

# STUDY SKILLS 1

## My Future

You are going to complete an exercise which is often used by Personnel Departments. This asks you to imagine yourself 5 years ahead. Try to think realistically what you want out of life. This should not be only a measure of financial prosperity and material goods!!!

You wake up on a weekday morning.

Describe the room -

- Is it part of a house or flat?
- Do you own or rent? Describe the house?

Are you alone?

- Who is with you?
- Who else lives in the house/Flat?

What time is it?

What are you going to do today?

What are you going to do at the weekend?

Where are you going on holiday this year?

Describe the type of holiday you will have?

How much do you earn?

Who do you have to support financially?

What do you value most in your life?

What's the point? You are all choosing careers pathways for when you leave school - does your career choice fit in with the salary you earn and the lifestyle you envisage? How are you going to attain what you want? Now - what are you going to do when you leave - not just next year - plan your career for the next five years

- Year 1
- Year 2
- Year 3
- Year 4
- Year 5

## STUDY SKILLS 2

### So you think you've got loads of time each week?

We know how little time there is until the exams - but when it comes to studying - how much time do you have each week? I am not suggesting that every minute of your time is used for studying - but what time do you have available?

Take a copy of the Weekly calendar - let's see how much time you have. The calendar is divided in to morning, afternoon and evening - you can subdivide these. The comments space may allow you to note details of commitments.

1. Mark in school Monday - Friday, morning and afternoon.
2. Mark in any work commitments - weekend/ evening jobs, regular babysitting commitments etc.
3. Mark in any regular sports commitments.
4. Mark in any other regular commitments relating to hobbies.
5. Mark in any regular family commitments - visits etc.
6. Mark in any regular social commitments - names and details are unnecessary!

Now have you got any time left?

In order to make sure you have enough study before these exams you are going to have to prioritise and manage your time very carefully. Ask yourself the following questions

1. Do you need to work so many hours in Tesco's?
2. Do you need to baby-sit 3 nights a week?
3. Do you have to play football 4 nights a week?
4. Can you curtail your social life?

In the short term it is going to be necessary to reduce your other commitments for the next three months in order to get through your exams. Remember - it's a case of short term discomfort for the long term good.

It also may be necessary for you to manage time more carefully. Look at your weekly calendar again. The afternoons are taken up with school but school stops at 3.35. What do you do between then and tea time? The evening is one unit - yet you may play sport from 7.00 until 8.00 - this still gives you time to study.

Go through the calendar day by day and carefully calculate how much time you have available to study. Set yourself a regular weekly calendar of study time - this will allow you to get into a study routine, and this will make things much easier for you over the coming months.

Take a new blank calendar and mark in YOUR weekly study time. Take it home and pin it up on the wall.



# STUDY SKILLS 3



## Basic Study Techniques

The most important study technique is that of believing in your ability to learn.

We can all learn - we are born with that ability but some people seem to find it easy whilst others find it more difficult. The difference is that some students understand the rules of learning whilst others don't. Some students have the motivation to learn whilst others find motivating themselves very difficult.

Almost all students learn study skills by trial and error - the idea of this course is to try to give you some hints so that you don't waste too much time learning to learn! We are all different - what works for you will not necessarily work for someone else - but understanding what makes us learn will!

**Motivation** - you have to want to learn. You remember the name of the girl or boy you met at the disco at the weekend because you want to remember. You need to be motivated to learn at school.

1. What do you want to do when you leave?

---

---

---

2. What qualifications do you need?

---

---

---

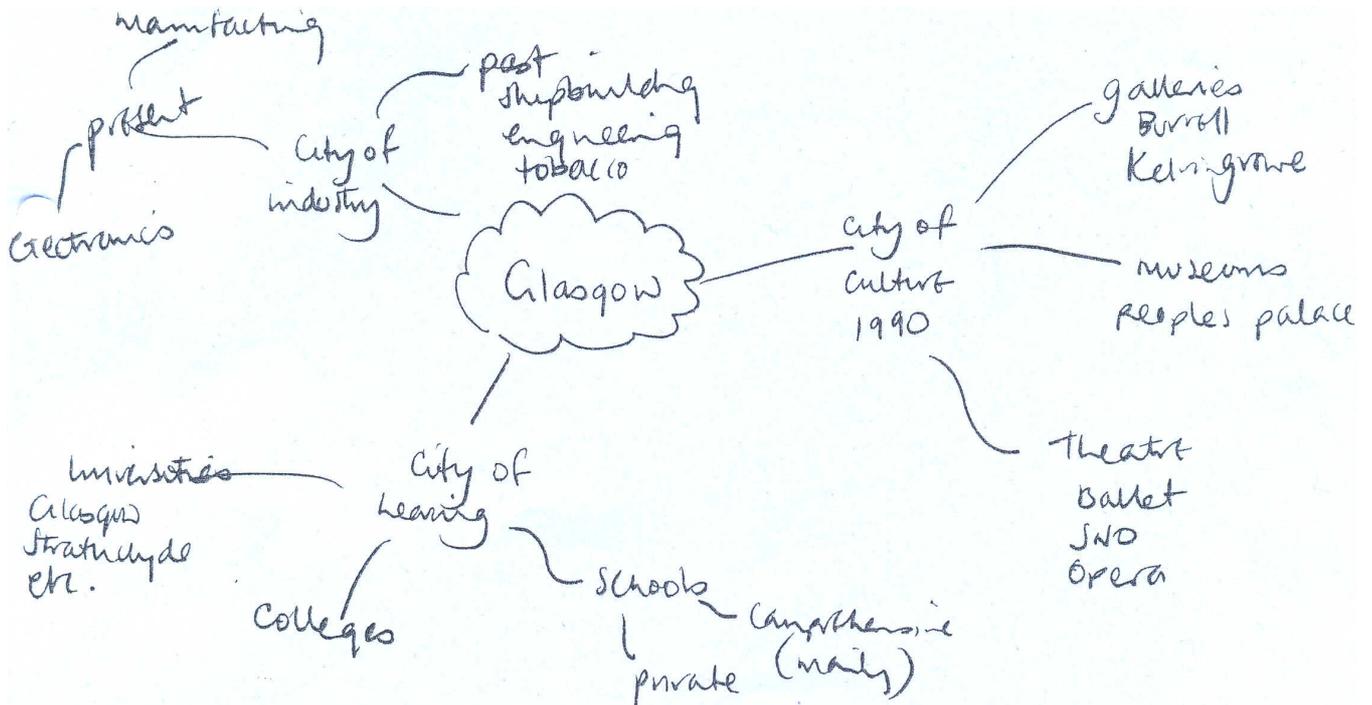
If you can fill in the spaces above you should be motivated to study so that you can do what you want when you leave. If you don't know, start finding out!!!!

## How to learn

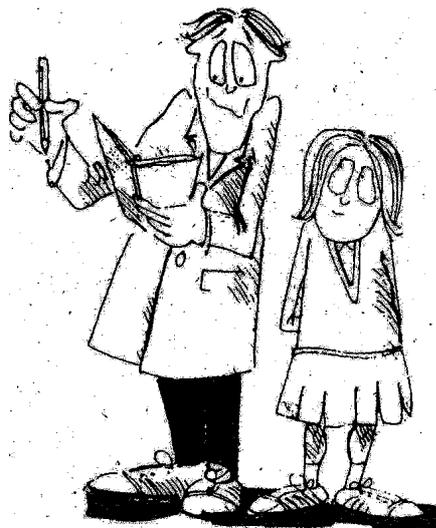
In order to learn effectively we must understand a little about how the brain works. The brain has two memory centres, the short term memory and the long term memory.

The short term memory deals with the day to day incoming information, much of which we don't require to remember - the 'in one ear and out the other' sort of information. The problem is that when you are in class, or studying, all incoming information goes into the short term memory - it does not go into the long term memory, and so it is very easy to "lose" it. In order to transfer the information you must process it in some way. In your long-term memory there are connections - it is like a giant mind - map. Every time you think of something you strengthen the connections. Copying a note will not transfer it to your long term memory as you don't really have to think, but if you summarise the note instead you will transfer it. As you think about how to summarise you are going over and over the connections and so that makes you remember it better. **The important idea is processing information - by processing we go over the connections, and we transfer information to the long term memory.** We can process in a variety of ways - summarise, write out important points in note form, do worked examples, talk about what you're learning, or highlight important points. This is the way we learn, and once something is transferred to the long term memory we can recall it fairly easily when necessary.





If you have a good set of notes it is worth far more than a number of textbooks. The notes are your textbook. When it comes to revising for exams you can go through your notes and write even shorter summaries and you can use underlining or highlighting to identify the most important facts. Your brain can work with learning links because it is based around connections- you remember a keyword - it links to the short revision note - it links to the more detailed note - it links back to the source of information - you can "see" the page of the book it came from!!



## STUDY SKILLS 5



### Exam preparation

Many people say they cannot do exams, and that is why they fail. Very often the reason is that they do not prepare properly, or that there is a flaw in their revision study skills, or that their exam technique is at fault. This lesson is on exam preparation.

This can take a little time - but it will certainly save you time in the long run!!

1. Find out when and where your exams are. (You can check right now on the SQA website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)). When you get the official SQA timetable, highlight your exams and stick the timetable onto the wall where you cannot miss it!!
2. If you are travelling to another school - do you sit the exam there? There is nothing worse than being panicked on the day of an exam by turning up at the wrong place, or indeed the wrong time. Make sure you know, well in advance!!
3. Make up an exam study timetable - not for a week before the exams - start at least six weeks before. This will allow you time for exam preparation, revision, and practise at exam techniques - all essential!! Two weekly outlines are attached to this sheet. I will keep a supply in my office - if you need more, let me know (Mrs. Robertson)!! Or make up your own on a computer! Use them!! Remember the rules from the weekly study / homework timetables.
  - a. Identify non-study time eg when you're at school, mealtimes, working in Tesco's etc. Make sure you allow a LIMITED amount of leisure time! If your timetable is now full - you're in trouble!!
  - b. Count up the number of spaces you have for study. Divide by the number of subjects you are doing. This will tell you how much time you have for each. ( You may want to increase the time for certain ones, but BE CAREFUL - the last thing you want is to wipe out one subject - you should have enough time for them all- make it as even as possible.)
  - c. Allocate subjects to the times available. It is best to change subject for each block - if you study the one subject for too long you will become stale!! Remember to include slots for regular homework and for completing projects etc.
  - d. **STICK ON THE WALL OF YOUR BEDROOM IN A PROMINENT PLACE!!!!**
4. Revision Lists - Draw up a list of revision topics. Many departments will give you such lists - make sure you use them. Put them at the front of your folder - you can tick off each topic as you revise it.
5. Organise your notes - Use your revision list to check that you have information / notes on all the topics. If you have missed anything due to absence, get a copy!! Make sure your notes are all in order - sort them out!! If your notes are well organised you will find studying much easier...
6. Textbooks - make sure you have all the textbooks you require - if not ask your teacher to borrow copies of any necessary texts. If you want further information or background reading, ask your teacher for advice. Go to the school library, or the local library or go online.

7. Past papers - Do you have copies of past papers to use for exam practise? You can download past papers free from the (SQA website [www.SQA.org.uk](http://www.SQA.org.uk)) There are also good study guides you can buy - WHSmith is a good source.....or Waterstones or other book shops.

**GET REVISING !! IT IS SOMETIMES VERY EASY TO BECOME OBSESSED WITH THE PREPARATION STAGE, SUCH THAT YOU NEVER QUITE GET ONTO THE ACTUAL REVISING STAGE. BE WARNED. !! REWRITING YOUR NOTES WITH MULTICOLOURED INDEXES FOR EACH FOLDER WILL NOT GET YOU THROUGH!!**



## STUDY SKILLS 6

### Revision Techniques

He lay on his bed .....his eyes were closed but flickered rapidly as he dreamt of yet another 5-0 victory for Dumbarton. He settled into a deeper sleep, relaxed and tranquil, despite the strains of Muse playing at full tilt on his I-Pod. Suddenly there was a crash!! Had the plasma blown up? Had the house subsided? Had the cold war heated up? No - it was the noise of his "Physics Is Fun" textbook falling to the floor. As the sound waves reached his inner ear he stirred ..... opened his eyes looked around with a slightly bemused smile..... which slowly turned to a look of pain and torture! He looked at the study timetable which was screaming at him from the wall beside the glossy signed sweat-stained print of Jedward .....AAAAAHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!

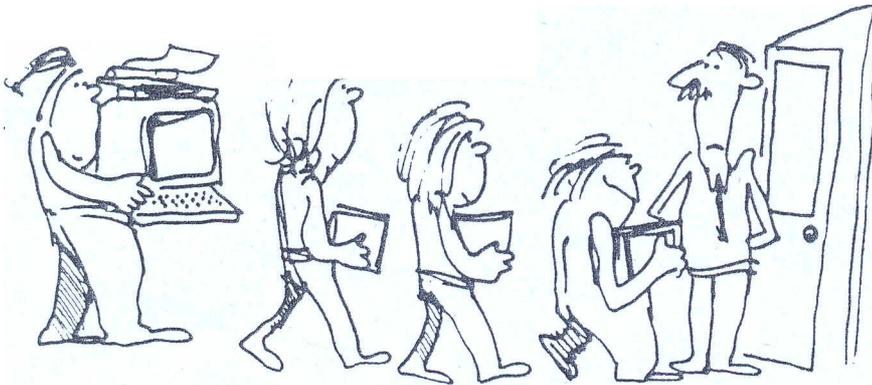
Some of the above will be familiar to you. It is vital that you use your study time effectively. Some common quotes are:

- A. "Its all right for her - she never does any work and she always passes!!" The reality of this oft used quote is:
  - 1) She lies well - she does study!!
  - 2) Her revision study techniques are better than yours!
- B. "If you don't know it by now, you never will." Absolute rubbish!
- C. "I can't do it" This usually means you WON'T do it!!
- D. "I hate her - she's so calm!" This probably means that she has prepared and feels that she's done all she can to do well, and you've not!

So how do you study effectively? Some of this may have been covered before - but it is too important to pass over.

- 1) Find somewhere suitable to study - this means a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. If you share a bedroom, try to explain to your brothers and sisters and parents the need for peace and quiet. If you cannot study at home, try the local library. If you have nowhere quiet to study during the exam leave then see me (Mrs. Robertson) and we will set up something for you during the day.
- 2) You must have a table to work at!! If you do not have a desk try local jumble sales or furniture sales to get one. Use the kitchen table! You really need a flat surface where you can write. Most people find that lying on your bed studying is conducive to one thing - sleep!!
- 3) You need peace and quiet. Some people say they work better with music in the background sometimes it does help to mask outside noise. For most of us it simply means that we sing along to the songs and don't do any work!
- 4) Stick to your study timetable. The more you procrastinate the greater the tension and panic will get!!
- 5) Work in short time blocks. One - two hours are suitable - but make sure you have regular short breaks - go and make a cup of coffee and then COME BACK and go onto your next block.
- 6) Making notes is the best way of revising in the first instance thinking about things and summarising them makes you remember them. Mind maps and flow charts are also useful. Try to learn general rules and principals rather than masses of isolated facts.
- 7) Talk about what you're doing. Tell your mum and dad or one of your pals - trying to explain something to somebody else often helps you to understand it!
- 8) Use Spaced Learning. It has been proved that repeated learning and relearning of the same material at regular intervals reduces the amount of detail forgotten. This can be particularly useful for final revision just before an exam. Look at your material over a few days at regular intervals and you will find your efficiency of learning improves.

- 9) For final revision the best thing is to play hide the notes! Read a section, then put your notes to one side and try to recall what you have just read. Then reread your note to see if you have remembered it all. This technique is also good for remembering formulae and diagrams which you might have to reproduce in an exam. Look at the diagram, then cover it and try to draw it out - then check it against the original. Repeat until you get it right.
- 10) Get some rest. Most people are worth nothing if they stay up until three in the morning!! Get some sleep!! If you're really worried, get up a little early and do a quick revision in the morning!!



## STUDY SKILLS 7

### So you've got it all on-line.....

Nowadays there are lots of materials on-line that you can use to help with studying. **This does not mean that you set up MSM or Bebo with BBC Bitesize in the background so that you can switch over when your mum or dad comes in!!!!**

There is a huge amount of information you can use to supplement the class notes. You can get information by using a search engine or by going onto specific websites. You can download written notes or take your own from the on-line sources. You can watch videos on related topics (BBC i-player could be a useful source if you miss a programme on TV). You can listen to or download podcasts and other audio materials onto MP3/ipod.

- There is a large amount of revision materials on the school website, for instance. The website address is: [www.scottishschools.info/valeoflevenacademy](http://www.scottishschools.info/valeoflevenacademy) . On the school website there are revision notes, study skills materials as well as podcasts and other resources.
- You can access a whole range of education materials at some education authority websites. A particularly good one is the East Renfrewshire site - curriculinks. The website address is:
- [www.ea.e-renfrew.sch.uk/curriculinks](http://www.ea.e-renfrew.sch.uk/curriculinks) .
- The exam timetable and past papers can all be accessed via the SQA website. The website address is: [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk) .
- There is a huge array of revision materials on the BBC website - particularly BBC Bitesize. The website address is: [www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/learning/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/learning/bitesize) . There is information on Scottish Highers and Standard Grade as well as English exam courses. The materials on the BBC include audio materials as well as video/online.
- VOLA pupils have access to the Scholar website which provides notes, revision materials and problem solving materials for a range of Highers and Advanced Highers, including Maths, Computing, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Business Management, Accounting & Finance and French. All pupils who are eligible to use this website have passwords as well as the website address. There is also a link on the school website for parents to check on how you are doing with your scholar work! The website address is: <http://scholar.hw.ac.uk> .

The one thing you have to be very careful about (apart from spending all your time on You-Tube when you're supposed to be studying) is that you do not make this a diversion from other forms of studying. Most people will still require the more conventional notes as have been described on this course! Having 742 pages of printed-out materials on 'electricity' sitting in the corner of your bedroom is still not going to get you through Higher Physics. The internet is a good source but it can't be the whole answer for most of us!!!



## STUDY SKILLS 8



### Exam Techniques

1. Many would argue that exam technique is as important as anything else in passing exams. I misread instructions in an O-Grade exam many years ago, and discovered five minutes before the end that 25 marks worth would not count. PANIC! Different exams take different techniques, and individual departments will give advice. However there are a few basics you should know.
2. Find out about the make up of the exam beforehand. How many papers are there? How many questions are there? How much time is there? How many marks is each question? From this you can calculate how much time you should give to each question, or section of the paper. Are there multiple choice, short answer or essay questions? Is there a choice element or is it all compulsory? You should know this before you go in - so that you know what to do, and don't have to rely on reading the instructions alone, when you'll be nervous and likely to misread them.
3. Use practice exam papers. Attempt whole questions - your teachers will probably be able to mark them. Nearer the exams, simply write outline answers identifying the points you would mention. Use multiple choice papers and skim through, checking up on ones you do not know, or do not know how to do.
4. Prepare well. If you have revised properly you SHOULD be able to do it! Have a little confidence in yourself. Try to keep calm on the day. Get up and read your notes in a relaxing bath and try to eat some breakfast. Take your folder, or some final notes with you - there is nothing more confidence sapping on the way to an exam than forgetting something and not being able to look it up. Make sure you leave home in plenty of time - arriving late in a sweaty, exhausted state is not conducive to passing! Make sure you have at least two pens and all the other things you might need, including 10 packs of chewing gum and your cuddly teddy bear as a good-luck mascot!
5. When you get into the exam room sit down, and start filling in the necessary information on the paper - this diverts your mind from panicking.
6. Before writing any answers, read quickly through the whole paper, and the instructions. If there is a choice element decide which questions you will do. Be very careful doing this. Count up how many marks you think you can get for each question before you decide.
7. Make sure you understand the question - read it at least three times before you start to answer it! If I had a pound for every time I've seen exams answers which did not answer the question asked.....
8. Write a plan (just headings/main points will do then put in order) before starting to write an essay question. This will only take a few moments but will save you time as you write.
9. Watch your time - divide up the time you have by the number of questions you have to do. If you have not finished a question and it is time to move on, leave space to complete it and move on - you can go back at the end.
10. Don't leave blank spaces. Try! If you write nothing you can't get any marks, but if you write something you might! Much of your work particularly at Higher level is based on transferable skills - you may not have done that case study, but you can use what you have learnt in another case study to answer!
11. If you're drawing diagrams or graphs - make sure they are drawn neatly and well labelled - BUT don't spend so long drawing them that you can't finish the written part.
12. Check your answers carefully - make sure you have mentioned all the points that you can - there's nothing wrong with adding a bit on to an answer. **Don't leave exams early - some people leave early and say it was easy - what that usually means is that they didn't answer in enough detail .....and they've probably not done too well !!**





## WEEKLY STUDY TIMETABLE

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
09.00-10.00							
10.00-11.00							
11.00-12.00							
12.00-13.00							
13.00-14.00							
14.00-15.00							
15.00-16.00							
16.00-17.00							
17.00-18.00							
18.00-19.00							
19.00-20.00							
20.00-21.00							
21.00-22.00							