

Five strategies for encouraging more effective independent study



Quizzing

This technique is quick and easy. It involves repeatedly quizzing yourself (or a friend) on what you have got to learn. This technique has been shown to have the highest impact in terms of supporting learning. Some ways in which you can do this easily:

- Using flashcards with questions on one side and answers on the other – keep testing yourself
- Create quizzes for yourself and for friends – share them with each other and keep testing!
- Create 'fill the gap' or matching exercises for you or a friend to complete
- Create multiple choice quizzes for you or a friend to complete

Spacing

Rather than cramming all of your revision into blocks, it is better to space it out over a longer period of time. This approach creates the opportunity for forgetting to occur, which is crucial in creating long term memories. If you come back to learning after a few days or weeks, you will have to think harder about it, which helps you to remember it more.

Example spaced timetable

	Science	RE	English	Maths
Monday	Reactions of carbonyl compounds	Biblical examples of experiences	Otto's concept of numinous	Jacobean theatre
Tuesday	The late romance plays	General Binomial Expansion	Features of carbonyl compounds	Partial Fractions
Wednesday	Parametric Equations	Act One character and plot	Algorithms	Properties of carboxylic acids
Thursday	Properties of carboxylic acids	Swainburne credibility & testimony	Theme of Power and control	Act One character and plot
Friday	Swainburne credibility & testimony	Esters, triglycerides and fats	Parametric Equations	William James - experiences
Saturday	Properties of carboxylic acids	Features of carbonyl compounds	Theme of Power and control	William James - experiences
Sunday	Properties of carboxylic acids	Jacobean theatre	Partial Fractions	Properties of carboxylic acids
BREAK				
BREAK				
BREAK				

Elaboration

One of the best things that you can do to support your revision is to get into the habit of asking yourself (or a friend) extension questions about the material you are studying. The questions most encourage you to elaborate on your learning by clarifying, analysing, speculating or contextualising.

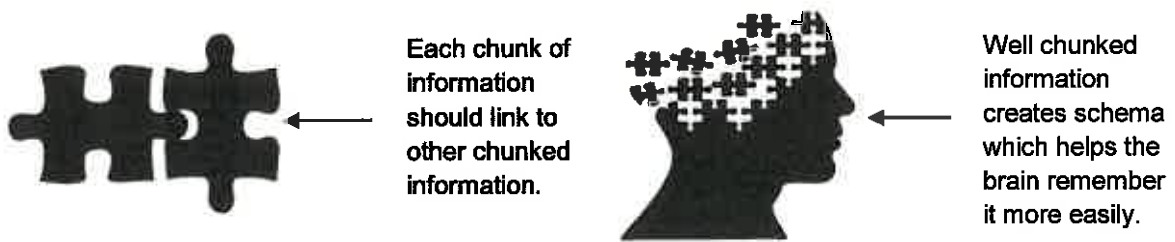
- **Clarify** - What does this mean?
- **Analyse** - Why does this matter?
- **Speculate** - What would happen if?
- **Contextualize** - How does this relate to?

Chunking

A chunk is information, such as an historical timeline or a dance routine, which has been grouped together or chunked into a concept. Chunking is the means by which we develop our understanding of the world and is the reason why we can learn staggering amounts of information – by grouping things together and treating them as one idea we can internalise incredibly complex ideas and processes.

There are three stages to effective chunking:

1. **Focus** – chunking required attention on the learning.
2. **Understanding** – full understanding before chunking material.
3. **Context** – going beyond understanding the initial problem or concept and seeing when, where and how to apply it.



Create banks of flash cards with chunked information:

- use headings and titles for different sections
- use bullet points to summarise and clarify important points
- use tables to summarise large amounts of data
- combine quick illustrations with text to create visual associations

Metacognition

Metacognition is essentially thinking about thinking. Effective metacognition controls highly important aspects of our minds, including motivation, self-regulation and will power. It is a way of mentally stepping back from a process to consider the 'hows' and 'whys' of what we do, such as answering questions in an exam, or going through a set of moves in a performance, and reflecting on how these process can be improved. There are a number of ways in which thinking about your thinking can help enhance your learning and improve your performance during an assessment.

Six steps to organise independent study:

