

Creative Revision Strategies

Revision can often seem dull or ineffective, and this may be because it is not varied or active enough. Using a wide range of revision strategies can add interest and also ensure deeper learning. Below are some suggestions for broadening your repertoire of revision strategies.

Related guides: ['Revision and Exam Skills'](#), ['Using Past Exam Papers'](#) and ['Improve your Memory'](#).

Different Materials

The A4 lined pad of paper plays such a standard part in study that it is easy to forget that there are other materials which might be just as useful, if not more effective, for your revision. The A4 pad is useful for certain sorts of note-taking as it has a large surface area: early in your revision, when you are collating the topics and information you need to learn, as part of the process of reducing or summarising the material or making an overview. Lined A4 encourages a linear format which may not always be the best way to present information, also, as each page has on average 32 lines, this may be more information than it is possible to learn in one go, so it is less useful for learning or memorising information. It might be useful however for learning small items such as foreign language vocabulary or terminology. You could use it in this way if you fold it in half lengthways, with the word you need to learn on one side, and the answer or meaning on the other, so that you can test yourself. Start by learning the first three, then the first six, then nine, etc. so you are building up the amount slowly and revisiting material you have learned once, thereby reinforcing it. Moreover, A4 paper is the same format as the exam, so it is useful for practicing with past papers.

Index cards or blank postcards are very useful for learning information. As they are small, they encourage you to break down information and only learn a little at a time, which is much easier. They are also portable, so you can take them with you and learn them in odd moments of time such as between lectures or on the bus. As they have two blank sides, and are easy to handle, they are very good for testing yourself. You might have a question on one side, or an incomplete diagram or similar prompt, and the answer or full information on the other side. You can use these to test yourself repeatedly, altering the order each time to keep your learning varied and flexible, even mixing up cards from different topics to understand any links between them.

A3 or other large sheets of paper are good for presenting an overview of a topic as a poster, reduced down to the basic details so you can see how your learning fits together. They are particularly suitable for large diagrams or mindmaps as they are not lined, and do not encourage linear presentation. Creating such posters is part of learning as you actively work with the information and think about how to present it, and you can display them around your home to use passively as you look at them repeatedly, or actively to visualise them in your mind and see if you can remember them. You could also use them to organize your revision, and monitor your progress through the topics to be covered.

Post-it notes can be used in a variety of ways. In the first stages of revision, they are useful for organising your revision, marking or annotating relevant parts in textbooks, for example. They are also helpful in learning material, passively allowing information to be acquired (for example, sticking a small selection around your bathroom mirror so that you look at them when brushing your teeth). They can also be used for active learning. The 'locus' method (described in the study guide *Improve your memory*) involves using your physical or visual memory, making a mental journey around an environment that is familiar to you, 'placing' different bits of information at different points on that route. It is particularly good if you need to remember information in a particular order, for example, stages of a process. You can make this a real journey by placing post-it notes around your room, and then testing yourself on another occasion by removing them and seeing if you can remember them as you make or visualise that route. You can also present information in a flexible or non-linear way on a table or wall.

Coloured pens can help you to organise and break information down if you use a different colour for different topics, associating the colour in your notes or your memory with that information. The colour can later act as a trigger to recall the information as you visualise it.

Electronic aids can help you to revise in more varied ways. You could use a Dictaphone to record yourself talking about a particular topic, and play it back to yourself. You could also use your mobile phone or computer in this way. Explaining a topic for a recording could itself be a way of learning material or testing yourself, and repeated listenings can reinforce it in your memory. You could even set yourself spoken tests, with pauses in the recording for you to answer later. There may be other features of devices such as mobile phones that you could use to help you revise.

Notebooks are useful for collecting together relevant material from different sources, such as lecture notes, textbooks etc. before synthesising them into a single account. They can also be used to make an overview of each topic, before you break it down and reduce it into other formats and you can refer back to it later if you need to. **Loose sheets of paper** may be more flexible, however, as you can break information down into more manageable amounts, and mix them up to keep your learning flexible.

Small **whiteboards** can be quite cheap, and are useful for practicing rough working out, whether this is to brainstorm a quick essay plan or bullet point a short answer question, or to work out a calculation or equation. You can easily make corrections and copy out the results if you want to keep them.

Different Formats

Reviewing information is an important part of the learning process. However, going back to material you've learned once can be dull and unmemorable if you always look at it in the same format, and it can also lead to passive, superficial learning. One way to keep your revision active is to change the format of the information each time you return to it. Thinking about how to present the information differently makes you work with it actively and keeps it flexible, so you can use it appropriately to respond to what the exam question asks for, rather than only being able to reproduce it in one format.

Different formats might include:

- Prose (sentences and paragraphs)
- Bullet points
- Diagrams
- Tables
- Mindmaps or spider diagrams
- Voice recordings
- Flowcharts

If your notes are in the form of prose, you could next change them to bullet points. When you revisit that topic, change your bullet points to a mindmap, the mindmap to a table, table to voice recording etc.

Different Learning Styles

There is a theory that we each have a preferred learning style, a way in which it is easier for us to take in information. You might be a textual learner and find it easiest to learn by reading books or an auditory learner (learning through listening e.g. to lectures) but you might also be a visual learner (learning through watching or through visual aids such as diagrams) or kinaesthetic learner (learning by doing). You can work with your preferred learning style when revising, but it may also be helpful to vary the style in which you learn when revisiting topics, or challenging yourself with a different learning style if you find the topic easy or familiar. Use some of the ideas above to vary your learning style.

Want to know more?

If you have any further questions about this topic you can make an appointment to see a [Learning Enhancement Tutor](#) in the [Student Support Service](#), as well as speaking to your lecturer or adviser.

- 📞 Call: 01603 592761
- 💻 Ask: ask.let@uea.ac.uk
- 🖱️ Click: <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/student-support-service/learning-enhancement>

There are many other resources to help you with your studies on our [website](#).

Your comments or suggestions about our resources are very welcome.

	<p>Scan the QR-code with a smartphone app for more resources.</p>	
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