



## Effective Study

### Spend time on activities which make you *recall* information

A common mistake that students make when studying (revising) is that they spend their time trying to remember information by just reading it or by copying it out. It is an easy trap to fall into. However, research into how we learn tells us that **it is far more effective to spend study time on activities which make you RECALL information.**

You might think that you are learning something by reading it or by copying it out, but until you prove that you have remembered it by **recalling** it, you can't ever be sure. The chances are that you won't remember as much as you think you have, or you will misremember things i.e. there will be mistakes.

When recalling information, it can be tempting to just think of what an answer is, rather than writing it down. This is not good enough. When re-calling information as part of study, it is very important that you write down what you are recalling. This takes more effort, but is an important part of proving that you know something correctly (or not), and being able to check that you are correct.

Because of the way human brains work, recalling information helps you to remember it, far better than reading and copying-out does. **Recalling information helps strengthens the memory you have of it.** The more you recall the same information, the stronger the memory becomes. People who become expert on particular topics do so because they are recalling the same information again, and again and again. Think of it like drawing a faint line with a pencil - which is difficult to see - and then going over this line again, and again and again. It changes:



The thin pencil line represents the weak memory, which is weak because you only practised recalling the information once. The thicker line represents the strong memory, which is strong because you practised recalling the information again, and again and again.

Assessments (e.g. class tests and exams) are designed to make you recall information. However, **you should not wait until an assessment that a teacher has set you to start practising recalling information - you can and should do this yourself, as often as you can.** For each of your subjects, you should be spending time on recall revision activities every week.

The table on the reverse of this sheet summaries the sorts of activity that you should and shouldn't be spending study time on. Time is limited and precious, so make sure you are spending it doing the things that are really going to help you learn (and not on the sorts of things where you think that you're learning, but you're not).

Clearly, there is a need to check that you are recalling the correct information, which is why comparing what you have written down against answer schemes, notes or textbooks, or asking a teacher about it, is very important.

Mr Robertson (Depute Headteacher)  
January 2019

# Effective



# Not effective



## Self-quiz

**READ, COVER, WRITE** (what you've just read, from memory), **CHECK, CORRECT**.

Use **Knowledge Organisers** to do this (sometimes called "summary notes" or "course specifications") - these are written summaries of the knowledge which needs to be learned.

Going through the read/cover/write/check/correct routine will help you to memorise information. You should repeat it several times. This is different from just reading and re-reading information, because you have to **recall** what you think you have remembered.

## Practise questions (and check answers)

- **SQA Past Papers** (free, and online)
- **BBC Bitesize** (free, and online)
- **BrightRed** (free, and online)
- **Scholar** (free, and online)
- **Textbooks and Study Guides** (often made available by teachers, or can be purchased)

If you get something wrong, or if you have had to guess, look up your notes or ask your teacher for help.

## Make and use Flash Cards

These are very useful to promote recall, so long as you are genuinely testing yourself with them - which means writing down what you think an answer is, rather than just thinking it.

Writing it down helps you commit to the answer and prove whether or not you have remembered it correctly.

## Make mind-maps or write down everything you know about a topic

Both these activities make you recall information. You should then check what you have written against your notes, Knowledge Organisers, textbooks etc.

## Reading

- and doing nothing with it.

## Copying notes or sections of textbooks

- and doing nothing with it.