

SUE FRYER is editor of a new Careerscope revision guide. Here she describes how important it is to find the revision technique that suits you best and to allow yourself plenty of revision time to prepare for your exams



NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY



BRUNEL UNIVERSITY

It's just a question of technique

At each stage of education we have to have to prove, via examinations, that we have absorbed and understood the subject matter in hand, before we can progress to the next stage. Revision is something we all have to do if we want to pass.

Is there just one way that all human beings learn, memorise and repeat the knowledge they have gained – or are there many different ways? Educational theorists do largely conclude that the latter is true, that each of us has a preferred way of taking in, memorizing and revising all sorts of information. Reproducing or repeating our previously learned knowledge must of course be

'If you attend a revision course you will be taught exam techniques'

done in such a way as to satisfy the examiner – otherwise we won't pass the exam, or won't get the grade we were hoping for! Knowing what examiners want would seem to be a fairly crucial issue!

Exam techniques

Are we born knowing how to sit and pass exams or do exam techniques need to be learned? If you are a total genius, you may not need to learn how to prepare for an exam – most of us, however, will have to revise.

Your teachers and lecturers are an obvious starting point. Books, CD-ROMs and websites on the subject abound. If you attend a revision course, it is almost certain that you will be taught exam techniques and given the chance to take mock exams on the course.

Various revision techniques, theories and methods are explained in "how-to" books, CD-ROMs and through hundreds of websites. There are several established revision techniques used by students of all ages the world over. The range includes mind-mapping, concept maps, graphical organizers, neuro-linguistic programming and many more. Most revision courses should include the study of revision techniques.

- Some relevant websites:
www.mind-map.com
www.examtutor.co.uk
Information, information, information.

There's so much of it around, but how to choose what will help you to revise and pass those crucial exams? First of all, decide what you need information on:

- Exam subjects. Do you know what your areas of weakness are and in which subjects? Has a poor mock exam result helped you realize what you need to concentrate on? Have you missed some topics because of illness? Were there some topics that simply puzzled you and that you have never really grasped? Have you asked your teachers/lecturers for advice? (Subject gaps/weaknesses).
- Do you know what sort of learner you are? How do you best absorb/memorise information? (Learning styles).
- Are you confident about how to reduce large areas of knowledge down to manageable, easy to remember summaries? (Revision techniques).
- Exams – do you know how to organize and timetable yourself? Or is this something you need help with? Does the thought of an exam reduce you to a shaking jelly? (Exam techniques de-stressing techniques).

Your teachers/lecturers should be able to advise, to some extent, on all of the above, so don't feel afraid to ask them.

Study skills

If educationalists agree that students have different learning styles preferences – but how do you find out yours? You may have already completed a learning styles questionnaire in school or college and may therefore know how you learn and revise best. Theorists agree that, for maximum exam success, your revision style should match your learning style/s. If you don't know and would like to find out, there are books and websites which contain self-scoring questionnaires, enabling you to work out your own styles profile.

- Three of many relevant websites are:
www.learning-styles-online.com
www.learntolearn.org
www.acceleratedlearning.com

Internet resources

A massive amount of information at the click of a button! Whether you want to find out about revision courses, subject guides, discovering your learning and revision style, how to revise and prepare for exams, finding a personal tutor or where you can self-test on subject-



'Months before your exam dates decide which revision method suits you best'

revision sites – it's all there! As with courses, you'll need to check on the validity of websites – don't forget that the internet is an unregulated medium of communication. Again, before you start surfing, decide what types of information you are seeking.

Organise yourself

Several months or longer before your exam dates, decide which revision method will suit you best:

- a) attending a revision course
- b) employing a private tutor
- c) revising independently with the help of books/websites/ other resources

If you decide to opt for attending a course, you'll need to do some research before enrolling. Questions to consider and ask include:

- Do you want a residential/non-residential course? If the former, you'll need to research the accommodation facilities and maybe visit beforehand
- When do you want the course? Easter, Christmas, Summer or another time to suit you?
- Is the institution accredited? (The

revision courses themselves won't be, as there is no one inspection body overseeing such courses)

- How many teaching hours a day are offered?
- Are the academic staff experienced in teaching revision courses?
- Is the cost within your/your parents budget?
- Is there someone you can talk to you about your specific needs before enrolling?
- Are you looking for a specialist revision course such as Medical School preparation?
- Are courses ever cancelled due to low

take-up of places? Have you got contingency plans in case this happens?

- What were the pass rates/grades for the previous batch of revision students? Any bona fide institution will be happy to make this information available on their website/in their prospectus.
- Are the teaching groups small? (around 8 students)

Next steps

Whichever revision method(s) you choose, make your plans well in advance. Think about what aspect of revision and exams is really concerning you, and tackle that issue first. And don't forget to

Effective Revision

Just published, the latest title from Careerscope Guides, edited by Sue Fryer. Sections include:

- Directory of UK and international revision course providers
 - Guide to revision websites
 - Revision resources
 - Outline discussion of the principal revision techniques and theories
- Price £7.95 (plus £1 pandp)
Tel: 01276 21188
Also available online at www.careerscope.info

Read the new Careerscope book *Revision courses and resources to find out more about all the above options/ideas.* This should be available from your school careers library or you can buy it on www.careerscope.info and go to bookshop.

