

Hi guys, Patrick Sherratt here. I can remember the frustration I felt at high school when it came to revise for an exam and I did not have a clear idea of what to do with my class-notes. I ended up writing them all out again with different colour pens and reading them over many times. Needless to say, I didn't remember much and consequently didn't do well in my exams.

I have since learned some much better techniques for reviewing and rewriting class notes which I would like to share with you as a step-by-step approach. My hope is that you can follow these steps and not make the same mistakes I made!

### **Step 1: Relax and set an intent**

When you start any revision session, use your breathing to get yourself into a relaxed, yet alert state. Relaxation will help your brain become more receptive to the information you want to revise.

Next, set an intent – like a little mini goal of what you want to achieve in this session. This helps switch on your brain to look for the information most relevant to your needs.

### **Step 2: Preview before you review**

For a minute or so, just scan through the pages of your class-notes in a very casual way without any deliberate intent to create a better understanding of the material. A preview before you review the material helps your brain activate the neural pathways associated to the information that you have previously covered in class. While your mind is not analysing it, at another level the information is sparking thoughts about the last time you saw it. This technique activates your former knowledge – the wiring already established in your brain and like stretching before exercise, it primes the brain to get ready for more analytical study.

### **Step 3: Search and select your notes**

Because you get given so much information on each subject, it is useful sometimes to be a bit more selective as to what you should revise. Ask yourself the question: if I could take my notes into the test or exam, which ones would I take? Find the answer by talking to your teacher, last years' students, looking at past exam papers: do anything that might give you clues as to what will likely be in the exam.

### **Step 4: Review and condense your class notes**

As you begin reviewing your class-notes hold the intention that you are looking for key phrases or words that represent the basis for a large chunk of information. The idea here, is that if you can memorise the key word, you will by association, be able to write all the information around it during a test or exam.

### **Step 5: Rewrite your class notes into revision notes**

The last step is that once you have highlighted or underlined the key points, extract those points and organise them by writing new condensed revision notes that look a

lot more visual in nature. Mind mapping or concept mapping works well here. They are a visual representation of what use to be lines of information on a page.

If you are able, you can use software such as Mind Manager to help you draw mind maps. There is also concept mapping tools in Microsoft Word that can help you illustrate keywords. Known as Smart Art, under the insert tab, these concept maps can illustrate your keywords as a list or a process, a cycle, hierarchy, relationship, matrix, pyramid or picture. Again, you are aiming to create a visual way of representing your linear class-notes.

Another simple planning technique that lists keywords in sequence is a technique I have developed called Essay Route Maps. Written by hand, keywords condensed from essay content applicable to a variety of possible exam questions, can be listed in sequence from the top to the bottom of a page and then named and numbered by section and sub-section. This is particularly useful if you are gathering content from a variety of different sources.

Once you have your keywords visually illustrated, you can then use these new revision notes to rehearse your recall which helps improve your memory. I will discuss a variety of principles to memory enhancement in the next section but for now – the mere repetition of rewriting your new revision notes may be enough to have good recall during a test or exam.

I will see you in the next topic.

### **Overview**

Sometimes test or exam preparation can be enhanced by reviewing and re-writing your class-notes.

Step 1: Relax and set an intent.

Step 2: Preview before you review.

Step 3: Search and select your notes.

Step 4: Review and condense your class-notes.

Step 5: Rewrite your class-notes into revision notes.