

Revision tips to get you started.

It's getting close to that time of year again, the sun is out but you've got to be inside studying , because it's exam time and revision is on your mind.



Thinking of somewhere else you'd rather be?

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I feel for you, I really do. We've all been there. We all hated it. Anyone who tells you that revision was no problem for them or who weren't revising were fibbing.

Through a process of many years of sitting exams, then setting exams, chatting with students and having children now going through the exam process, I'd like to think I have a few insights into the exam process.

Once you get over the fact that exams are inevitable, or if you choose a certain career or other, you may find that exams are part of your life. If you accept that you just have to get on with it, grit your teeth and deal with it and get down to revision, you've already won half of the psychological battle. This applies to every exam from school to university and beyond.

So where to begin.

It's very simple. Begin.

No matter how daunting, no matter how great the task ahead of you, if you don't start, you won't finish.

Most of this anxiety comes from a total lack of confidence and what you must do is have a belief in yourself.

Now, I'm not saying don't revise, don't work and walk into an exam thinking it's all going to be great, because it won't. However, if you know you have to undergo some sort of test- accept it, it's easier than battling with an attitude of not wanting to do it, or of thinking how unfair life is. Woe is me.

Now you've accepted it, prepare. You wouldn't run a marathon without training, would you?

So, here are a few of my handy revision tips that I hope provide some logistical way forwards for you.



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Make revision notes

You may think this is a little old school, but then again, the exam system is. Notes, I find, are your go to. Notes as I call them, are the thing where you put all of your ideas, explanations about a topic that have enabled you to understand them,

practice papers, and directions as to where your ideas came from. Ultimately, the day before an exam you just go to your notes and **they should look after you.**

Learn stuff.

I'm sorry- sleeping with your notes under your pillow does not work. You do not learn by osmosis. Revision is hard work- not because it's hard, but because it's making you do something when you'd really rather be doing something else.

Make yourself learn stuff. Find out your strengths in learning and play to those strengths. Are you a visual learner? If so, draw pictures of what you need to learn and stick them everywhere. Are you a person who needs to hear things? Then record your thoughts, most phones have dictaphones, record what you need and listen to it. You get the idea. Revision is not a one size fits all.

When you are learning, some people have suggested that memory pathways can also be created by smelling certain smells. Get some oils - peppermint, rose, lavender, whatever- and have it close by when revising a certain subject. On the day of the exam, whip out a handkerchief with the smell on- it should trigger those memories associated with whatever you were revising at the time.

Immersion and consistency.

If you're trying to revise for maths and any other sciences it's really difficult to revise at the last minute, particularly for maths. Maths, like chemistry I have found, can be drip fed over a period of time, and then for some reason the penny suddenly drops and you just get it. For maths, doing all these tests online is okay, but your exam is going to be on paper, so go old school and do your maths revision on paper. Every day 15 minutes at least. The familiarity makes it easier to walk into an exam.

The same as I have mentioned, is true for the sciences. Familiarity with scientific language, scientific approach and articulating ideas comes from consistent exposure to these subjects. If you happen to be one of those people who somehow switched off during class (yes we've all been there), then during revision time when you're learning everything, consistent small doses is what you need.

Use one or two good websites as resources for revision

There are numerous amazing sites with information to help you revise and pass your exams. This doesn't mean that your teacher isn't good or that you aren't a good student. We all learn in a particular way and if you have missed a lesson or two or are not on the same wavelength as your teacher, that's okay but it can become a problem if you disengage and don't try and get help to see the problem from another point of view.

For those doing GCSEs, I do recommend the BBC bite-size courses <https://www.bbc.com/bitesize>, they allow you to get the bare bones of the subject down and provide tests of every subject to see if you're following. As with every test, if you're not getting 100% in these online things keep repeating them until you do.

I'm aware that exam criteria will be different across the globe but these examples are aimed at those who are doing exams at about age 16. It may not be specifically targeted for what you want, but by doing other courses in the same field you end up gaining a breath of knowledge. Remember, no work is ever wasted.

Practise under exam conditions

Finally, I would say that after you have revised as much as you can revise, after you have practised as much as you can practice with little test questions, you actually set a practice exam and exam conditions. Pretend you are sitting in exam. Give yourself two hours, get your clear pencil case and all your stuff in it, then off you go.

Get nervous when sitting the practise 'exam'. This will be on your terms. As I have said in previous blogs <https://franscienceart.com/2019/03/27/6-simple-and-effective-exam-revision-secrets/>, inducing control over your anxiety by being in a familiar setting, you can work towards preventing anxiety in the real exam, and in doing that you can enable yourself to be on top form.

I know exams are difficult and I hate them. I think it's because we know that they are a mechanism of being judged. Just remember what's important to you when you're sitting these exams. Why you're doing these exams is irrelevant. These exams are reflection of everything that's going on in your life right now and if you nail them and do very well, well hats off to you, but honestly, to me, what I respect the most is that you tried and I don't just mean, like, when your mum says 'well at least you tried'.

You faced your fears, and you did it anyway. Even though something can be so tough, you're brave enough to face it and you may find you get you don't get what you want, but people I respect are those who:

- Prepare
- Get ready
- See what happens, come what may.

If you can do that and you have given yourself a life skill that is invaluable.

Bring it on.