



# Exam preparation: Revision tips for parents/Carers

**13<sup>th</sup> October, 2021**



Dear Parent / Carer,

It is our continued goal to look for ways in which we can support our students' learning and progress. We are currently running Monday morning assemblies with Year 11 to help prepare them for their GCSE exams. Likewise, we are running period 6 sessions too.

We are delighted to share this booklet on Exam preparation: Revision tips for Parents/Carers. The aims of this booklet are to:

- Share top tips for parent support
- Look at effective strategies to support revision
- Develop strategies to help students cope with exam stress

Parental support is one of a number of important factors in determining a child's academic success. The Campaign for Learning found that parental involvement in a child's education can significantly improve his/her outcomes at GCSE.

The good news is that parents do not need to be experts in any of the subjects your child chooses. Parents and students also do not need to give up other responsibilities – you just need to know how best to spend the time you have.

One of the hardest demands on students is understanding the long-term importance of doing the best they can and learning to shelve short-term fun at times in the interest of long-term benefits (not easy even for adults).

Students will also differ in the levels of maturity, their ability to take responsibility for their learning, organisational skills and motivation. This is where parents come in. Your support, encouragement and interest can make a spectacular difference to your child's motivation and ability to cope with the academic and organisational demands of the exam period.

If you have any questions or need further support, please do not hesitate to contact me at [diarmaidcasey@birleysecondaryacademy.co.uk](mailto:diarmaidcasey@birleysecondaryacademy.co.uk)

Yours faithfully,

D. Casey



## What is Revision?

I've read all my notes and I can't remember any of it...!

It means actively looking back over your work on an ongoing basis to;

1. To remind you of things you might have forgotten
2. Make links to other learning so you have the bigger picture
3. To reinforce your learning – so it stays remembered
4. To show you what you don't know
5. Check that you have understood everything

**Support and encourage your child to achieve**, while making sure that they do not feel under too much pressure. Help them to see how important qualifications are to their future.





## Why encourage your child to revise?

1. It can reduce panic – gives them control and confidence
2. It means examinations reflect what they can do, not what they didn't bother to do – show what you know!
3. It can help them to identify problem areas.

## Where to start? When to do it?

- Help them work out how much time they have, being realistic.
- Get them to take into account their ideal time of day to work – work out when they will revise.
- Break it down to make it seem manageable. 'Revising for GCSE's/ BTEC's' sounds like too much hard work. 'Revising key French verb endings' is do-able.

Make sure they use their planner/timetable to keep up with revision and encourage them to attend revision sessions outside school hours where offered.







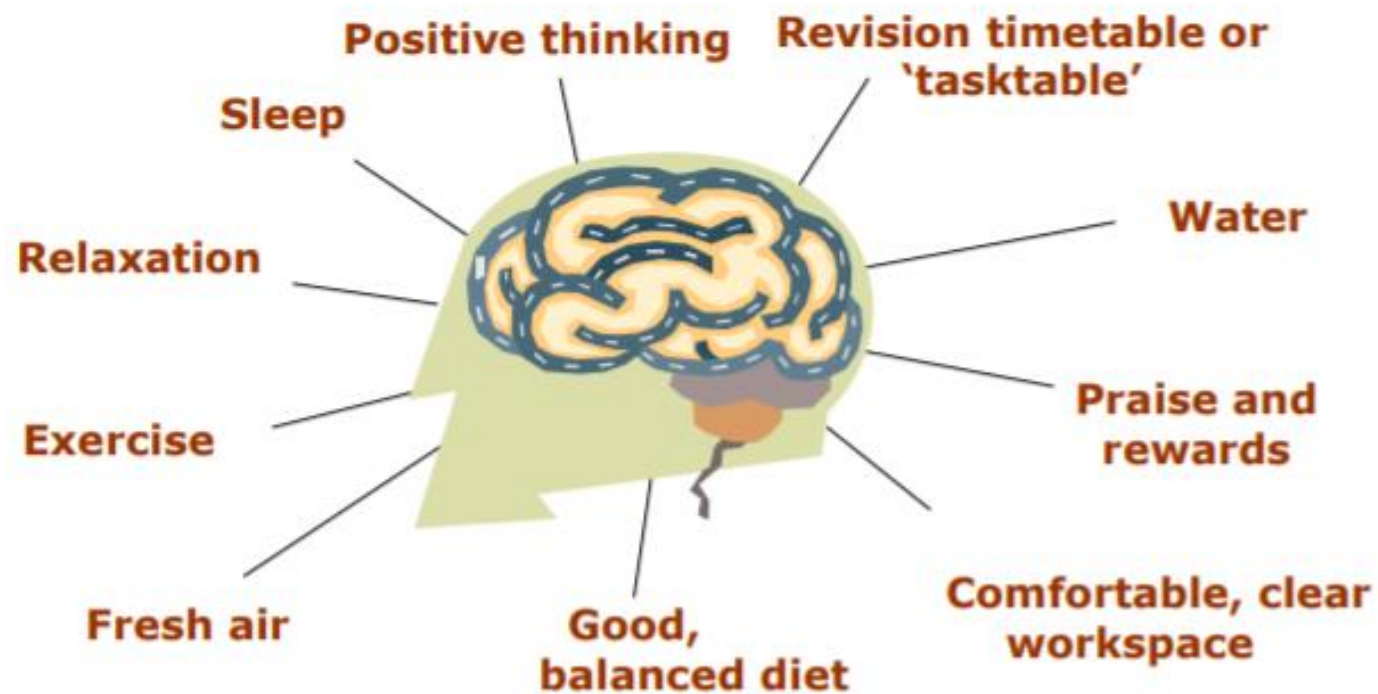
## Hints for an Ideal Revision Area

Providing some of these will go a long way to helping your child...





## ... How to keep the Amazing Brain Happy



When your child is revising, encourage them to drink water and to take regular breaks. This helps keep the body refreshed allowing the brain to process information well.





# Getting started with revision

*How should my child revise when s/he is attending school full time?*

Teachers will do revision with students. Encourage your child to come home and look again at what was revised in class. It helps to fix it in the memory.

*How should my child revise in school holidays and if his/her school organises study leave?*

Your child needs to build up their working stamina so that they can show what they have learned in each subject over a six-week period of time, and they need to build their concentration stamina so that they can focus for the whole

exam. The longest written exams are two hours, so they need to be able to work in concentrated bursts for the time it takes to answer each question with short 'take a breath' breaks before starting the next question.

First, agree what time your child will have away from revision and exams. This seems like it's the wrong way round but if they want to do sports training, a part time job, go to a party or attend a gig or show, they need to build that into their week and use the rest of the time for quality revision. They also need one full day off a week – but only one day! Call time off a 'reward session'.

See if the school offers revision sessions in the subjects s/he takes and encourage him/her to attend.

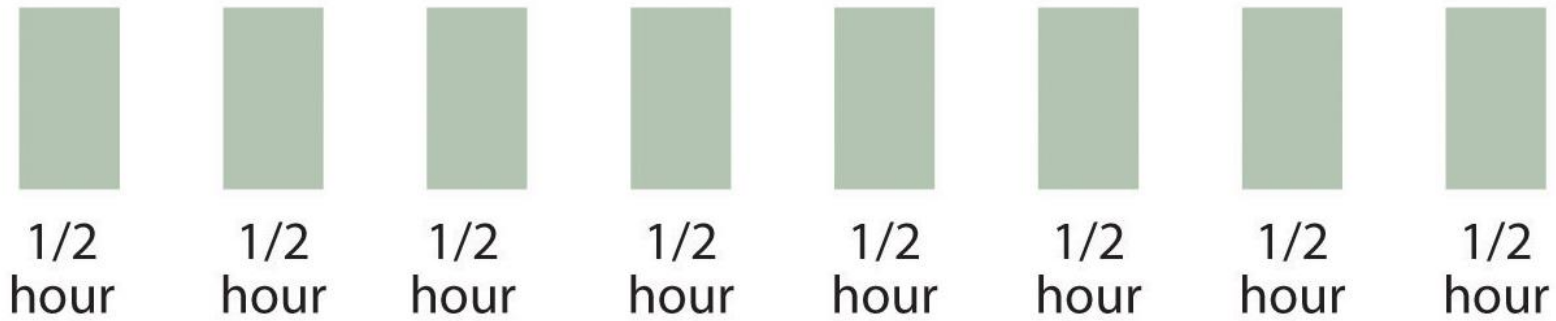
# How can I help my child to revise?



- Show an interest but try not to nag! Their way of learning things may not be the same as yours, but it doesn't matter as long as they learn.
- Revision is best if it is active. Remind your child to do more than just read notes or watch revision videos. The evidence is that revision works best when students summon information from their memory.
- Offer to be a revision buddy and ask them questions. If they work with friends, ask how they are revising together to check it's active learning.
- Get them to teach you the topic – if you can learn, they really know it!
- The important thing in the exam is what they can show they know. Encourage them to write examination answers and get them to check their marks with the mark scheme.
- If your child is using a reader or a scribe, offer to read or scribe for them.



# What is spacing?



Most effective method



# How should I structure my revision?

- Research suggests that the most effective revision takes place at the beginning and end of sessions.
- So don't revise for 2 hours solid. Adopt patterns like the following:
  - Revise for 30 minutes
  - Break for 10 minutes
  - Revise for 30 minutes
  - Break for 10 minutes
  - Revise for 30 minutes
  - Break for 10 minutes.
  - In this way there are three beginnings and three ends.
- Research suggests that you should follow up revision sessions the next night and the next week. For example:
  - Tuesday revise Science topic for 1 hour.
  - Wednesday **recap** same Science topic for 10 minutes.
  - One week later recap the same Science topic for 5 minutes.
  - Tony Buzan (lead researcher) describes this as moving the recall from the SHORT-TERM to the LONGTERM memory.

# How can I help once exams have started?

- Pick your battles! Encourage your child to eat well, sleep, take some exercise and revise. All other nagging can wait.
- Know the exam timetable and what time your child has to be in school. Make sure they are there on time and with the equipment they need.
- Encourage your child to keep to his/her school day routine. Evidence suggests students have a body clock which wants to wake up later and go to bed later than adults do, but s/he needs to be ready to work at exam start time.
- Revision has to work round the exams they are taking. Count each exam as a work session and encourage them to continue to work two out of three sessions a day. If they have two exams in one day and an exam the next day, encourage them to remind themselves of what is in the next day's exam in the evening.





# Revision techniques to try

Some of these seem odd to those who don't use them but each one works for some people. We all learn in different ways. It's a matter of experimenting to see what works for your child.



## Revision timetable

The secret with a revision timetable is to not spend more time planning it than doing it! Put the date of exams in first, then 'reward time', then plan two out of three sessions a day. Put a copy of the exam timetable where it can be seen. Tick off exams as they are taken.



## Subject revision planner

Divide a piece of A3 paper (or two A4 sheets stuck together) into three columns.

Left column - not known.  
Middle column - learning.  
Right column - known.

Write topic headings on post-it notes and put them in the appropriate column. As they learn each topic, they move it to the right until all the topics are in the 'known' column.

*Why this works:*

- It tells the student what to revise (not known first, then learning) and how they are progressing.
- It shows what they already know.



## Cue cards

Postcard size cards. Question on one side, answer on the other. Good for content-based subjects like science.

*Why this works:*

- Making them is a reminder of what to learn. Writing questions also helps learning.
- They are portable. You can revise on the bus, in the car, in the park, on the beach etc.
- A partner can hold up the card with the question facing the student and read the answer on the back.
- The student can read the question and turn the card over to check the answer.
- The student can mark the card with a tick every time s/he gets the answer right. Five ticks and it is learned.
- Cards can be sorted into 'learning' and 'known' piles. The 'learning' pile can be gone through every day. The 'known' pile can be gone through once a week.

# Revision techniques to try



## Mind mapping

Mind maps are good for people who remember visual images well. The topic is the central idea - add branches to show the different sections of the main topic, then use colour and images to make it more memorable.

*Why this works:*

- Students who remember visual images well will remember the colours / shapes / pictures in the mind map they have drawn and can redraw all or part of it in the exam to help with planning answers.



## Mnemonics

Mnemonics are useful for remembering lists or sequences, for instance 'Richard of York Gave Battle in Vain' for the colours of the rainbow.

*Why this works:*

- The mnemonic is a memorable sentence or phrase and easier to remember than a list of words. Research shows they work best if students make up their own – and the sillier the better!



## Mind palace / memory palace

This is a different version of a mnemonic. The student imagines walking through a familiar building or outdoor space. S/he then imagines that a particular piece of information is stored in a specific spot. To find the information again, s/he imagines going to that place.

*Why this works:*

- Students are able to link the place with the information.

# Revision techniques to try



## Music / smell / taste

Some evidence suggests that students who play music when revising do less well than those who revise in silence. Other research suggests that if the student plays different music while revising each subject, s/he can think about the same music and the revised information is easier to recall.

Some research also suggests that wearing a particular aftershave or perfume when revising a specific subject, then wearing the same one in the exam, can help with recall of information. Eating the same mints or sweets when revising or in the exam could also help.

### *Why this works:*

- Revision usually uses sight, hearing, speech and movement (writing). Engaging hearing music and smell activates more parts of the brain and helps to jog the memory for information.



## Teaching someone else

Evidence shows revision works best when students finish by having to recall information from their memory in a different way to answering exam questions. A good tactic for this is for a student to teach it to someone else.

### *Why this works:*

- If you can teach it, you have to know the topic very well. You not only have to recall information, you also have to work out how to tell someone else about it in a way which helps the other person learn.



## Answering examination questions

Find past papers and answer the questions in the time allowed. Exam boards have copies of past papers online with the mark schemes.

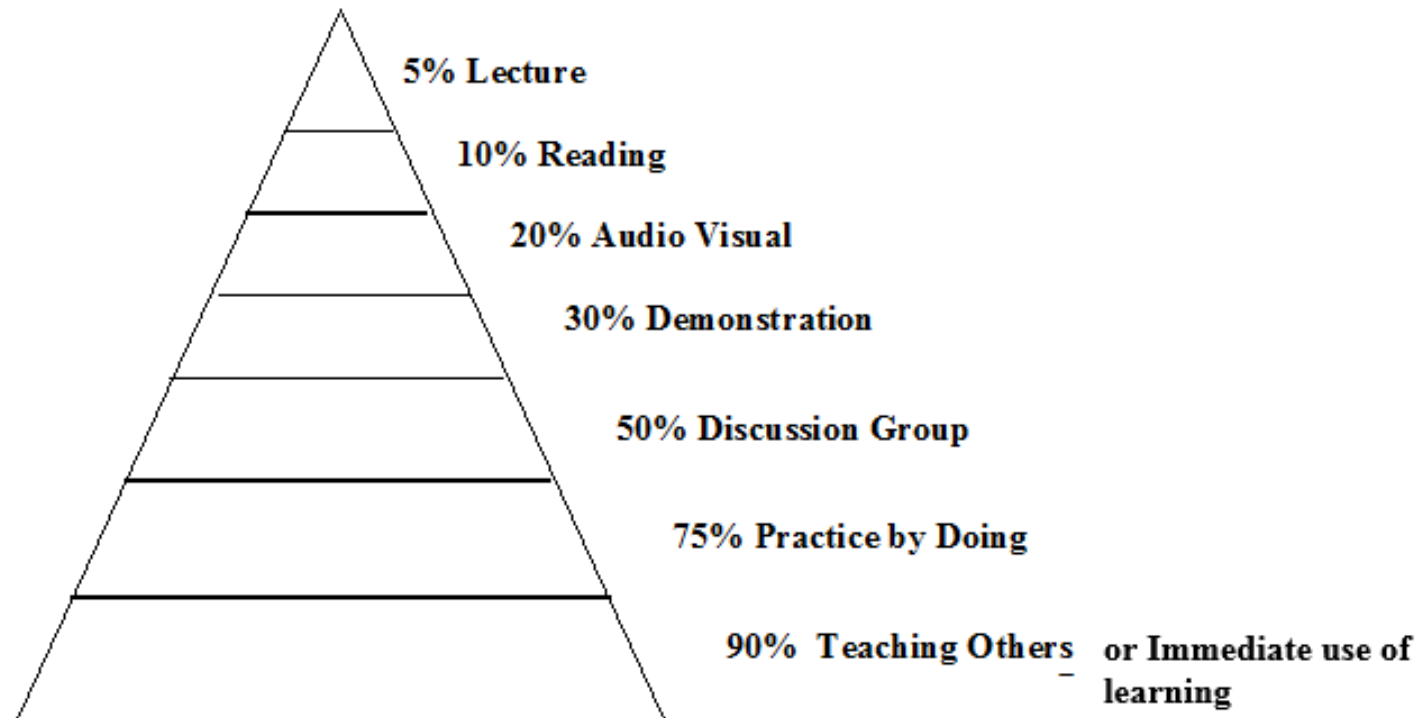
### *Why this works:*

- Research shows producing information from memory is the best revision.
- Some subjects, like English Language, are about producing responses like a letter or an essay and not about learning facts. This is what has to be done in the exam. It's the only way to let the examiner know what the student knows.



# Better retention rates

**AVERAGE RETENTION RATES FOR  
DIFFERENT TEACHING METHODOLOGIES**



National Training Lab, Bethel, Maine

The pyramid shows the average percentage of retention of material after 24 hours when a particular teaching methodology is the one primarily used.

“Moving down the pyramid, students become more involved in the learning process, and retention increases. The method at the bottom of the pyramid involves having the students teach others or use the new learning immediately. ... We have known for a long time that the best way to learn something is to prepare to teach it. In other words, whoever explains, learns.”

**(Sousa, *How the Brain Learns*)**





## PiXL Revisit: Reduce to 6 points

Unit / Topic:

R  
E  
D  
U  
C  
E

Information



Reduce to 6 points

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.



Reduce to 3 key points

- A.
- B.
- C.

P  
R  
I  
O  
R  
I  
T  
I  
S  
E

Information



Prioritise (most important)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.



**WHY?**

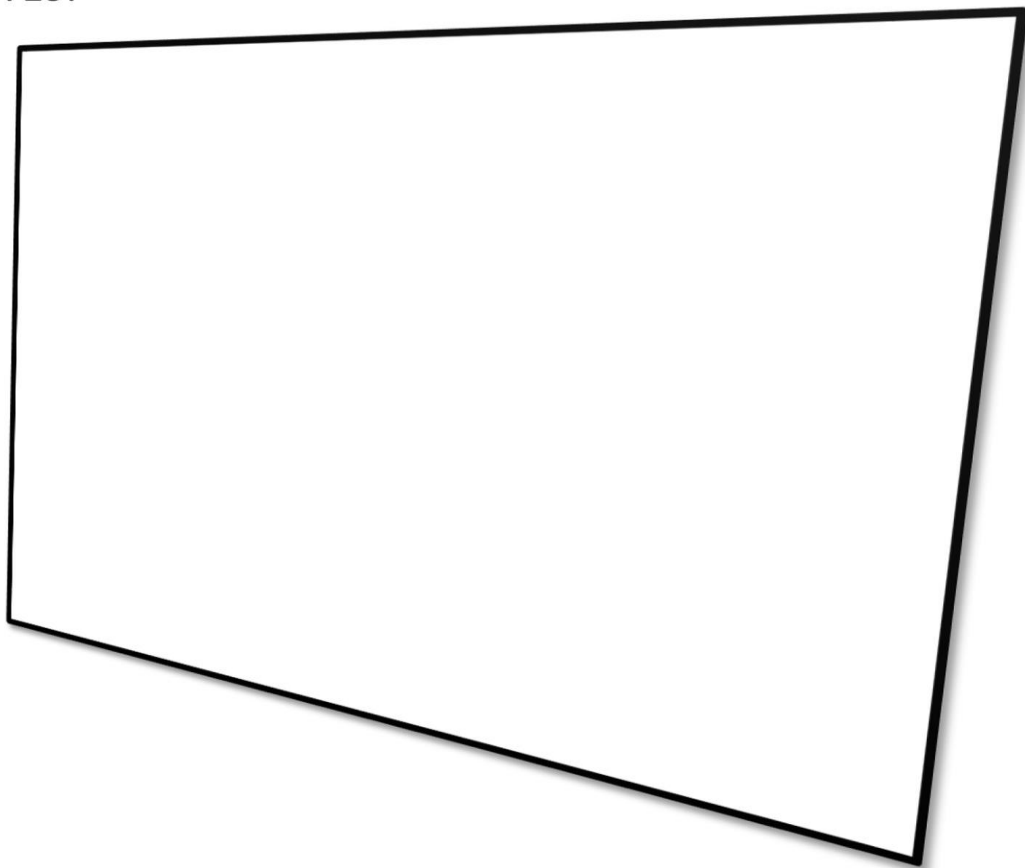




## PiXL Revisit: Transform

Unit / Topic:

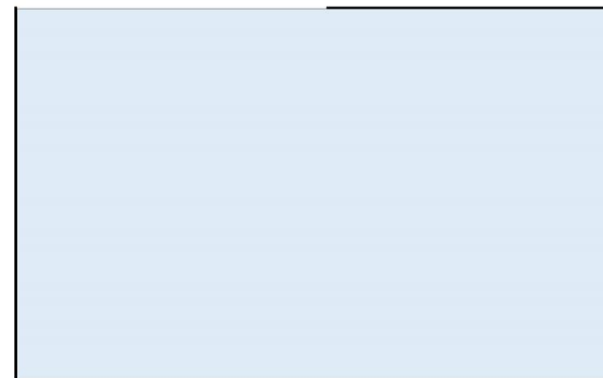
NOTES:



Picture



Picture

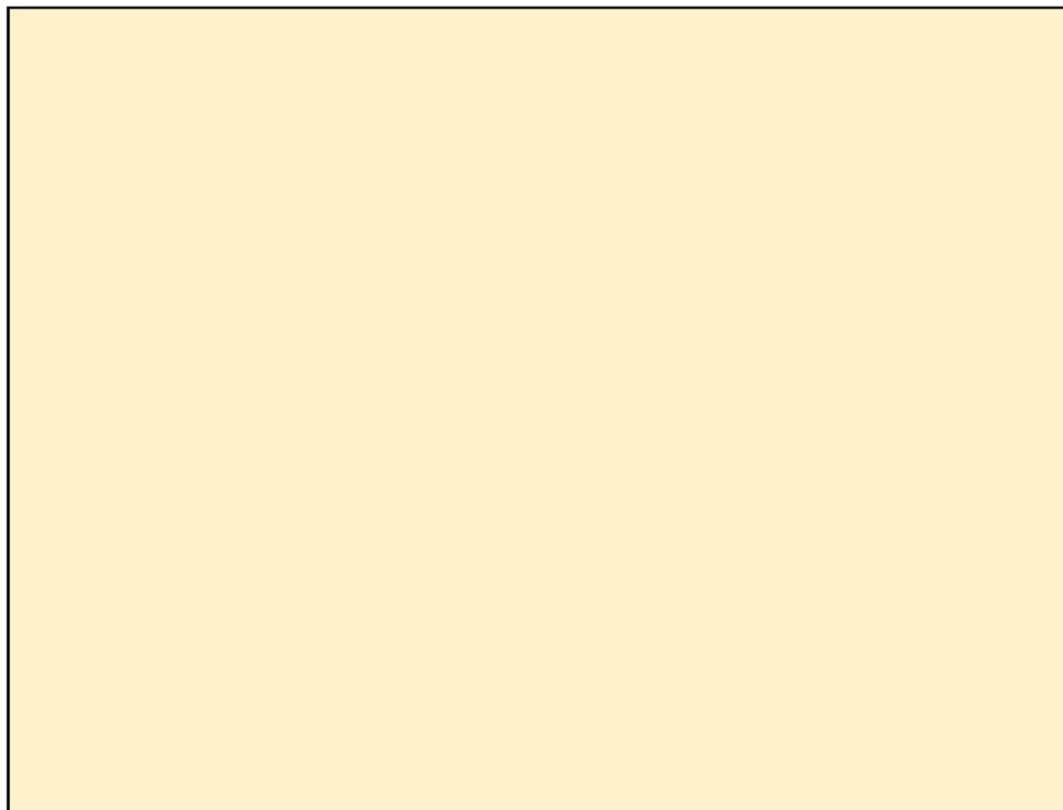




## PiXL Revisit: Transform

Unit / Topic:

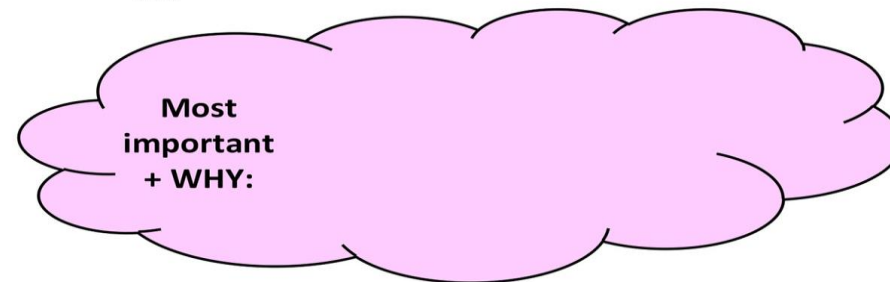
PICTURE / SOURCE / INFO / RESOURCE



### Key Points

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

**Most  
important  
+ WHY:**





## PiXL Revisit: Experiment on a page

Experiment Title:

### Process / Method

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

### Results

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Experiment Diagram

Label

Label

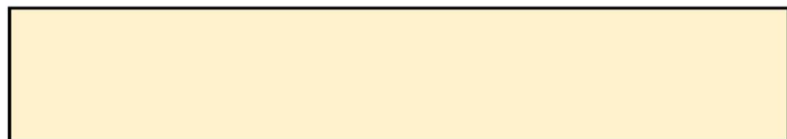
Label

Formulae





## PiXL Revisit: Flexibility of thinking Connection Map



3<sup>rd</sup> June

**Recap** \_\_\_\_\_:

Not sure	OK	Great!

What do you need to re-cover?

4<sup>th</sup> June

**Recap** \_\_\_\_\_:

Not sure	OK	Great!

What do you need to re-cover?

5<sup>th</sup> June

**Recap** \_\_\_\_\_:

Not sure	OK	Great!

What do you need to re-cover?

6<sup>th</sup> June

**Recap** \_\_\_\_\_:

Not sure	OK	Great!

What do you need to re-cover?

7<sup>th</sup> June

**Recap** \_\_\_\_\_:

Not sure	OK	Great!

What do you need to re-cover?

10<sup>th</sup> June

**Recap** \_\_\_\_\_:

Not sure	OK	Great!

What do you need to re-cover?

11<sup>th</sup> June

**Recap** \_\_\_\_\_:

Not sure	OK	Great!

What do you need to re-cover?

12<sup>th</sup> June

**Recap** \_\_\_\_\_:

Not sure	OK	Great!

What do you need to re-cover?

13<sup>th</sup> June

**Recap** \_\_\_\_\_:

Not sure	OK	Great!

What do you need to re-cover?

14<sup>th</sup> June

**Recap** \_\_\_\_\_:

Not sure	OK	Great!

What do you need to re-cover?



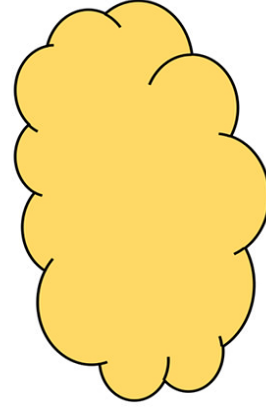
**PiXL Revisit:**  
**Prioritise - Significance and Importance**

Unit / Topic:

**Notes:**

1.

**Key Facts, Dates, Words,**



**Number of Priority:**

2.

WHY?

3.

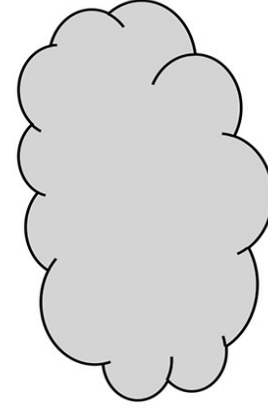
WHY?

4.

WHY?

5.

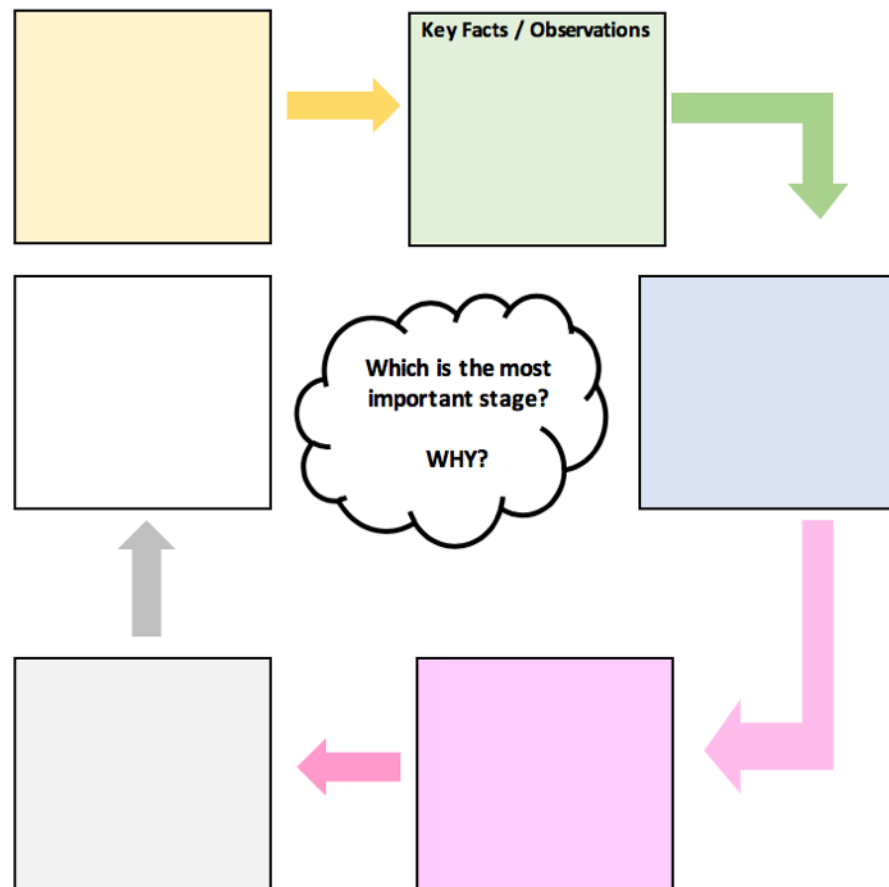
WHY?





## PiXL Revisit: Process and Categorise Steps and stages explained

Unit / Topic:



## PiXL Revisit: Ranking Triangle

Name of Topic:

Name:

Class:

The most important information goes at the top and then the least important at the bottom. Make sure you justify WHY you think it the most/least important.



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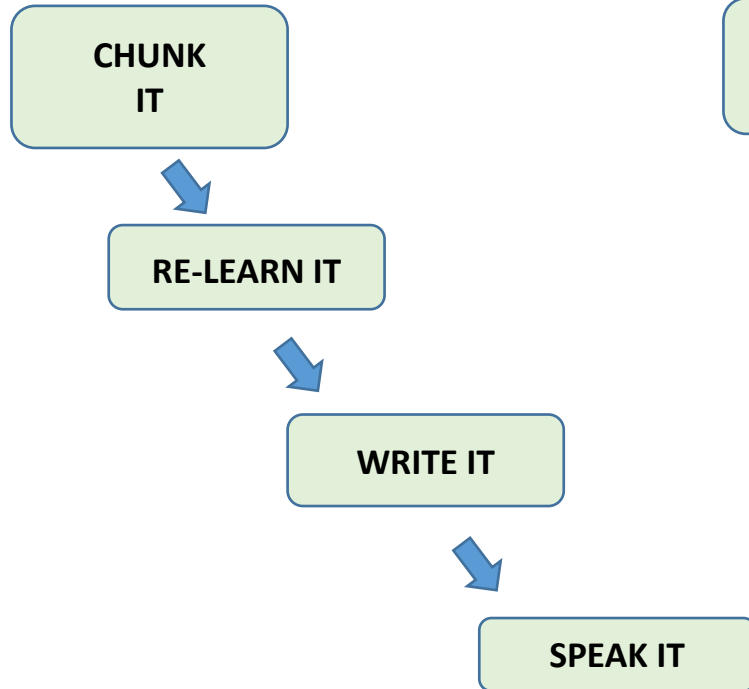
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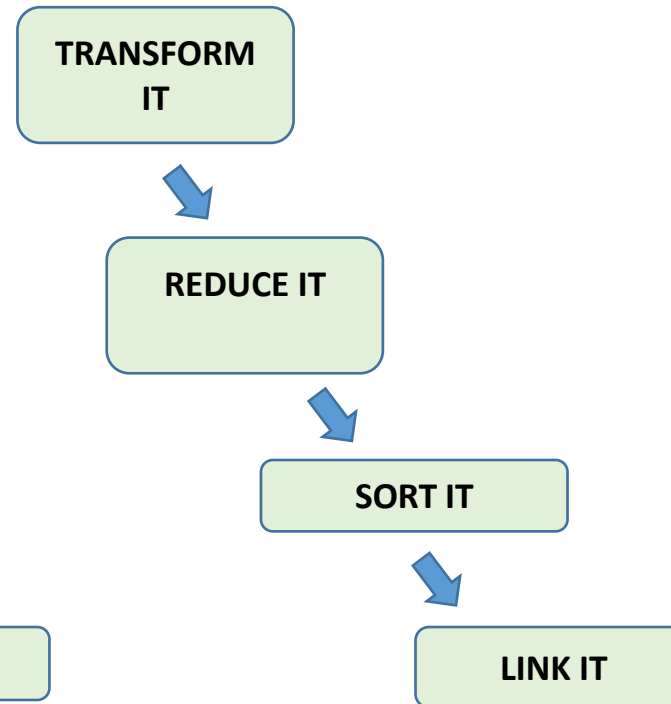


# Re-visit

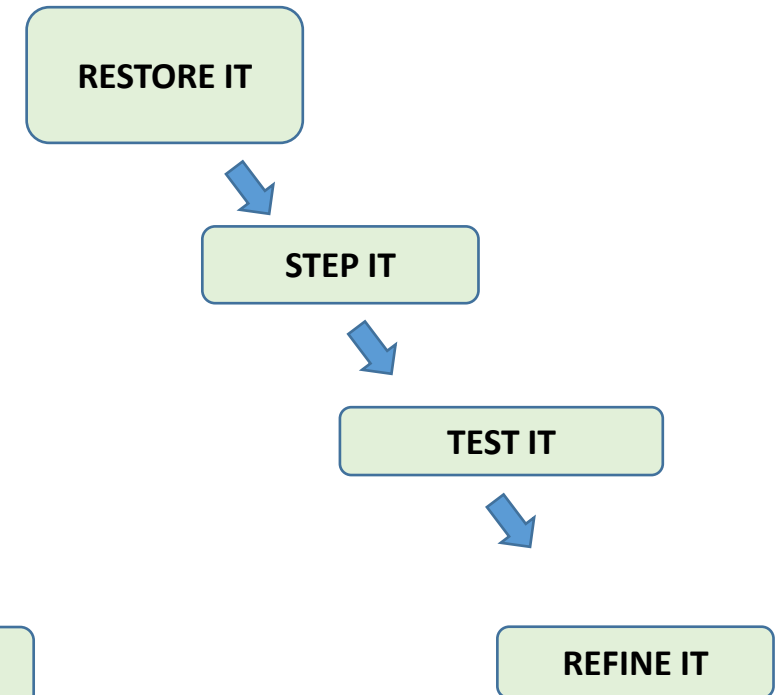
## Upload



## Process



## Download



PIXL Revisit is a simple revisiting method that ensures students are preparing for external exams in an effective way. It is based on the three key stages explained above and is arranged around a 10-week cycle.

- Stage 1 - **Upload** - Embedding the knowledge.
- Stage 2 - **Process** - Deepening the knowledge.
- Stage 3 - **Download** - Demonstrating the knowledge.



# REVISION TIMETABLE

Week Commencing:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9:00am							
10:00am							
11:00am							
12:00am							
1:00pm							
2:00pm							
3:00pm							
4:00pm							
5:00pm							
6:00pm							
7:00pm							
8:00pm							
9:00pm							
10:00pm							

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