

How do you revise?



There are a variety of things you can try to revise better. There is no single perfect method, so below are a variety of different techniques you might want to try to see if any work for you. However, there are some general bits of advice that can be given:

- **Plan** what you are going to do
 - Your plan should be the first stage of your revision process
 - Leave aside plenty of time to cover your topics
 - Be specific about what each piece of revision will be (which topic, chapter etc)
 - Say when you intend to do it (don't panic if not exactly on schedule)
- Have an **index** for each subject with chapter or topic headings. Tick them off as you've covered them.
- **Write** down revision notes – even if you don't intend to keep them. The process of writing down things will cement the knowledge better in your brain than simple flicking over pages
- **Test yourself** to make sure you understand and remember what you have learnt – you can do this by
 - writing it down without your original notes
 - repeating it in your head or
 - by getting a family member or friend to ask you questions
- **Past paper questions** are an excellent way of reinforcing your knowledge and improving on exam technique. It is strongly recommended that you use past paper questions to assist your revision

Methods of revision you can try

1. Mind maps (also known as Spider diagrams, Pattern notes)

- Put the topic in the middle of the page.
- Surround it with headings.
- Connect each heading to the central topic with “legs”.
- Surround each heading with examples or explanation.
- Connect each of these examples/pieces of explanation to the central topic with “legs”

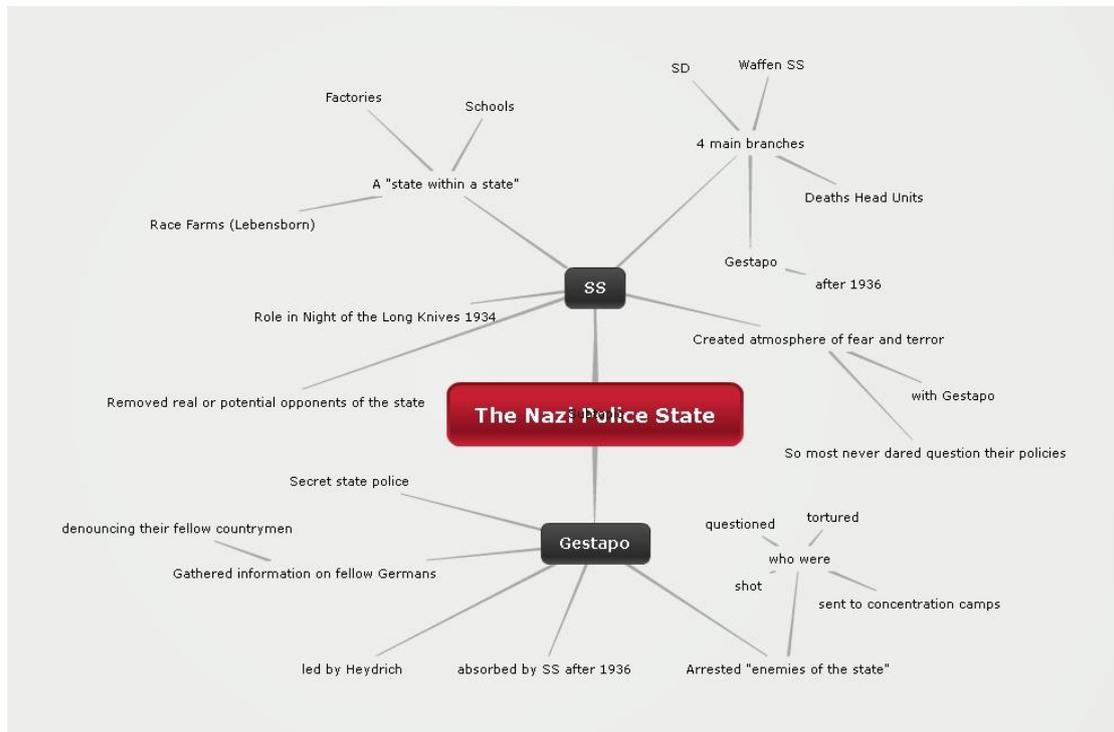
Mind maps can be done direct from a page of notes (and then learning the mind map) or as a way of testing yourself that you know you're stuff with the file close.

Advantages

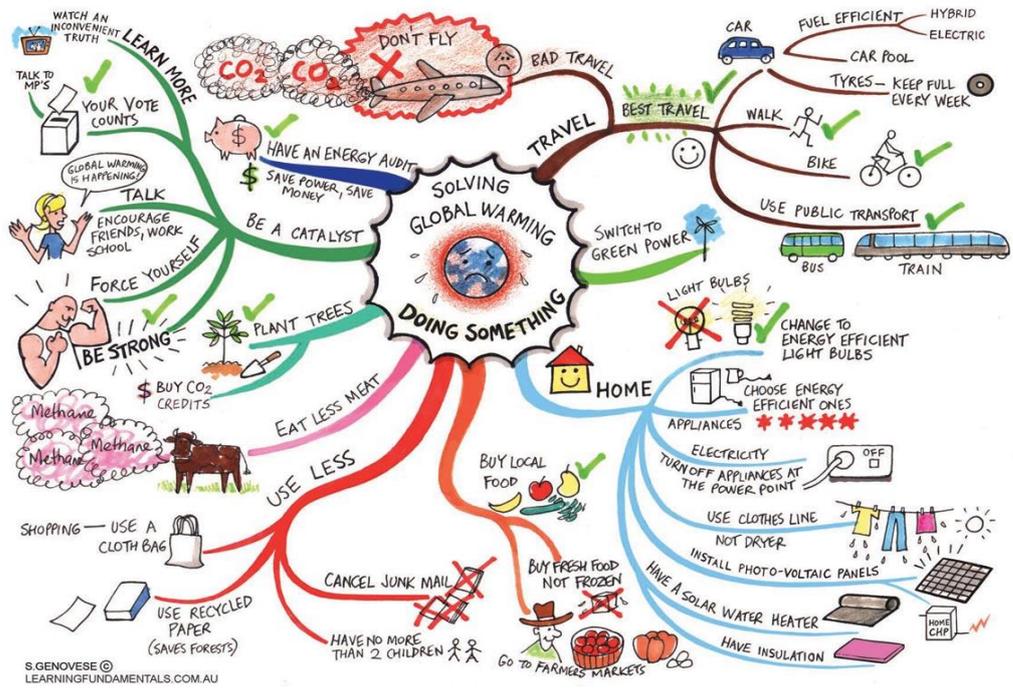
1. You can visualise where your information should be on the page
2. You can get all of a topic on to the one page

Advice – make them big!

Here is an example of a Mind Map for History: (except will be bigger!)



Here is an example of a mind map for Biology:



2. Writing notes under headings

- Read a chapter or a topic
- Close the file
- Write out the main headings
- Write down as much as you can remember about each heading underneath
- Check file to see what you've remembered/haven't remembered yet
- Repeat the process until you've got it all – with each repetition, writing down only what you didn't remember before

Advantages

1. Good way of making you sharpen up on detail (as are pattern notes)
2. You're remembering notes in the same way as you would want to produce them for extended writing – i.e. making your point at the start of a paragraph and then adding detail to support this.

Advice

1. Why not make the headings *before* you've started to read that topic?
Perhaps you know some of it already
2. Don't worry about keeping the revision notes. The process of writing it down in itself will help you remember it.
3. The process can be a bit time-consuming, so save it for the most awkward topics

Here is the same History topic as in the Mind Map, only with the notes laid out under headings:

The SS

Carried out Night of the Long Knives 1934, when 200 SA leaders were killed
Operated as a "State within a State" e.g. had own factories, schools and race farms (as part of Lebensborn policy)
Etc

The Gestapo

Were the secret state police
They gathered information on fellow Germans and encouraged Germans to denounce their fellow countrymen
Etc

3. Summary cards

Good for prompting you in those final hours before an exam.

- Underline the key points in your notes
- Take a card for each topic or each heading in your notes
- Write down the key points you've underlined for the appropriate topic
- Remember the key points
- Expand on each key point – think about what examples or explanation you would give for each one (you'll need to have read your notes first!)

Advantages

Great for those people who write loads, but have trouble making sense of their notes afterwards

Advice

This one may not be for you if you need to work on writing in detail. It could make you even more brief!

Example of a summary card for the same History topic as the Mind Map:

The SS

- Night of the Long Knives 1934
- “State within a State”
- Etc

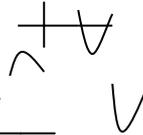
The Gestapo

- secret state police
- information on fellow Germans
- Etc

Here is an example of a summary card for Mathematics:
(A few main bullet points and examples of possible questions)

C1 Topic 4 Quadratics and Roots.

Discriminate = $b^2 - 4ac$

- If $b^2 - 4ac = 0 \Rightarrow$ two equal roots. 
- If $b^2 - 4ac < 0 \Rightarrow$ no real roots 
- If $b^2 - 4ac > 0 \Rightarrow$ two distinct real roots 

NB If an equation is always positive it will have NO real roots and $b^2 - 4ac < 0$

e.g. show that $2x^2 + 8x + 9$ is always positive

U shaped (+ve x^2)

$b^2 - 4ac = 64 - 4(2)(9) < 0$ therefore no roots

Therefore, always positive

Completing the square

e.g. $x^2 + 6x - 7$

half the coefficient of x and add it to add and square

$(x+3)^2$

Then subtract "3" squared

$(x+3)^2 - 9 - 7 = (x+3)^2 - 16$Min value -16 when $x = -3$

4.Mneumonics

This involves making words or phrases (often silly or nonsense) to help you remember key points. The nonsense word will be made up out of the first letter or few letters of the point you make.

Advantages

1. Not as time consuming as some of the others, as long as you can think of a word quickly!
2. Can help with those awkward areas that you find it hard to make stick in your mind.

Advice

1. Don't try to make a mnemonic for every single topic – this will waste time. Stick to the ones where there seems to be a lot to get your head around, or that are particularly hard to remember any other way.
2. It's often best to use mnemonics for smaller amounts of information (especially lists of things), rather than an entire topic.

Here's an example of a mnemonic, using a History topic:

Consolidation of Power 1933-34

1933

Richard – **R**eichstag Fire

Likes – **L**aw for the Protection of People and State

Driving – **D**eal with the Centre Party

English – **E**nabling Law

Cars – policy of **C**oordination

1934

Lurgan's – **L**aw for the Reconstruction of the State

New – **N**ight of the Long Knives

Chippy – **C**ombining the posts of chancellor and president

Open – **O**ath of Allegiance from the army

O'Neill's 5 Point Reforms

S - **S**pecial Powers Act (parts of it removed)

L - **L**ondonderry Corporation replaced by a Development Commission

O - **O**mbudsman (a formal complaints procedure)

P - **P**oints system for allocation of council housing

E - **E**xtra votes for businessmen removed

5. Subject specific terms and concepts

Sometimes it helps if you separate ideas, theories and developments from the rest of your information. It may help to make a list of important concepts in a particular topic and make it clear what each one means. For some subjects, subject specific terms are part of what it looked for in mark schemes

Here's an example:

Democracy – a political system where everyone over 18 has the choice of who rules them and how they are to be ruled

Left-wing – a term describing those who generally seek change in politics. This change is aimed at promoting equality. This change could be revolutionary (as with Communists or KPD) or gradual (as with Social Democrats or SPD).

Right-wing – a term describing those who generally seek to avoid change in politics. One party in Germany which disliked change was the Nazi Party

Nationalist – a term which describes someone who passionately loves their country (although its meaning in Northern Ireland is a little more specific). Right wing groups such as the Nazis in Germany were extremely nationalist in their views