

Revision Techniques

Revision planning

All the research into revising for examinations shows that *regular* revision improves learning performance. That is, if you rehearse what you have learned on a regular basis you are more likely to have a firm grasp of all its basic principles and topics when it comes to the examination. This might seem fairly obvious, but it is worth knowing so as to confirm that your efforts in revising will not be wasted.

The very best form of revision (as we have just considered in Chapter 2) is that which goes on all the way through a course. If possible you should ideally revise your work to date every four to six weeks throughout a course. In some subjects such as foreign languages the rehearsal of vocabulary and grammar might be a necessity of the course, and in medicine there are often regular checks of a factual and practical nature which constitute course revision.

One advantage of this approach is that it removes some of the strain of trying to revise the whole of a course in the period immediately preceding an examination. Another is that you are more likely to develop a firmly grounded knowledge of the course and its content, rather than just short-term memory traces which in the worst cases could evaporate just before the day of the examination.

However, it would be utopian to expect everybody to have the foresight, self-discipline, or even the time for such an approach. For most students merely getting through the lectures, the reading, and the essay-writing requirements of a course will take up the majority of their time and attention. Most people understandably begin to think about revision in the last few weeks before an examination.

It is for this reason that the most important strategy in successful revising is to create a revision timetable for the run-up period to the examination itself. This is a skill of time management which requires that you create and set aside regular periods of time which you will devote to looking back over the course, refreshing your memory of its principal contents, and preparing for the examination ahead.