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Time management and revision techniques

Exams are a normal part of everyone's academic journey. Being able to recall a year's worth of subject knowledge in one sitting is extremely daunting and revising for exams can often feel overwhelming. However, as my mum (originally Benjamin Franklin) always says "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail" and preparation, planning and organisation are key when it comes to mastering revision, and ultimately succeeding in your exams. Here are a few tips for time management and revision techniques to help.

- **Overcoming procrastination.** Procrastination affects us all; rather than being a reflection of laziness or poor time management, it is a symptom of our negative emotions or inner feelings about a task. Recognising when and how we are most likely to, is one step towards overcoming it. Also reframing the task in a more positive light can help.
- **Creating a productive workspace.** Having a **dedicated workspace** can help put us in the right frame of mind for studying and can help us to focus. This space might be at home, at school or in a public library or café, but it's often better to keep this space separate from where you will rest or switch off from studying. It's often better to have a clean and tidy space, free from distractions, and make sure you have all of the books, pens, snacks and materials you need before you start, (but don't let tidying/organising the space become a form of procrastination). **Limit your distractions.** If your phone is a distraction, keep it in another room or use a focus mode or app (such as [forest](#)) to limit interruptions. Some people find revising with others useful, but if you are tempted to get distracted, find a space where you can revise alone. Some people like to revise in silence, but others (like me), need some background noise to help focus. I often find a lofi or binaural beats playlist does the trick!

- **Make a plan.** Whether you use a calendar or task app, or good old pen and paper, it's really important to make a plan. When you are first starting out, get a copy of the curriculum or course content for each subject and break it down into **bite-sized topics or sections**. This way, you know you've covered everything and you're less likely to try and cram everything in the night before an exam. Decide on what needs to be prioritised and create a calendar or schedule accordingly, splitting the day/week up into smaller blocks of time (remember to schedule in breaks too!). When scheduling tasks **be specific**. Rather than scheduling '*45 minutes for biology revision*', schedule '*45 minutes to revise protein synthesis, 1 hour to do a practice paper*' etc. If you get bored easily, switch things up by scheduling different topics or subjects after each other, rather than spending a whole day just revising one single subject. Finally, I personally like to create mini checklists or to-do lists, so that I can get a little dopamine boost every time I tick something off!
- **Take breaks.** During study leave or exam season, it can be tempting to want to revise every hour of every day, but this can lead to exhaustion and burnout. It's well known that our brains retain information better when we allow it to rest and take a break. It's often useful to **designate specific times for breaks** in your schedule, as that way, you won't feel any guilt about taking a break, and you will be refreshed and ready to focus when the allotted break time is over. Remember, it's also important to **take breaks from screen time**, so try to go out and do something on your breaks, rather than scrolling through Instagram. Try to get a good night's sleep throughout the revision period and especially before the exam, so this often means having a daily wind-down routine; find what works for you. Finally, it can be really beneficial to have a rest day also. I find that whether in stressful periods, or even in just day to day life, my mental health is drastically improved by having one day a week to rest, relax, spend time with family or friends, or by doing the things that I enjoy. This can work as an incentive to study, but also leaves us feeling refreshed and ready to start on the next tasks or challenges.
- **Try different techniques.** We all learn in different ways, and sometimes different topics are easier to learn and understand using different methods. Instead of just copying from text books, try online revision guides (such as [Chemrevise](#) or [MME](#)), try handwritten notes summarising key information in your own words, try writing notes without looking at the book, try making flashcards or posters (in science subjects, you often have to memorise long processes or equations, making your own, colourful, diagrams and posters can help you to learn this information), try talking aloud or explaining the theories or concepts to others, you could even try making your own online quizzes or slide decks. The methods you use will differ, depending on what stage of revision you are at, but one thing I would strongly recommend

when the exams are approaching, is to do past papers. Doing **past papers under timed conditions**, will help you to identify mistakes and areas that you need to work on, but will also get you used to working quickly under pressure. When you do these papers, make sure you **refer to the mark schemes**. This will help you to understand exactly what the exam board is looking for and where you can gain more marks.

Finally, a lot of these time management and organisation skills come with practice. It's all about creating skills and techniques which are sustainable. Don't worry if it takes a while to master, but focus on creating good habits, as these will be beneficial for your future careers and in the long run.