



KNOX ACADEMY

Haddington • Ambition, Respect, Community

Family Support Series

EFFECTIVE REVISION & EXAM PREPARATION

Helping Your Child Get the Most Out of Studying

Working smarter, not harder: Evidence-based study strategies and practical support for senior phase learners.

 Cognitive Science

 Active Techniques

 Home Routines

OBJECTIVES

Aims of This Session

Empowering learners with sustainable habits



Memory & Mood

What can students do to improve their memory, mood and concentration.



Cognitive Science

What does research tell us about how to study more effectively and really embed knowledge.



Proven Methods

Which techniques really work and which don't.



Home Support

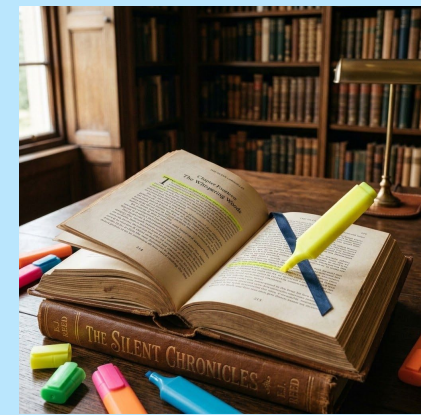
Practical ways families can coach and test pupils.

I learn best when I

Can you remember how you studied? Pick as many as apply to you.



- ☐ Read over my notes lots of times.
- ☐ Highlight key points
- ☐ Teach someone else
- ☐ Write notes out again in a different form eg Mind maps
- ☐ Test myself using flashcards/quizzes
- ☐ Do past paper questions
- ☐ Cram the knowledge just before an exam, so it is all fresh in my head.
- ☐ Revise the topic several times over the course of a few weeks



What the Research Shows Does Not Work

There is no one way to revise, but there is a lot of research to show that some of the most common and popular methods are not the most effective. For example::

- ✗ **Passive Re-Reading:** Looking at notes creates false familiarity.
- ✗ **Heavy Highlighting:** Decorating pages without processing concepts.
- ✗ **Open-Book Copying:** Transcribing text directly requires zero recall.
- ✗ **Last-Minute Cramming:** Knowledge evaporates rapidly post-exam.

THE ILLUSION OF COMPETENCE

"Familiarity is not retention. If your brain is not working to retrieve, it is not learning."

Active challenge is the engine of long-term memory formation.

The Science of Revision: What psychological studies tell us.



Structured Breaks

Without breaks, your brain becomes overloaded with new information and is less likely to hold onto it. Fresh air helps focus, anxiety and improves self esteem.

Rule: 25–40 min work + 10 min rest



Quiet Environments

Research shows that students who study in a quiet environment recall significantly more than those listening to music or podcasts.

Rule: Zero lyric music during recall



Sleep Consolidation

During slow-wave and REM sleep, the brain backs up short term patterns and creates long term memories.

Rule: Consistent 8 hours per night

The key messages from research

01

Retrieval Practice

Making your brain work to extract memories strengthens synaptic pathways far more than re-reading.

02

Information Reorganisation

Translating notes into mind maps, tables, or spoken answers helps material become permanently lodged.

03

Distributed Spaced Learning

1 hour daily over 10 days produces dramatically higher retention than 10 hours of cramming in a single day.



**How to make the brain active and
make the learning stick.**

Strategy 1: Getting Started

Step 1: Map the Syllabus

- **Course Specifications:** Obtain SQA content checklists.
- **Identify Missing Notes:** Check google classroom, or ask teachers.
- **Come up with a realistic revision plan.** Switching between different topics/subjects rather than focusing on one topic/subject during a revision session works best

Support at Home: The Traffic Light Method

Sit down with your child and review their subject topic lists:

Red Topics: Urgent gaps — begin revision here first.

Amber Topics: Moderate recall — requires targeted practice.

Green Topics: High confidence — quick spaced review only.

Strategy 2: Testing Yourself (Retrieval Practice)



Flashcards & Glossaries

Write the prompt on the front and answer on the back. Force recall before flipping. Create mindmaps or posters or glossaries.



Closed-Book Brain Dumps

Spend 5 minutes writing everything you remember from memory before verifying against notes.



Spoken Verbal Answers

Testing doesn't need to be written. Explaining answers out loud strengthens neural circuits.



Support at Home: Quiz them using their flashcards. Ask sudden, unexpected follow-up questions to test deep understanding.

Strategy 3: Finding Gaps

Knowledge About One's Own Knowledge

Big advantage of frequently testing yourself is it helps find gaps in your knowledge.

"High achievers do not practice what they already know. They deliberately target their points of failure."

Support at Home

Misread the Prompt?

Practice circling keywords and command verbs.

Memory Retrieval Gap?

Schedule daily flashcard repetition for 5 days.

Content Confusion?

Consult class teacher, Scholar, or BBC Bitesize.

SQA Past Papers & Command Words

The Gold Standard for Senior Phase

Past papers are too often left until the final fortnight. Regular practice builds familiarity with exam stamina and marking schemes.

- ✓ **Command Words:** Distinguish between Describe, Explain, Evaluate.
- ✓ **Mark Allocation:** Write 4 distinct points for a 4–mark question.
- ✓ **Repeat Tough Questions:** Redo missed questions after 3 days.

Home Coaching Routine

Download past papers from sqa.org.uk/pastpapers

Phase 1: Timed Questions

Time 1–2 questions under strict exam conditions.

Phase 2: Marking Scheme Review

Compare answers together with the official marking scheme..

Teaching Others (The Protégé Effect)

Think It • Say It • Teach It

When people prepare to teach someone else, it requires them to learn and organise your knowledge in a clear and structured manner.

STEP 1

Think it

STEP 2

Say it

STEP 3

Teach it

How Families Can Help

You don't need to know the subject material yourself! Simply become the inquisitive audience:

- Ask them: "Explain that concept as if I'm a complete beginner."
- Schedule progressive sessions: 1 hour later, 2 days later, 1 week later.
- Encourage teaching pets, siblings, or even the bathroom mirror!

Spaced Repetition & Interleaving

Massed Practice (Cramming)

Low Retention

AAAA • BBBB • CCCC

Studying only one subject for hours creates immediate fatigue and steep memory decay within 48 hours.

Interleaved Practice (Spacing)

High Retention

A B C • B C A • C A B

Mixing up topics forces the brain to categorise problem types, boosting long-term exam performance.

The Leitner Box Schedule: Organise flashcards into 3 compartments. Correct cards move forward to be reviewed less frequently; incorrect cards return to Box 1 for daily review.

Essential Digital Platforms

ACHIEVE

Online SQA Courses

Interactive N5 & Higher course units with self-evaluation trackers and past exam bank questions.

e-Sgoil & West OS

Live & On-Demand

Scottish national evening study webinars, Easter school support, and recorded ClickView lessons.

SQA Past Papers

Official Mark Schemes

Free downloadable past exam papers and full marking guidance to gauge timing and standards.





KNOX ACADEMY

Haddington, East Lothian

Empowering Every Pupil to Succeed

Small consistent shifts in daily habits produce massive academic gains. Test actively, space out sessions, and protect restorative sleep.

NEXT STEPS

Traffic light subject topics

SCHOOL SUPPORT

Attend study support sessions