



THE BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL  
ABU DHABI  
A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL



# A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE E REVISION

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# INTRODUCTION



## THE POWER IS IN YOUR HANDS YOU ARE THE KEY TO YOUR SUCCESS

Now is the moment to showcase your brilliance and reveal the incredible potential within you. Navigating through exams can be demanding, and we recognise the challenges students face. The guidance in this booklet is designed to be your ally, making your journey smoother.

Every test you take in school is a stepping stone toward a future filled with possibilities. Regardless of the path you choose, each exam is a valuable experience helping you to achieve your goals. Maintain a positive mindset throughout your academic journey, consistently reminding yourself of the reasons behind your hard work.

Your time in school is a unique and invaluable opportunity, so make the most of every moment. This guide is a product of thorough research, wisdom and insights from the experienced expert staff at BIS Abu Dhabi. We encourage you to refer to it regularly during your school years, and you may even find it beneficial in your university life or beyond. Wishing you the best of luck on your journey!



# CHOOSING THE RIGHT SETTING



It is worth making sure that your study environment is comfortable and focused. Make sure you have space to work, that you are organised and that you have all of your equipment within reach. Spend some time early in the school year to tidy your revision area and prepare yourself for the academic year ahead.

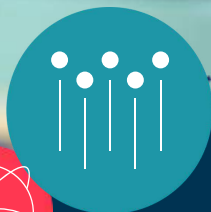
When it is time to revise, sit down and get into the right mindset. Have a bottle of water nearby to stay hydrated and attentive. Put your mobile phone in another room on silent and only use a device if you absolutely need it to revise, otherwise it will distract you during your focused revision. Any other sources of distraction or procrastination are bad, they will lower your grades; cut them out of your calm and relaxed study sanctuary.



*An environment fostering learning is the core of effective revision.*

**Mr Will McLoughlin**  
Maths teacher





# STRATEGIES S AND TECHNIQUES

This section will explain some of the most powerful revision strategies available. These are proven by educational psychologists to work for all students after extensive scientific research.





# METACOGNITION



Metacognition refers to the ability to think about and understand your own thinking processes. It involves being aware of your thoughts, emotions, and knowledge, and having the ability to reflect on and control your cognitive activities. In simple terms, metacognition is thinking about how you think. It includes being aware of your strengths and weaknesses, setting goals, monitoring your progress, and adjusting your strategies to improve your learning and problem-solving abilities. Metacognition helps you become a more effective learner and problem-solver by enabling you to actively manage and regulate your own thinking processes. Here are some ideas of how you can practice metacognition:

After you complete a problem, take time to think about the thought process that helped you solve the problem.



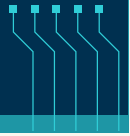
When you have a creative idea, consider what inspired you to come up with it.



When you have made a breakthrough in understanding a concept, reflect on what you did differently.



# RETRIEVAL PRACTICE <sup>E</sup>



Retrieval practice is a learning technique that involves actively recalling information from memory. It focuses on retrieving information rather than simply reviewing or re-reading it. Practicing retrieval means that your memories are stronger, longer lasting and also easy to access under the pressure of exams.

Instead of passively absorbing content, retrieval practice involves actively attempting to recall information without relying on external cues or prompts.

This technique has been shown to enhance long-term retention and promote deeper learning by strengthening memory retrieval pathways and identifying gaps in knowledge.



Some of the best ways to implement retrieval practice in your revision include:

- Using flashcards
- Answering questions relating to the material being studied
- Doing practice tests.

# SELF-TESTING



THE BEST WAY TO PRACTICE FOR AN EXAM, IS TO DO A PRACTICE EXAM.

Timer on. Pen at the ready. Ready? Go for it. Complete as much as you can and check your answers thoroughly. Then once finished, self-mark and self-reflect. Try to match the experience as closely as possible to the real exam - this includes putting devices away, keeping an empty desk and letting no distractions interfere.

If you're not ready for this, there are plenty of smaller scale self-testing exercises you can do. Online quizzes or practice questions are a great way to build up confidence for actual exams. If you are ever unsure, always ask your teachers and they will be able to provide great resources.



*Lots and lots of exam practice will lead to you getting better at the actual exams!*

**Ms Georgina Roughley**  
Head of Science





# SELF REFLECTION



Take a moment to reflect and consider what you have just learned. Digest it.

For example, maybe you just answered an exam question, how well did you score? It's important to self-mark using an official mark scheme, and then self-reflect.

Did it go well? Great! What made your answer so strong? Can you use this success elsewhere? What strategies did you use that helped you to get to the right answer? How could you have made it slightly better?

Did you miss some marks? No worries. How could you avoid these mistakes next time? Could you add more detail to your answer? Did you read the question incorrectly? Is this a topic you need to prioritise for tomorrow's revision?

Make a habit of routinely reflecting on your progress. Have you finished revising a chapter in History? Reflect on how it relates to the rest of the course. Have you finally understood each step of a method in Maths? Reflect on the logic behind each step. Have you written a very high-level analysis in English? Reflect on why it was so effective.

Reflection is similar to metacognition, and the two strategies overlap and complement each other.



# ELABORATING

When you are revising a topic, you need to think about it. Explain it to yourself. The best way to do this is to try to rewrite it in your own words, focussing on the key pieces of information. You can elaborate on this by adding more ideas, thinking about it more deeply or comparing it to another idea or topic.

Elaboration forces you to think about the content properly. Thinking leads to remembering. Thinking also leads to improved understanding, and more detailed exam answers.

Practice: Try elaborating on all the revision strategies mentioned above. Use the following questions to get you started:

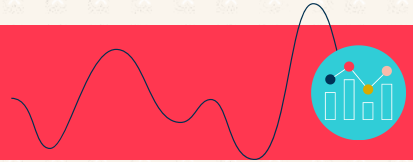
What are the common themes?

Can you give examples of using them?

What steps could you take to improve your own revision?



# INTERLEAVING

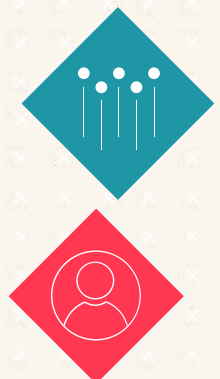


This is the process of mixing the order of revision so that different subjects and topics are dispersed throughout your revision schedule. Educational psychologists have demonstrated that an interwoven approach to learning can be very effective at improving long term memory and preparing for exams.

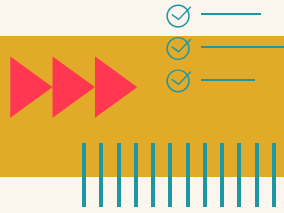
It can be tempting to focus on one topic for several days however this doesn't pay off in the long term. Even worse is to cram the day before a test, because this is far less effective than spaced out and interleaved practice over time. For this reason, it's vital that you start preparing early!

Below is an example of a blocked and an interleaved study timetable.

DAY	BLOCKED TIMETABLE	INTERLEAVED TIMETABLE
Monday	Science	Maths
Tuesday	Science	Science
Wednesday	Science	History
Thursday	Maths	Science
Friday	Maths	English



# TECHNIQUES



Truly effective revision comes from engaging with the content you're learning in a deeper way than just highlighting words on a page. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that highlighting is learning.

## COLOUR CODING

Assign specific colours to different types or categories of information. This helps to organise information, and link different pieces of content together.

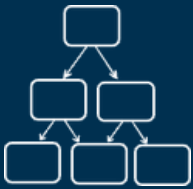
## FLASHCARDS

Write key questions on the front of a flash card and put the perfect answer on the back. This may be simple facts that you need to remember, diagrams, more detailed processes or even full paragraphs. This is a perfect way to practice retrieval, with instant feedback. Answer without looking, and then check the back, how accurate was your answer? Below is an example of a good flashcard.

# TRANSFORM IT!

Graphic organisers are a great way of transforming your notes into visually clear ideas. They can be used to create links, show a narrative, identify the causes, compare ideas, or show hierarchy.

Use color and take pride in these notes. If you care about your notes, you will look after them and use them for a long time. This will help your memory!



HIERARCHY



VENN



MIND MAP



CHAIN



*I've learnt from experience that you revise most effectively only when you use the techniques that work best for you - everyone is different.*

BIS Abu Dhabi student

A photograph of three young men in school uniforms. One is sitting in the foreground, looking up and smiling. Two others stand behind him, one looking at him and the other looking down and laughing. A large red circle with a dotted border is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title and a short paragraph.

# COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

This section will explain some of the most common mistakes students make that negatively impact the quality of their revision.

**CRAMMING:** It doesn't work. You need to revise for months before the test to achieve your full potential. Last minute revision has far less impact on your memory than spaced, regular, and focused revision.

**READING, READING AND READING:** Any revision is better than no revision, however just reading a textbook isn't going to help you remember and master the knowledge and skills. Use the techniques and strategies discussed earlier to support deeper learning.

**WRITING THE SAME NOTES OVER AND OVER AGAIN:** If you've learnt it, it's now time to do practice questions or practice tests. Re-writing the same thing isn't going to help much.

**WRITING OUT ESSAYS AND MEMORISING THEM BY HEART:** This is time consuming and counter-productive. It is unlikely the exact same question will come up on the test, and it is even less likely that you will remember hundreds of words in the right order.

**PROCRASTINATION:** Putting off work for later just because you don't feel like doing it is extremely unhelpful, and will lead to an unnecessarily high workload and stress level later on. Face up to reality and just sit down to focus and study.

**"I CAN'T FORCE MYSELF TO STUDY":** Rather than forcing yourself to study, encourage yourself. Set achievable and realistic goals that you can work towards. Find the motivation early on. Ensure you also reward yourself when you achieve your targets.

**PANICKING:** Don't panic. Just relax, take a breath and do what you can. After exams, make sure you speak to a counsellor, teacher or parent to understand why you were panicked and how you could prevent it in the future.

**MAKING EXCUSES:** Anyone can make excuses to avoid doing something. This is negative thinking and not productive. Try to move to a positive mindset to find the motivation to study. Always study for your sake- not for your teachers, not for your parents- only for yourself as this will only affect you in the future.



# HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Exam season can be stressful and tiring if you don't take care of your health. This section will provide some proven tips to stay healthy physically and mentally, while helping you maximise your focus and retention.



# TECHNOLOGY



Recent research sheds light on the increasing impact of digital media on various aspects of our lives, including brain function, structure, physical and mental health, education, social interaction, and even politics. WHO published strict guidelines about our screen time in 2019 as research concluded that digital technology use has a significant impact on brain function and behaviour. Some of the potential harmful effects of extensive screen time and technology use include heightened attention-deficit symptoms, impaired emotional and social intelligence, technology addiction, social isolation, adverse impact on cognitive and brain development, and sleep deprivation. None of this is good for helping you achieve your potential!

AGE	RECOMMENDED SCREEN TIME
0-18 months (babies)	No screen time
18-24 months (toddlers)	Less than 1 hour a day
2-5 years	Less than 2 hours a day
5-13 years	Less than 3 hours a day
14+	Less than 4 hours a day



# DIET



A good diet helps students to beat stress. The kind of food a student eats, helps the student prepare effectively and manage the anxiety of the period. During these exams, eating regular and healthy meals and snacks will help you stay nourished. Eating the right foods during the exam helps increase memory and helps maintain calm in difficult situations. Here are some suggestions for exam seasons snacks:

NUTS

VEGETABLES & DIP

FRUITS

WHOLE GRAIN BREAD

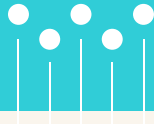
YOGHURT

CEREAL/ PROTEIN BARS



According to many studies, an average of over 58% of students engage in unhealthy eating habits during exam periods. Make sure you don't start overeating or starving, because of stress.

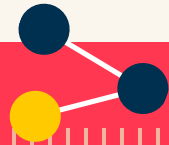
# WATER



Drinking water is important during exam season, because it can have a physiological effect on thinking functions that lead to improved exam performance. Too little water consumption may also alleviate anxiety, which is known to have a negative effect on exam performance.

So, make sure you always have water on your table and drink at least 2-3 litres of water minimum every day. It will also help you cut down the number of teas or coffees during the day.

# EXERCISE



Combined with a healthy diet, exercise also helps you keep a healthy body and healthy mind. It helps boost your energy and concentration, and improves blood flow to the brain, leading to a calmer feeling, and being able to think more clearly.

Try to go for a run, a swim or anything else active at least once a day while revising. It's also a great opportunity to get some fresh air and digest everything you've learned during the day.



# SLEEP



Sleep plays a vital role in good health and well-being throughout your life. The way you feel while you are awake depends in part on what happens while you are sleeping. During sleep, your body is working to support healthy brain function and maintain your physical health. Sleep also serves as an opportunity for the mind to process all the stimuli that we have taken in while we are awake; and triggers changes in the brain that strengthen neural connections helping us to form memories. It's crucial to prioritise positive sleep hygiene not just during exam season but consistently. You can achieve this by following these steps:

Limit caffeine and sugary drinks near bedtime.

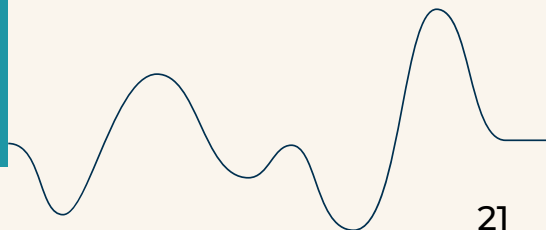
Avoid electronics and screens (laptops, phones, tablets, game consoles) within an hour of bedtime.

Maintain a regular sleep schedule. Aim to stay consistent everyday, even during weekends.



*I always find that it is much much better to get a good night of sleep before my exam days, rather than stay up all night studying.*

BIS Abu Dhabi Student



# COMMAND WORDS



The following are common command words that come up in exams - make sure you know how to answer questions with these words.

**SUGGEST:** Offer a reasonable option; apply your knowledge and understanding to a new situation.

**EXPLAIN:** Write a detailed answer about how and why something happens. Focus on reasons and examples.

**PREDICT:** Use known trends and patterns to make a reasonable prediction.

**DESCRIBE:** Write an answer that covers the facts and characteristics: what happens; what it looks like; where is it found; and when does it happen.



*Understanding the command word in a question is the key to getting the right answer!*

Ms Alexa Forte  
History teacher







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