

Revision: What the Research tells us... A guide for Students (and their Parents)

What *not* to do...



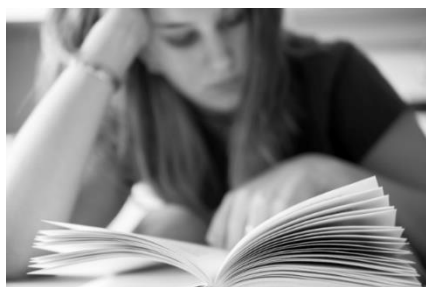
First of all, here are some of the strategies that research has shown to have a *limited* impact [and that you should seriously consider ditching].

If you love **highlighting** and **re-reading**, then think again. Research indicates that both have limited impact.

Research shows that making *connections* and *links* across our learning is the way forward. **Highlighting** might look pretty and feel satisfying, but actually involves us *isolating* chunks of learning. This doesn't help us process or retain the learning meaningfully. **Re-reading** is time-consuming, dull and passive – and also doesn't help us learn effectively.



Research also shows that '**massed practice**' [aka '**cramming**' – for example, setting aside 8 hours to revise one subject, continuing well into the night, on the eve of the exam] is also not recommended. Doing a **little but often** – distributed over a period of time - is far more effective... and nocturnal revision should be avoided!



Far more effective...

Research recommends **interleaving**. This means switching between topics when revising; not sticking with one focus for too long. There is evidence that mixing up material and interleaving practice encourages a greater retention of knowledge for a longer period of time and enables you to make more links across your learning. Varying the order in which you tackle your interleaved revision is beneficial for this reason [e.g. session 1- ABC; session 2 – CAB; session 3 – BCA].



Retrieval practice has also been shown to be highly beneficial. Put away the class notes/text book and sketch/write down everything that you know about a

particular exam focus; then check your notes/text book to see what you've missed. This can then be followed by self-testing with flash cards and/or practice exam opportunities. Focus on retaining key concepts and links *across* the learning – not just definitions and key facts.

Ask 'Why?' Don't just engage with the learning at surface level [e.g. what photosynthesis is] but also probe/question **why** that fact may be true. **Self-explanation** is also beneficial: explain to yourself [or another] what you are doing and why you are doing it in that way [e.g. 'Why did I just decide to do X?' – where X is any move relevant to solving the problem at hand].

Talking through the subject and **explaining/answering questions** to someone else is also a great way of embedding learning.



To find out more, watch the videos at

<http://www.learningscientists.org/videos/>

Or read:

Dunlosky, 2013, *Strengthening the Student Toolbox, Study Strategies to Boost Learning* available at <http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/dunlosky.pdf>