 seconds. By doing these or trying them you will be making connections with the info in your mind.

### Snowballing

Learn a chunk of info but write down just 1 word for the chunk. Then when you remember the one word you will automatically remember most/all of the rest.

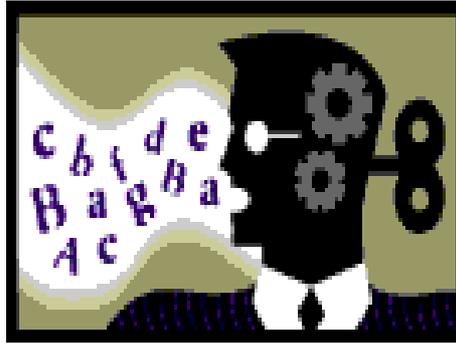
### How often to Review?

The more often you review it the more likely it is to stick. Ideally you would review

- After 24 hours
- 1 week
- 2 weeks
- 4 weeks

Remember you are **reviewing** -using your revision notes or key facts not learning all of the information.

Always revise in the position and conditions under which you will sit the exam i.e. in a quiet room, sitting at a desk or table. Research shows that this lessens exam stress and nerves. Do not revise lying down or with music or T.V. in the background!



## 8. Recalling

You have registered the information (made it go in), retained it (stored it) and now we need to get it out again - **recall** it.

One of the main reasons that you cannot recall things is stress - but we will deal with that later.

There are a number of ways to beat stress that you can address in your preparation for your exam and in your technique. If you are confident that you can do the questions, that you are skilled in exam answering and that you have prepared as much as you possibly could then you will have reduced levels of stress.

So how can your preparation and technique reduce stress in the exam:

- be prepared - if you know you have spent time revising then you will be as well prepared as you can be!
- Good exam technique ( see notes)
- Do not use revision time on displacement activities e.g. tidying desk, rearranging pages, sharpening pencils.
- Have a revision timetable (this will also be addressed in another session today)
- Do not revise late at night e.g. after 10p.m.

## Exam Technique

### Preparation

- Check dates, times and which paper of the subject well in advance and make sure someone at home knows these too to remind you if you happen to forget.
- Find out about the exam - is it short questions, essays etc./ is it talking and listening or written etc.
- Look at past papers - see what type of questions are asked, can you see patterns, do some topics seem to be asked more often than others
- Arrive at least 15 minutes before the exam to ensure you are in the right room, settled etc.
- Check that you have all the equipment the night before always bring an extra pencil and pen and a rubber and a ruler
- Eat a breakfast or meal 1 hour before the exam start time - blood sugar levels effect exam performance.
- Ensure your mobile phone is **switched off** or better still at home. All exam boards will withhold your results if your phone rings in the exam room even if you do not answer it.

### In the Exam Room

- Always check mobile phone is off
- Check you know the centre number (usually displayed) and your candidate number (the same for all exams)
- Make sure you have a watch or can see the exam hall clock
- Do not talk, pass notes or speak to anyone apart from the invigilator

### During the Exam ( For all subjects)

- **Read the instructions carefully.** Answer the question numbers set. This is called the rubric and if you are asked to answer one question from section A and you answer 2 then only one is marked so you have wasted your time.
- **Look at the marks allocated for each question** - at GCSE there is about 1.5 minutes for every mark so if there are 10 marks for a question you should spend around 15 minutes. If you have answered it in 3 then the odds are that you have left a lot out. If you have taken 35 then you will have wasted time.
- **Look at the space provided on the paper for your answer**- if there is room for 1 or 2 words then you should be able to recall 1 or 2 words to answer it- if you write 3 lines then have you missed the key word the examiner was looking for?
- Pay special attention to words in **Bold type** - the examiner has done this to give you a hint as to what he/she wants in the answer.
- **Drawings and diagrams should be done in pencil**
- **Do not draw cartoons, write funny comments on questions** - the examiner has spent over 1 year making this paper at some point the marker will have to decide whether to give you 1 or 2 or 3 marks and at this point the decision may be swayed by their opinion of how seriously you have taken their favourite subject!
- **WRITE CLEARLY** - THE MARKER HAS TO MARK HUNDREDS OF PAPERS FOR VERY LITTLE MONEY - THEY MAY NOT TAKE A LOT OF TIME TO DECIPHER YOUR WRITING. This also applies to candidates who write their answers in very small letters no matter how neat it is!
- **Never leave blanks** - in GCSE no marks are deducted for educated guesses. Always write some answer that contains words that you have seen/ heard in that subject's classes.
- **Always read over your answers** if you have time at the end. Twice or three times if you get the chance. Silly errors cost most candidates 5% of their lost marks according to the examiners reports.
- **Always read over the questions** as you read over the paper at the end - you may have mis-read the question the first time you read it.
- **Read each question carefully understand the language** - know the difference between "describe the shape of the graph" and "explain the shape of the graph" ( see the sheet provided).