

Revision Evolution

Active Revision – Proven Strategies That Help Students Remember and Apply What They Learn

Once your child has a good study space and routine in place, the next step is using revision techniques that really work. Not all study methods are equally effective. Highlighting notes or rereading textbooks might feel productive, but they often give a false sense of mastery. The most powerful revision strategies are those that actively challenge the brain to retrieve, connect, and use information.



Retrieval practice – remembering by recalling

The brain strengthens memory through retrieval practice – deliberately recalling information rather than just re-reading it. Encourage your child to close their notes and try to write down everything they can remember about a topic, or to answer past paper questions without looking at their materials. Flashcards are a great tool for this, allowing them to test themselves on key terms, dates, formulas, or concepts. This process signals that the knowledge is valuable, helping to embed it in long-term memory.

Spacing and interleaving – study smarter, not longer

Short, spaced sessions on different topics are more effective than long blocks on a single subject. Studying in this way keeps the brain engaged and prevents the illusion of fluency that comes from over-focusing on one area. For example, revising English Literature quotations one day, then grammar the next, and returning to quotations a few days later helps strengthen recall across different contexts.

Dual coding – combining words and visuals

Combining verbal and visual information improves understanding and recall. Mind maps, diagrams, timelines, and other visual tools help represent ideas pictorially. For example, in science, linking key terms with labelled diagrams can deepen conceptual understanding. The key is to encourage your child to create visuals from memory rather than just copy from notes.

Elaborative questioning – connecting ideas

Encourage your child to ask “why?” and “how?” questions about what they’re learning. This approach strengthens connections between ideas, making it easier to retrieve information in exams. Using mind maps alongside questioning can show how different ideas link together, creating a clear overview of complex topics.

By focusing on active rather than passive revision, your child is training their brain to think like an examiner – to recall, apply, and connect knowledge under pressure.

Watch the accompanying video on our school website for examples of how to use these strategies effectively at home.