



THE EARLS

HIGH SCHOOL

EXCELLENCE | CARE | PARTNERSHIP



Achieving Success at GCSE

Year 11 Junior Leadership Team



Nyah Wright

I would really recommend using the Pomodoro method for starting revision. This is where you have regular break periods during studying. For example, you could do one hour of revision in 20-minute blocks of deep concentration with five-minute intervals in between. This method is scientifically proven to prevent burnout, and I personally found that it made studying feel a little more manageable and a bit less daunting. There are also many Pomodoro apps that have timers for you to use, so go for it!

And aside from the academic aspect of revision, please remember not to overexert yourself, as from personal experience, sitting an exam while you're exhausted is not the way to go! Good luck Year 10!

Delilah Worton

I recommend going online to view past papers and their mark schemes to learn how to answer the questions. Knowing the facts is great but showing being able to articulate your answers are just as important. The important thing is on results day when you open that envelope you feel proud of your results and you know the work you put in because you know they are the best results you could have gotten. Good luck year 10, you'll do great!



Shaima Abdulalem

I recommend you use revision technique, such as flashcards, blurring, mind maps, and practice questions. Simply reading through your notes can feel productive, but testing yourself helps you remember information for longer. Make use of your teachers and resources. If there is something you don't understand, ask your teacher rather than ignoring it.

Remember that revision isn't everything. Try to find a good balance between studying and having a social life. Make time to see your friends, enjoy yourself and do things that make you happy. Don't put too much pressure on yourself or stress about getting everything perfect. Work hard but remember to enjoy Year 10 too.

Zainab Kureembokus

Out of all revision methods I've used before, I'd say that for me past papers have worked the best. They're effective, and easy to find too. Simply go onto Google and type whatever subject you want and past papers and find the exam board that you're doing. Complete the paper and then self-assess or ask someone at home to check for you. This is my favourite revision method as it allows you to not only get a feel for how your exam questions will be formatted, but it also tells you what you're good at and where you need to improve! Balance this with all your other revision methods and I'd say you're good to go.



Oh, and as a rule of thumb, remember don't overwork yourself! Overworking yourself and burning out yields the same results as not revising at all, which isn't really what you want. Remember there's a balance for everything, and once you achieve that balance you'll fly through those GCSEs. Good luck!!



Scarlett Roberts

I really recommend using the Feynman Technique as a way of revising! The way I would describe it is explaining the idea of the topic you're revising in a way that a child would understand. The child would have no knowledge of the topic at all, and they must fully learn it! Once you've finished writing everything down, it is much easier to find gaps in your knowledge.

Remember to take breaks! Revision doesn't help when you do it all at once and never do it again! 'Little and often' is how it has always been described to me. Good luck to you all

:)

Elsbeth Lawford



Flashcards can be very useful if used properly but don't fall into the trap of thinking that just *making* flashcards is helping you revise. I would get flashcards, either ones you made or bought, and give them to a friend or family member to ask questions and test you. The ones you find harder or get wrong, repeat more frequently and you'll find you remember them better.

Another good method is giving yourself a certain amount of time (e.g. 3 mins) to write down everything you know about a certain topic from memory. When the time is up, give yourself another 2/3 minutes to add any extra information with resources such as your books or revision guides. This will help you identify areas that you need to focus on, as well as improving your memory and providing good practice of recalling facts under a time limit.



Chrissie Firkins

Flashcards - Instead of trying to memorise big chunks of text, condense your notes down to the key information and put this onto flashcards. Focus on learning the important facts and ideas rather than trying to remember everything word-for-word. You can also get a family member or friend to test you using your flashcards, helping you identify what you know and what you need to go over again.

Revise little and often - Start by revising for small periods of time and gradually increase the amount as you become better adjusted to revising and as your exams begin to approach. I've found that creating a revision timetable can help you keep track of when to revise, what you have or have not revised and help you feel as though you've accomplished a lot once you've completed your revision for the day. Do not try to revise for hours without breaks, that is overworking yourself and will not help you - a couple of hours a day, when you can, with regular breaks is healthier and much more effective. Do not try to cram the night before, there is far too much content and you will not retain any of the information. If you have a few minutes spare, use it to go over a topic you're less confident with instead of scrolling on your phone.



Hollie Panter

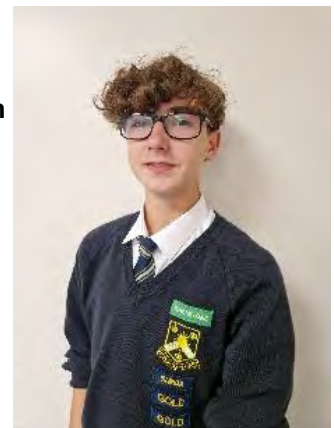
I would like to start by congratulating you all for making it this far and for entering your GCSE years!

There are lots of ways to revise but my biggest top tip when it comes to revision would be to create a timetable for all of your subjects as it can help set out a clear structure on what to revise, it also helps reduce stress and can massively help avoid burn out because if you know what you need to work on then you can plan ahead and inevitably become successful when it comes to exams.

Some of my favourite websites are: BBC bitesize, Save my exams and Sparx

Jamie Anderson

One of my favourite revision tactics is Re-writing. Put all your notes aside and try recall as many of them as you can. Once you're done, go back over your notes focus on the ones you missed. Don't be stressed, you have time!



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Alicja Szczerba

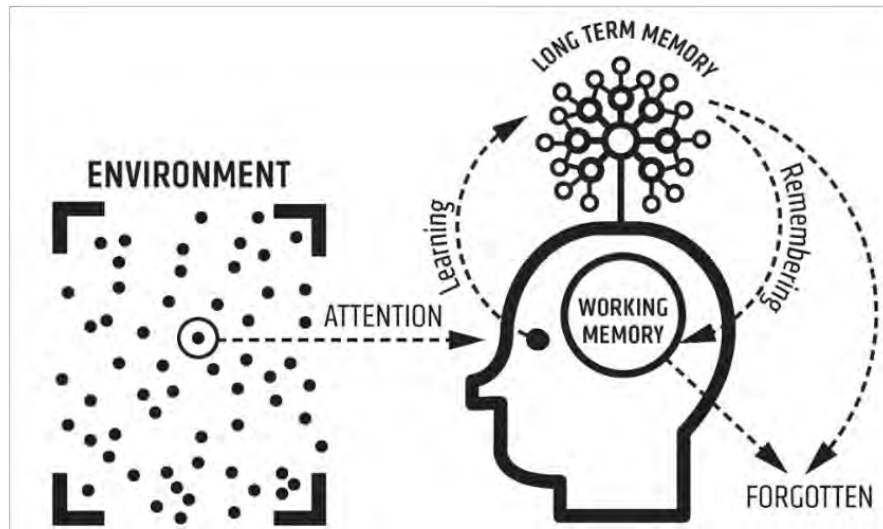
My recommended revision tip is to start early and don't overwork yourself!

A way I do revision is to have 3 subjects to revise, do about 10-20 minutes of each subject, then after a bit, test yourself on the topics you revised in those subjects. I find it quite easy to figure out my strengths and weaknesses this way. (And remember to take breaks!) Make sure to revise the way you learn the best, so if you are a visual learner, revise with something more visual and make sure to add colour as it is more likely to stick!

How Learning Happens

Learning revolves Learning revolves around your memory.

Memory involves encoding, storage and retrieval of information. The image is a diagram of how memory works, particularly focusing on how we learn and retain information.



Here's a breakdown of the key components:

- **Environmental Input:** Information comes from the world around us (e.g., lessons, reading, experiences).
- **Attention:** We must pay attention for information to enter our memory system. Without attention, learning doesn't happen.
- **Working Memory:** This is our short-term memory. It holds information temporarily while we think about it. It's **limited** and can only hold a few items at once.
- **Long-Term Memory:** Through learning strategies (like retrieval practice, elaboration, and repetition), information moves into long-term memory. This is where knowledge is stored more permanently. The long term memory is **unlimited**.
- **Remembering vs Forgetting:** Information in long-term memory can be retrieved (remembered) or forgotten. Retrieval strengthens memory, each time you recall something, it becomes easier to remember again.

How to Help Your Memory Work Better

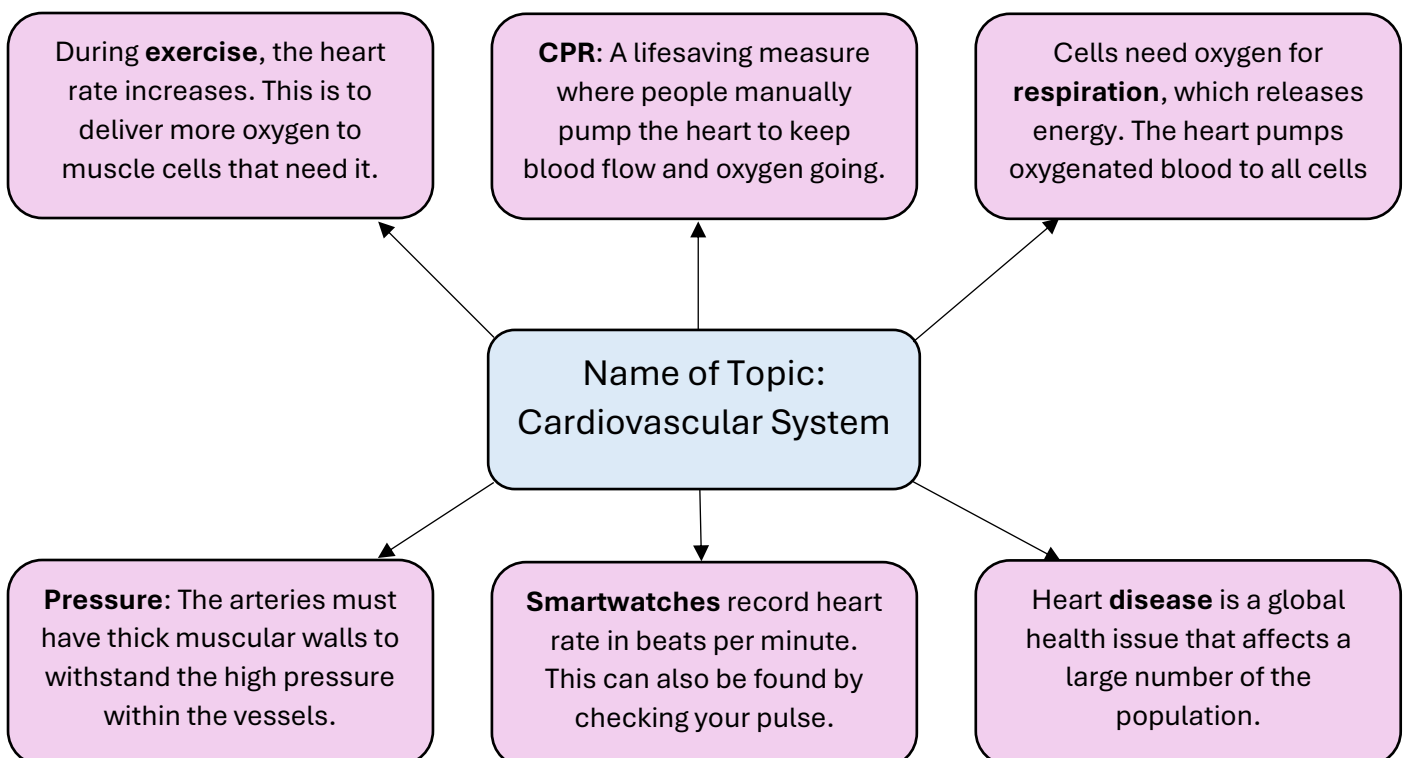
Research shows that we remember things more effectively when we use specific strategies that help encode and retrieve information. These include:

- **Connecting new ideas to what you already know.**
If you're learning about ecosystems and you've visited a forest before, link what you're learning to your own experience.
- **Spacing out your study over time instead of cramming.**
For example, recalling material in small chunks over several days is far more effective than rereading everything the night before a test.
- **Retrieving information repeatedly.**
This could mean using flashcards, self-quizzing, or simply trying to write down what you remember before checking your notes.
- **Explaining it to someone else.**
Teaching forces you to organize and clarify your thinking, which strengthens your memory.
- **Using visuals**
For example, using a drawing to remember the process of photosynthesis, or a diagram to understand the water cycle, helps anchor the ideas in your brain.

What does Effective Revision Look Like?

Below are some examples of how you can put each method into practice.

Method One: Link it!



Method Two: Revision Schedule

Your revision schedule should be realistic and achievable.

1. Collate all your topics and determine where you need to focus your time. Which subjects and topics do you need to target?
2. Create a table for a week with 30-minute revision slots and breaks built in.
3. Write the subjects in the table, leaving yourself at least two days between each.
4. Type it up so you re-use it and edit it. Ensure it is easy to check and find.
5. Put it somewhere visible and tick off completed sessions = see the success!
Ensure someone at home also has ownership of it. It will support motivation.

For an example revision timetable, see the next page. *This involves only English, Maths, Science and R.S to show how a timetable may look but please ensure all subjects are included depending on the focus at a given moment.*

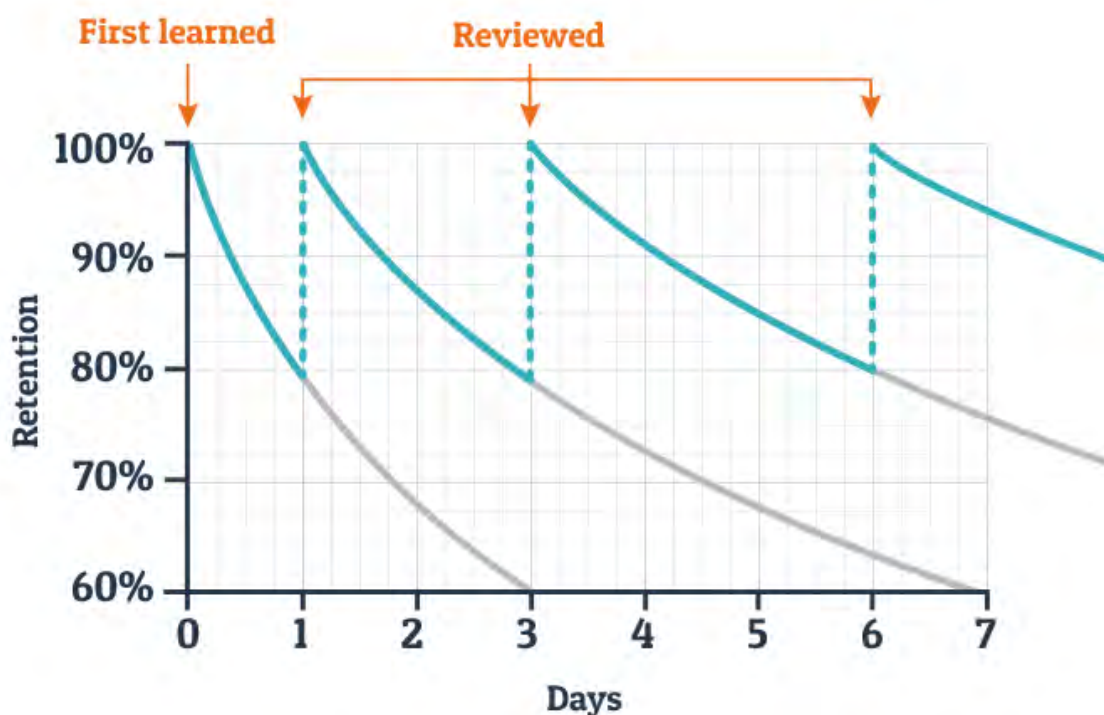
Subjects				English	Maths	Science	R.S.
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
30 mins	Reactions	Biblical experiences	Buddhism	Features of theatre texts	Atoms, electrons and protons	Experiences of an author	Properties
30 mins	The late romance plays	Expansion	Features of compounds	Partial fractions	Buddhism	Partial fractions	Features of theatre texts
Break							
30 mins	Equations	Act One character and plot	Algorithms	Properties	Features of compounds	Theme of Power and Control	Experiences of an author
30 mins	Properties	Buddhism	Theme of Power and Control	Act One character and plot	Algorithms	Equations	Expansion

Method Three: Retrieval Practice

Retrieval practice is the act of bringing information to mind without looking at your notes. It's one of the most powerful ways to strengthen memory and it works much better than re-reading or highlighting.

When you first learn something new, like how to calculate speed or how photosynthesis works, it's stored in short-term memory. But short-term memory is temporary. Unless you actively use that information, your brain starts to forget it. Psychologists call this the forgetting curve, a natural process where memories fade unless they're reinforced.

Retrieval practice helps slow down forgetting. Each time you recall information, especially after a little time has passed, you interrupt the forgetting curve and strengthen the memory. It's like building a trail through a forest: the more often you walk the path, the clearer and easier it becomes to find again.



Retrieval practice can take multiple forms:

1. Quizzing yourself
2. Retrieval grids/pyramids
3. Low stake quizzes
4. Retrieval clocks
5. Brain dumps
6. Flashcards

Struggle Is a Good Thing

Many students rely on rereading, highlighting, or copying notes as their main study strategies. But research shows that those methods are mostly **passive**. You're looking at the information, but not really doing anything with it. It may feel productive, but it doesn't create strong, lasting learning.

Retrieval practice, on the other hand, is active. It forces your brain to search, retrieve, and reconstruct knowledge. That's why it leads to better understanding and better performance on tests, projects, and discussions.

Example One: Quizzing Yourself

After a lesson, testing your understanding is a great way to strengthen your memory. Try answering the questions below without looking at your notes. This is called retrieval practice and helps you remember more in the long term.

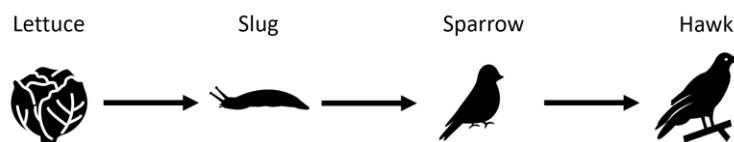
Attempt the questions based on what you remember from the lesson.

1. If you get stuck, check your notes to fill in any gaps.
2. Finally, compare your answers with a mark scheme or model answers. Correct any mistakes and make a note of anything you need to revisit.

💡 Top Tip: The more often you quiz yourself, the easier it becomes to recall the information when it matters—like in an exam!

Example Questions: Food Webs and Food Chains

1. What is a producer?
2. What is a herbivore?
3. The diagram shows a simple food chain.

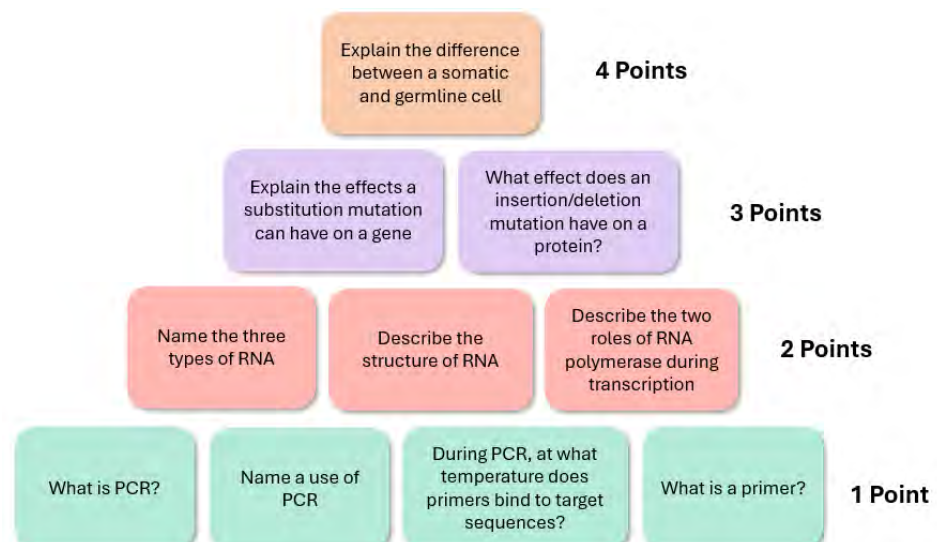


- a. Identify the producer
- b. Identify the herbivore
- c. Which organism is both predator and prey?
- d. Which organisms is the prey of the sparrow?
- e. Predict the effect on the slug population if most of the sparrows died.
- f. What do the arrows in a food chain represent?

Example Two: Retrieval Grids/Pyramids

Answer the questions from a key area or a topic, without using notes. You can make your own retrieval grids or ask your teacher for some!

Retrieval Pyramid Example



Example of a Retrieval Grid

Explain the difference between intra and interspecific competition.	Name the pigment that traps light energy in plants.	How do you ensure results are reliable?
What do the arrows in a food chain represent?	Simplify the following ratio: 2000: 1500: 20	Name the three ways energy can be lost from a food chain
What are the three limiting factors of photosynthesis?	Describe an error that can occur when using a pitfall trap.	A random change to DNA is known as what?
Why is photosynthesis affected by temperature?	Describe stage one of photosynthesis.	Name two examples of abiotic factors and the equipment used to measure them

Example Three: Low Stake Quizzes

Low stake quizzes are beneficial for strengthening memory through repeated retrieval, reducing test anxiety, promoting regular revision habits and getting quick feedback.

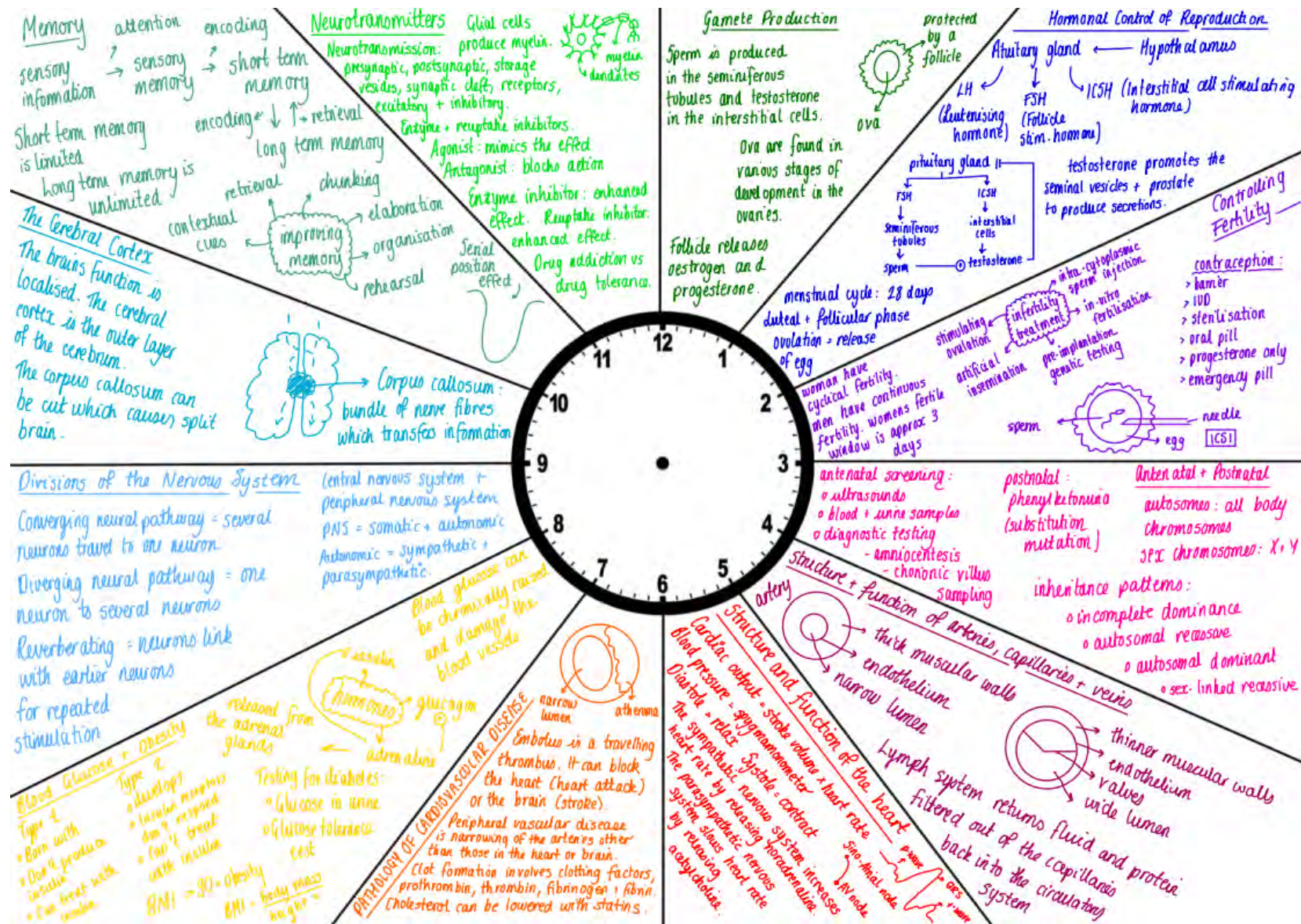
Question	Final answer	Confidence	Marking
1. Name an abiotic factor and the equipment used to measure it.			
2. A community plus its habitat can be described as what?			
3. What do the arrows in a food web represent?			
4. How can the reliability of an experiment be increased?			
5. Describe a limitation of a pitfall trap and how you can correct this.			
6. To ensure valid results, what should be done each time when using a soil thermometer?			

To be effective, after low stake quizzes you must:

- Make flashcards of the questions you were confident in and got **incorrect**
- Use the flashcards regularly to revise that information

Example Four: Retrieval Clocks

Retrieval clocks are an effective way of organising a brain dump. You can assign a topic to each section or use it as a timeframe (i.e. one week ago, two weeks ago).



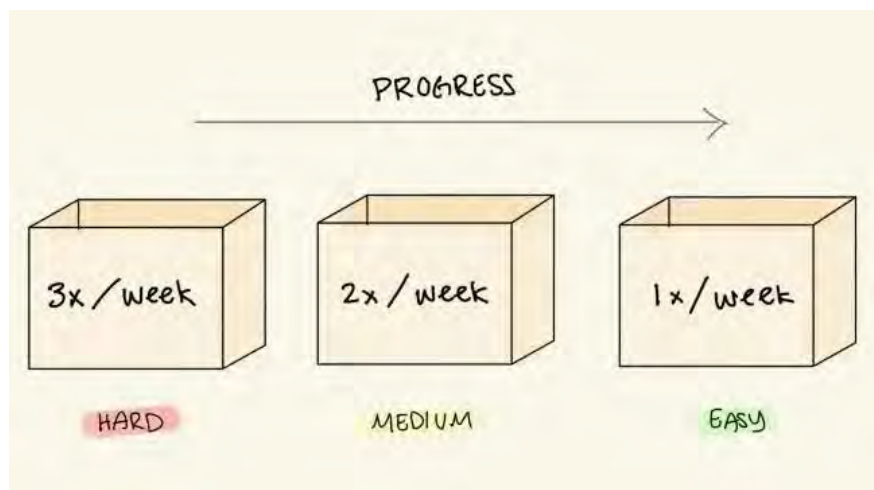
Example Five: Brain Dumps

Choose a topic and without using your notes, write down as much as you can about that topic. Once complete, use a different coloured pen to review your brain dump against class notes. Add any information you have missed. This helps you prioritise your revision.

Christian Beliefs	
Nature of God: 	Creation: 
Problem of Evil and Suffering: a challenge to God's existence 	Life after Death: 

Example Six: Flashcards

Flashcards are a powerful tool for active recall and retrieval practice. Each card should have a question or key term on one side and the answer or explanation on the other. To use them effectively, test yourself without looking at the answers first. This strengthens your memory far more than simply re-reading notes. You can make your own flashcards or use digital apps like Quizlet.

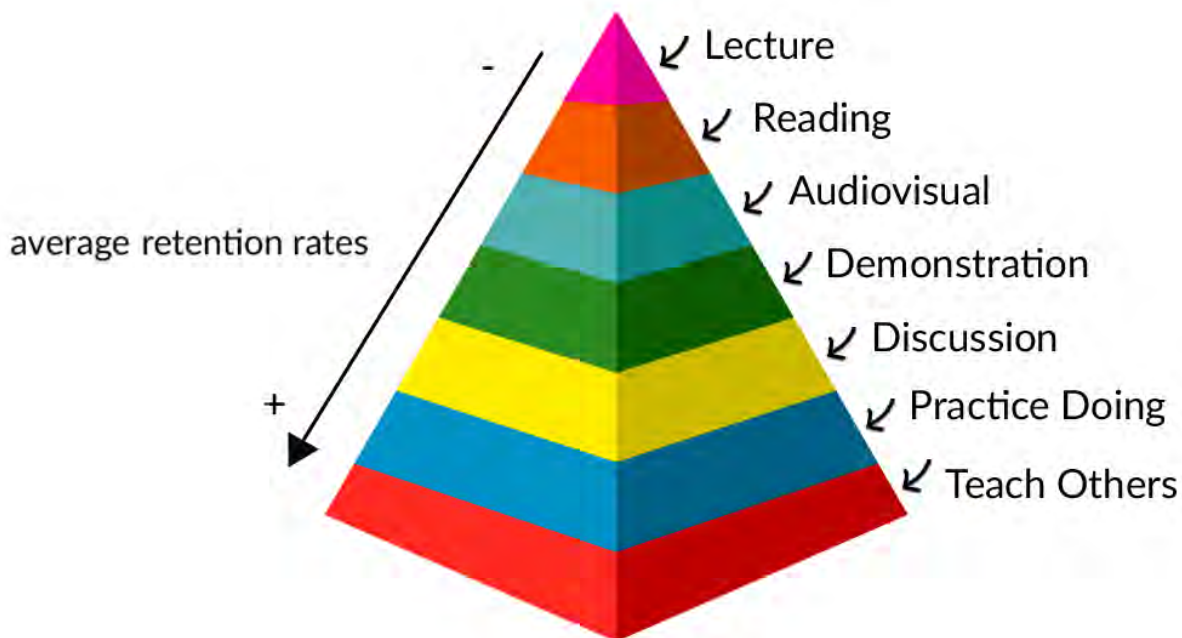


The Leitner System:

1. Take 3 boxes and label them: Easy, Medium, Hard
2. Every card starts in the Hard box
3. As cards become easier to answer, "promote" them into the Medium or Easy boxes. If you find cards are still challenging, move them back one difficulty level.
4. Review the cards **in the Hard box 3 times a week, Medium box 2 times a week, and Easy box once a week**

Method Four: Teach Someone Else

One of the most effective ways to revise is by teaching the topic to someone else. When you explain an idea out loud—whether to a friend, family member, or even just to yourself—you're forced to organise your thoughts clearly and identify any gaps in your understanding. This process strengthens your memory and deepens your learning. You can use mini whiteboards, diagrams, or even record yourself explaining a concept. If you can teach it, you truly understand it!



Method Five: Using Visuals

Visuals like diagrams, mind maps, and infographics help encode information in both verbal and visual formats, which strengthens memory through dual coding theory. This means you're more likely to remember something if it's presented both as text and image.

Additional benefits are:

- Encourages active engagement by forcing you to interact with the content
- Helps simplify complex information
- Reduces cognitive load

