

# REMEMBER, REMEMBER

Effective revision can transform how students perform in exams – so, as *that* time of year rushes ever closer, TS has put together some top tips especially for the digital generation...

**T**eaching students techniques to read, digest and memorise information effectively is a key part of exam success. But with so many young people used to receiving information via digital platforms, the tried and tested methods of flash cards and revision notes aren't always proving to be the most effective revision method for members of the younger generation.

According to the 2011 Communications Market Report by Ofcom into the impact of smartphones on everyday life, nearly half of teenagers (47%) now own a smartphone device, a number which is fast rising as technology becomes more accessible and ownership increases. Digitally supported revision is becoming the norm amongst young people and in many cases it is up to teachers to direct students towards more creative and contemporary resources which can aid the revision process.

So just what resources are available to take revision out of the dark ages and into the digital era? As GCSE exams loom we take a look at some of the more interesting and varied methods to make revision notes leap off the page or device, into the student's head and onto an examination paper.

## Get creative

Images are one of the most useful tools for successful revision and yet often one of the most under-used by students. They not



only break up text, but make difficult subjects easier to understand – using clear diagrams and pictures helps to create and link visual cues to certain topics.

Comics are an especially vibrant and accessible way in which students can create a scaffolded learning platform through which to communicate ideas in a fun and relatable way. **Comiclif.com** is a fantastic online resource that allows students to summarise their revision notes into a one-page comic strip for a range of different topics. Students can insert their own photographs, images, diagrams and speech or thought bubbles to help caption and illustrate points, creating a personalised revision comic strip booklet along the way. The flow of information and engaging delivery of a comic strip brings topics to life, with plenty of visual learning cues to aid retention and recall.

Far from this being an individual experience, teachers can also get involved by creating classroom competitions for the creation of the best comic strips to illustrate topics, making revision a fun homework assignment as well as an important task to review particular lesson topics.

Comiclif.com is available as an iPad app or via a Windows or Mac desktop computer.

## Word play

Revision is in many ways a very individual process. We all utilise different memory techniques to remember everything from what goes into a recipe to what was on TV three weeks ago but the lack of personal reference or identifying features can make some educational material that little bit more difficult to retain. This can be particularly true of science and maths subjects where abstract or impersonal information is often retained using mnemonic techniques, creating poems or phrases to form reference and meaning where there might be none.

Mnemonics are frequently employed to understand and recall formulas or lists. Whilst no doubt useful to students studying for exams for hundreds of years, actually creating useful mnemonics can be a lesson in itself. Famous examples such as 'Never Eat Shredded Wheat' to remember compass points or 'Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain' for the colours of the spectrum are well-embedded into the public consciousness but how do you create something new that offers relevance as well as retention?

Although mnemonics generally use wordplay, by incorporating images into the mix there is an opportunity to create





a dual layer of information for additional memory cues. This is where **google images** and other searchable online picture libraries offer a simple and free way to create visual connections between ideas. By creating image-linked mnemonics, revision becomes a more connected experience wherein each word or phrase has been supported with an equally memorable picture sourced from the internet.

There are other ways to create visually linked revision aids using mind mapping tools with a number of free apps available. **SimpleMind** ([simpleapps.eu/simplemind/touch](http://simpleapps.eu/simplemind/touch)) is an iOS app that turns iPads or iPhones into detailed mind maps, with descriptions, ideas and details flowing out from one central concept. Using a brainstorming principle, the mind maps are clear, simple to put together and if created effectively, easy to follow. The app is flexible and utilises the ability to create connections between information for more structured and effective revision notes.

### Added extras

Personal tuition is often an extremely effective way of raising student achievement, and an intensive revision course under the supervision of a tutor can build both confidence and essential skills, just when learners are most in need of a boost. Thanks to technological advances, neither geography nor cost need necessarily be a problem these days, with online services such as **iTutor Maths** ([itutormaths.co.uk](http://itutormaths.co.uk)) offering affordable, tiered, fully interactive courses that demonstrably improve young people's attainment – and already working in successful partnerships with schools across the country.

### Go handheld

It is easy to see handheld devices as more of distraction from revision than a learning resource but there are plenty of good quality revision techniques and products to target one of the most under-used learning resources at the disposal of teachers – the mobile phone in a student's pocket.

For example, **GCSEPod** ([gcsepod.co.uk](http://gcsepod.co.uk); additional mobile app is free to download via the Apple app store or accessible through a whole school GCSEPod subscription) is one of the more prominent industry names in the delivery of

## 200 HOURS

= MINIMUM TOTAL REVISION TIME A STUDENT SHOULD PUT ASIDE FOR GCSE EXAMS, ACCORDING TO LETTS (LETTSREVISION.COM), WHICH ADVISES THAT LEARNERS TYPICALLY NEED 30-90 MINUTES TO REVISE EACH OF THE 200-300 TOPICS IN EVERY SUBJECT THEY'RE TAKING

audio-visual revision content for handheld devices, with over 100,000 students accessing their revision and learning podcasts on a daily basis. The subscription-style service gives students the tools to download and access a range of subject specific podcasts for learning, revision and study skills, delivering content which engages students via the digital devices and platforms they use every day.

Content is key for handheld devices and GCSEPod offers teacher-written material for clear and concise revision and learning guides, which students can download and watch either on-the-go or as part of their classroom learning. Similar to a music player, students can create playlists mapped to particular exams to focus their revision towards an end goal and manage their time effectively. Each of the individual podcasts has been structured to incorporate keywords and create a range of cues for recall, but also to support students in creating their own follow-up quizzes. Students can test their knowledge with podcasts such as maths, deleting the topic from their playlist once all questions have been answered successfully.

Professional podcasts are certainly an effective way to incorporate words and images for content-rich revision material, but students can also add an extra dimension to their revision by creating their own. Free software such as **Camtasia Studio** can help make the most of online resources to create personalised podcasts using content from YouTube etc, and images and diagrams.

Videos of scientific experiments or screenshots of revision material can be incorporated into a simple podcast summarising the main points of the topic, audio is then added using a computer or tablet to record over the podcast visuals. Creating podcasts can be a fun way to revisit topics and find suitable online resources to interpret revision notes, repeat material and aid understanding along the way. Homemade podcasts can be shared amongst friends or classmates or even set as homework by teachers to help review lesson topics in a fun and interactive way.

Wider availability of new forms of digital technology has opened up the world of revision beyond just the simple read, write and repeat method. Digital learning and revision is all about using available technology to add a new dimension to the learning process, bringing together content with more interactive and creative platforms which engages students to aid retention of information in different ways. The quality of resources available and relative ease of use brings a new edge to revision and one that reaches out to students across the growing digital universe.

