



Effective Revision Techniques

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KING EDWARD VI
SCHOOL LICHFIELD

Common mistakes students make with revision

1. Rereading and highlighting instead of actually learning.
2. Revising in long, exhausting sessions.
3. Avoiding topics that they are less confident in because it makes them feel uncomfortable.
4. Not using past papers enough.
5. Making notes instead of learning from notes.



Five effective revision techniques that are proven to work:

- 1) Active recall
- 2) Spaced repetition
- 3) Past paper practice
- 4) Mind-mapping
- 5) Flashcards



Active Recall

- **The most powerful learning method.**
- **Takeaway** – you learn more by pulling information out of your brain than by pushing more in.
- **Why it works** – active recall forces your brain to reconstruct knowledge, strengthening neural pathways. It's the opposite of passive revision (rereading, highlighting), which feels productive but produces weak memory.



Active Recall

How to use it effectively

- **Brain dumps:** Close your notes and write everything you remember about a topic. Then check what you missed.
- **Self-quizzing:** Turn every heading in your notes into a question.
- **Blurting:** Pick a topic, set a 5-minute timer, and write everything you know.
- **Teach it:** Explain the topic out loud as if teaching a younger student.

What students often get wrong

- They *read* notes first.
- They test themselves *after* revising.
- They avoid testing because it feels hard — but that difficulty is the point.



Spaced Repetition

How to use it effectively

- **Use a spaced timetable:**
 - Day 1 → Learn
 - Day 3 → Review
 - Day 7 → Review
 - Day 14 → Review
 - Day 30 → Review
- **Mix subjects:** Don't revise one subject for hours. Rotate.
- **Use apps:** Anki, Quizlet, or any flashcard app with spaced repetition built in.

What students often get wrong

- They revise a topic once and assume they “know it”.
- They cram the night before — which helps short-term recall but collapses under exam pressure



Past Paper Practice

Learn the exam, not just the content

Takeaway: You're not just learning content; you're learning how to *apply* it in exam conditions.

Why it works

GCSE exams follow predictable patterns. Practising real questions trains your brain to recognise what examiners want and reduces anxiety



Past Paper Practice

How to use it effectively

- **Do papers under timed conditions** to build speed and stamina.
- **Mark your answers** using official mark schemes — this teaches you the exact phrasing examiners reward.
- **Track mistakes:** Create a “mistake log” and revise those topics again.
- **Analyse patterns:** Look for question types that repeat every year.

What students often get wrong

- They do past papers *with notes open*.
- They don't mark their work properly.
- They avoid topics they find hard — which guarantees lower marks.



Mind Mapping

A powerful tool for organising and connecting ideas

Takeaway: Mind maps help you see the bigger picture and how ideas link together.

Why it works

Mind maps use visual structure, colour, and spatial memory to help you recall information more easily. They're especially useful for subjects with lots of interconnected ideas (e.g., Biology, Geography, English Literature).



Mind Mapping

How to use it effectively

- **Create from memory first**, then fill in gaps.
- **Use colour coding** for themes, processes, or case studies.
- **Keep branches short** — one or two keywords per branch.
- **Use images or symbols** to anchor memory.

What students often get wrong

- They copy mind maps from textbooks (passive).
- They make them too detailed — mind maps should simplify, not overwhelm.



Flashcards

Simple, flexible and extremely effective.

Takeaway: Flashcards are best when used for *questions*, not notes.

Why it works

Flashcards combine active recall and spaced repetition. They're ideal for definitions, formulas, quotes, case studies, and key facts.



Flashcards

How to use them effectively

- **One question per card** — keep it simple.
- **Use the “Leitner system”:**
 - Cards you get right move to a less frequent box.
 - Cards you get wrong stay in the daily box.
- **Shuffle regularly** so you don’t memorise the order.
- **Make your own** — the act of creating them is part of the learning.

What students often get wrong

- They write paragraphs on cards.
- They flip the card too quickly.
- They only revise the cards they like.



One More Thing

If you combine these techniques — especially active recall + spaced repetition + past papers — you create a revision system that is scientifically proven to boost grades.

AI programmes can help students to build a personalised revision plan for specific subjects.

