

## Testing yourself

**The revision cycle** To get the most from your revision, test yourself again and again but with increasing gaps between tests:

1. 10 minutes after learning something (e.g. at the end of the 10 minute study break which you take after learning the topic.
2. 1 day later at the beginning of a revision session
3. 3 days later
4. 1 week later....etc

If you can't remember the information at any point in the cycle then relearn it and go back to (1).

## Recalling the information

**Remembering** Practice planning lots of answers to old exam questions. You don't have to write the answer out in full. Practice plans will get you used to interpreting questions, then choosing and ordering what you know in order to answer them. During the exam this will help your ability to retrieve information quickly and see how to apply it to the particular question.

**Stay calm** During exams stay calm. If you can't remember something move on to another topic. Your mind is likely to remember the information once you stop searching for it.

For more information, see....

**Preparing for exams 1. Planning your revision.**

**Preparing for exams 3. Writing exam answers.**

For more on this and other aspects of academic study, see our website at [www.rdg.ac.uk/studyadvice](http://www.rdg.ac.uk/studyadvice)

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## Improve your memory

### Preparing for exams 2



This includes advice on:

- Active learning
- Learning through understanding
- Strategies for rote learning
- Testing yourself

**This guide is an introduction to the advice available. For more detailed advice on Preparing for Exams, see the Study Advice website**

Many students worry about memory especially in relation to exams.

In exams, for most modules, you will not be expected to be able to repeat information by rote. University exams are designed to test your ability to apply information by applying facts and ideas to the question being asked. You will need to be able to see the links between ideas quickly and select the most relevant information to include in your answer.

This study guide contains a series of suggestions for ways to improve your memory during revision: not all of these will be effective for everybody, so experiment and find what works for you.

## Getting your timing right

**Time of day** - Think about when you work best (morning, afternoon or evening). When you need to learn facts, try to revise when you are most alert and focused.

**Taking breaks** - Take regular breaks to let your memory recover and absorb the information you have just studied. You will learn best if you revise material, have a sleep and then review the material the next day.

**Pacing your learning** - You will learn best if you spread your learning of a particular topic over an extended period of time. Rather than focusing on similar information for a whole day, change topics completely. When you next pick up a revised topic take a short time to recall what you learned previously and then build on it with new information.

## Practising active learning

**Passive learning does not work!** - It's not effective to read your notes over and over, copy out notes or highlight bits of handouts. You need to think actively about ideas if you are going to remember them.

**Learn actively** by thinking, understanding and connecting the things you are trying to learn to your existing ideas and knowledge. Consider how the information can be used to answer exam questions from past papers. Is it a theory? Or supporting evidence? Do you agree with it?

### Ask yourself...

“What have I just learnt?”

“How could I use it to answer an exam question?”

## Strategies for understanding

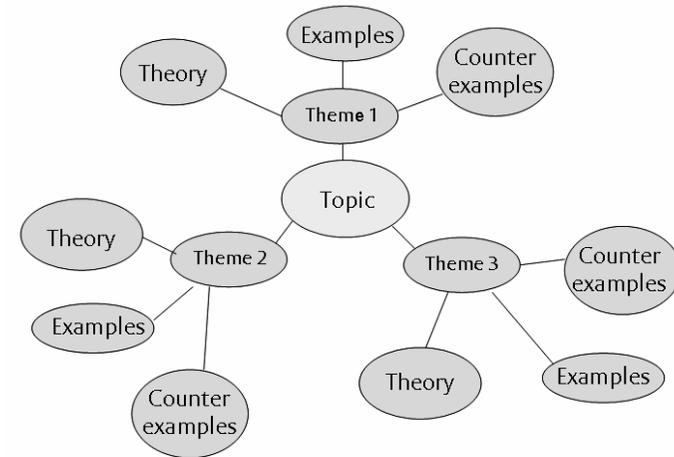
**Make sense of the information** - Information is hard to remember if it does not make sense. So you need to understand what you are trying to learn and relate it to things you already know.

**Use your own words** in revision notes as this connects the ideas to your understanding.

**Think about the material...** and look for similarities and differences between new information and what you already know. Why was the research valuable? Has it been replicated? Does it support old theories or suggest new ones?

**Explain the idea** to a friend as this helps you to organise the ideas and ensures that you have really understood them.

**Organise the information** - It is easier to remember well organised information. Try to find a meaningful structure for the information. Identify the most significant points, break down ideas into sections. Make a spidergram to summarise ideas and evidence. It is easier to remember one series of connected ideas rather than a lot of separate points.



**Make the information more memorable** - One way is to generate sounds or images to go with the information and form mental images to go with the ideas. Or make a spidergram using colours to create a visual image.

## Strategies for rote learning

**Learning formulae and brief facts** - Start learning formulae early in your revision and learn one at a time. Write the information out in colour on a card and stick it somewhere prominent, e.g. by the kettle or in the bathroom. Look at it every time you pass by. Test yourself. If you know it then put another formula in a different colour by the kettle and add the old one to a pile that you test yourself on regularly.

**Mnemonics** - These can be a useful way to learn facts. Use the first letter of each word to create an easily remembered phrase or word e.g. Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain (colours of the rainbow in order: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet).