



Monmouth School

STUDY SKILLS *FOR* *SUCCESSFUL LEARNING* *HABITS*



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Introduction

The aim of this booklet is to make sure all your efforts to work hard are efficient and successful.

Improving habits of mind is an important part of learning at Monmouth School. Simply reading more to acquire knowledge will not necessarily increase your academic marks. Learning *how* to study, using particular techniques and practice, can turn you into an Olympian academic!

This booklet explores several areas of learning techniques. With regular practice, just like weight training, you can strengthen your brain muscle.

The result should be an increase in your confidence and belief that working hard will produce good results.



Organisation

Coping with homework, revision, music lessons, sports activities and simply having fun is quite a juggling act.

Organising your life allows you to:

- consider your priorities
- decide how much time you really can spend on a task
- see what might need to give a little.

Organising yourself means being proactive by seeing problems ahead and working out how to fit them in. Create your own timetable for the week ahead, using the ideas below:

PERSONAL TIMETABLE

	Clubs	4.00 – 5.00 pm	5.00 – 6.00 pm	6.00 – 7.00 pm	7.00 – 8.00 pm	8.00 – 9.00 pm	Homework Subjects
Mon	<i>Rugby</i>	Rugby Club	Dinner	French and Maths homework	History homework	Check timetable and pack bag for tomorrow. Chill.	<i>French Maths History</i>
Tue	<i>Trumpet</i>	Geography and Science homework	Trumpet lesson	Dinner	Science & English homework	Check timetable and pack bag for tomorrow. Chill.	<i>English Geography Science</i>
Wed		DENTIST AT 4.15pm	Dinner	Latin homework	Art homework	Check, pack & chill.	<i>Art Latin</i>
W/E	Homework and trumpet practice must be completed by 4.00 pm on Sunday.						

Ideas for keeping organised:

- Always write your homework in your homework diary.
- Always make a note of when your homework is due in.
- Pack your bags at night for the following day, checking with your timetable.
- Give yourself at least an hour for prep, undisturbed, and be prepared to work for a little longer if necessary.
- If you didn't manage to finish your homework at home, use the School Library in break times.
- Make sure you regularly empty your bag rather than carrying everything round all the time.
- Make sure your belongings are clearly labelled.
- Put off fun until work is finished – you'll enjoy it much more when you have no deadlines hanging over you.



How to Learn

An important way to approach your studies is to remember that every small lesson is leading onto something else. You are not learning things in isolation.

1. **Aim to see the bigger picture:** what is this exercise teaching you to do? How will it help you in the future?
Remember:
 - a. What the teacher is saying now may help you with your homework tonight.
 - b. Doing your homework carefully tonight may help you perform well in that small quiz at the end of the week.
 - c. Studying for that small quiz will have prepared you for the big test at the end of term.

2. **Link your lessons:** Within a subject
 - a. How does what you are learning relate to what you have already learnt?
 - b. How might you be building upon past learning?
 - c. What is the overall purpose of the project or text you are studying? What are you aiming to achieve at the end?

Between subjects

 - a. How do essay techniques in one subject relate to another subject?
 - b. How could you use your literacy skills in Science?
 - c. How might your map-reading skills in Geography relate to your reading skills in Literature?

Seeing the bigger picture and linking your lessons allows you to recognise each piece of work as part of a much larger puzzle. This can actually save you time:

- You become more efficient at linking your ideas, allowing you to remember what might be the best way to approach a task from another subject.
- You become more motivated as you learn that each task has a point to it, rather than being just another piece of homework.

Questions

Getting the grades is not simply about remembering and understanding. You will also be learning about how to apply what you have learnt, how to analyse and evaluate ideas and how to create ideas yourselves. Ask yourself:

- a. Why am I reading this?
- b. How will it help me to apply my knowledge in my essay? What am I looking for?
- c. What is the author suggesting here? How do I know?
- d. How well have I shown my understanding of this question? Have I covered every angle?
- e. Could I do this in a different way? Is there another way I could make sure my point is understood?

Regularly asking yourself questions like these

- Turns you into an efficient, quick learner
- Links each exercise to others, seeing all your learning as part of the bigger puzzle
- Builds your confidence in your own independent learning
- Allows you to become creative and make independent decisions.

READING

We read in three different ways:

Skimming: this is reading at speed, noticing key words to achieve some idea of the content and purpose of the passage.

Scanning: this is a quick search to find a particular detail such as a word, name or date or to find information to answer a question.

Word-by-Word or close reading: this is slow, careful reading of every word, aiming to gain maximum understanding of not just the literal meaning of words but also to consider the implications of the words; what is the writer suggesting?



SEE

LISTENING

Teachers talk to you.

Do you remember everything they say?

How might you remind yourself what the teacher said when it comes to doing your homework? You are unlikely to know shorthand so could not write everything down in class.



HEAR

Both READING information and LISTENING to a speaker require you to remember ideas.

How?

Read about note-taking on the next page.



DO

NOTE-TAKING

Note-taking is essential when you reach GCSE and A levels.

Beginning this intelligent habit early prepares you well.

NOTES ARE FOR YOU. No one else has to see them though keep them clear. Note-taking helps you to:

- Concentrate and listen or read carefully
- Prepare and plan for essays and projects
- Identify and organise main points
- Provide a concise record of information for revision.

Ways of taking notes:

Linear Notes:

1. Give your notes a headings and sub-headings.
2. Take notes in a logical order, not all over the page.
3. Use letters, numbers or bullet points to organise notes.

4. Use abbreviations:

5. Note down KEY WORDS or phrases: they might trigger your memory or lead to other ideas.

Make them easy to find by:

- a. Underlining key points once,
very important points twice.
- b. Use CAPITAL LETTERS.
- c. Draw boxes round key words.
- d. Draw an *asterisk* each side of a key idea.
- e. Go over the important points with a highlighter pen.

e.g.	<i>for example</i>	<	<i>less than</i>
i.e.	<i>that is</i>	>	<i>greater than</i>
+	<i>and</i>	∴	<i>therefore</i>
=	<i>equals</i>	∵	<i>because</i>
%	<i>percentage</i>	etc.	<i>and so on</i>

Example of linear note-taking:

You are summarising the key points of what you have read in your own words. You can jot ideas down in order (linear notes) starting a new line for each new point.

Elizabeth I

Intro

- Reign known as Elizabethan era
- Time of travel – Drake - + great playwrights – Marlowe & Shakespeare
- 44 years on throne

Early Years

- Born 1533 to Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn.
- MOTHER EXECUTED WHEN SHE WAS TWO.
- Imprisoned during half-sister Mary's reign for nearly year, suspected of supporting Protestant rebels.

Elizabeth's Reign

- Succeeded Mary in 1558.
- Depended heavily on advisers led by *William Cecil*.
- First move to establish English Protestant Church.
- More moderate than father and Mary. Motto 'video et taceo' ('I see, and say nothing').
- Reigned over the failure of the Spanish Armada.
- Imprisoned Mary Queen of Scots and executed her in 1587.
- Long reign created stability.

Subheadings underlined

Key names and words underlined or double-underlined

Important name highlighted with asterisks

Clear layout

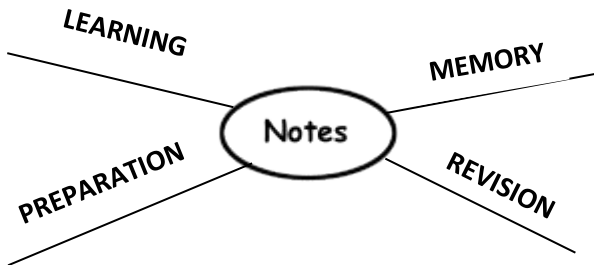
Important information in box

Mind Mapping Notes:

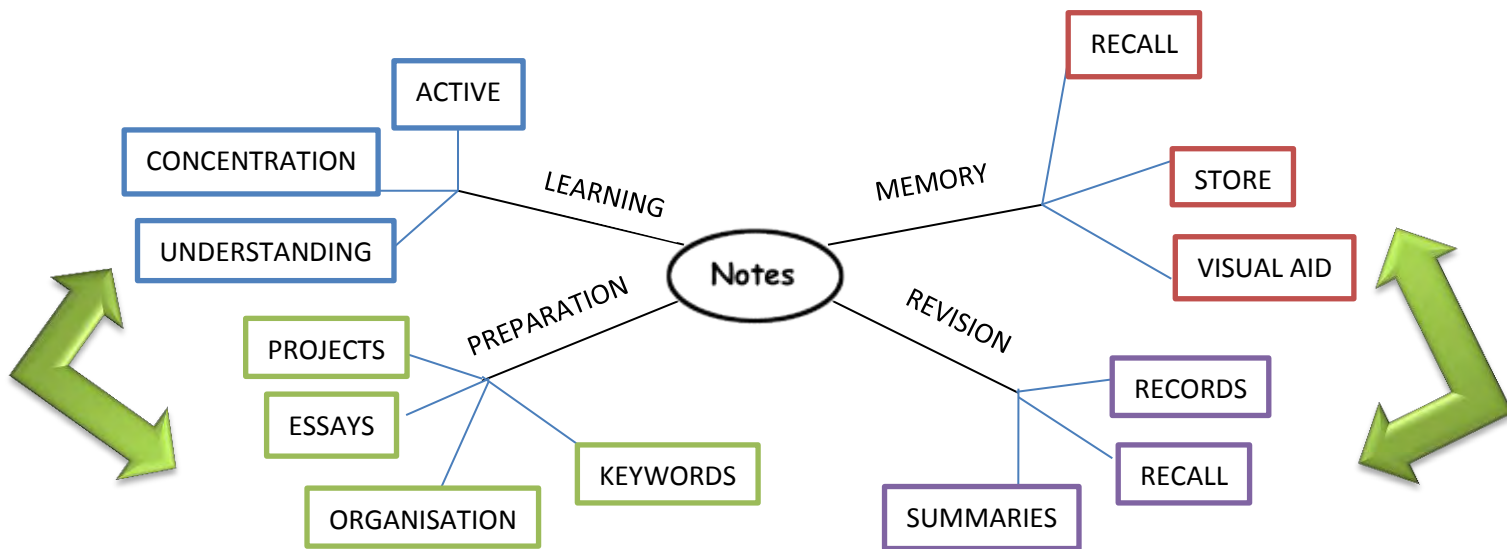
You can also make patterned notes with the title in the middle of the page and a circle around it:



As main ideas are mentioned by the teacher, in a book or as you think of them, draw a line from the central circle and print that idea on the line, as you would with subheadings.



Now you can add ideas onto these and look for links between ideas, indicating them with an arrow or chain.



Revision Note-Making

Revision is not just about reading and re-reading all the information on a topic. Make yourself revision cards which fit topics onto small postcard sized cards:

You can add smaller notes for any particular details you keep forgetting.

It is easier to revise notes in small chunks than re-reading whole essays.

Going through an essay and turning it into notes is an excellent revision exercise.

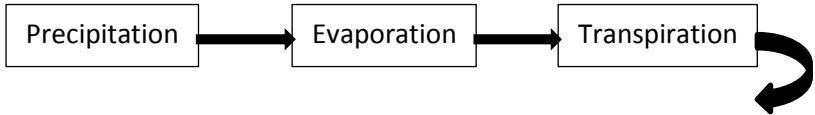
You can also use post-it notes stuck on your mirror to help you to memorise information.

Crustaceans

1. Groups:
 - a. Entomostracans
 - b. Malacostraceans
2. Physical features:
 - a. Exoskeleton
 - b. Head
 - c. Trunk
 - d. Tail
 - e. Circulation
 - f. Nervous System
3. Reproduction:
 - a. Separate sexes
 - b. Swimmerets
4. Survival:
 - a. Claw pressure
 - b. Sonic boom
 - c. Strike

Other Methods of Revision Note-Making

Flow Lines: Useful for illustrating processes:



Tables and Grids: Useful for

- comparing features or places
- highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of different things.

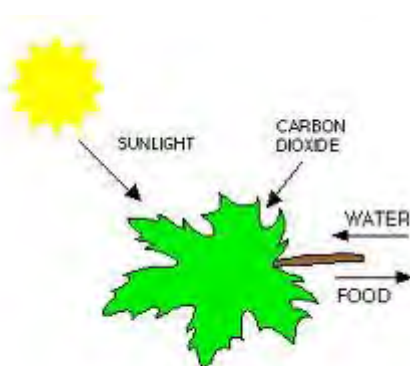
	Edinburgh	London
Cloud cover		
Frost frequency		
Sunshine		
Wind speed		

Diagrams & Drawings: Useful for

- Illustrating PROCESSES such as the rain cycle
- Labelling FEATURES on a diagram, such as the body.

Keep diagrams and drawings:

- Large enough for details and labels to be clear
- Keep all labels horizontal, not slanting
- Avoid cluttering up the diagram with too many labels.



Making Comparisons

Use Venn diagrams to find similarities, differences and commonalities.



Final Tips on Making Notes

1. Do not try to write everything down as you will miss important information. Much of the time the teacher will write down for you the important things you need to know.
2. Listen out for important points that the teacher stresses and repeats.
3. If you are unsure about an idea, make sure you ask.
4. If you doing your homework and you become unsure, look up the topic yourself by background reading and research.
5. Check your notes as soon as possible to make sure they make sense.

Analytical Technique

Many subjects require analytical essays. A key technique for analysing is making a **POINT**, giving **EVIDENCE** and providing an **EXPLANATION**: **PEE**.

Compare PEE with a burger:

The **POINT** is often quite short – it is the lighter top of the burger.

You cannot make a point without **EVIDENCE** – it would be like having a burger bun with nothing inside. Further one-word quotations can add more proof to your point, adding the lettuce and tomato to your burger.

Finally, the **EXPLANATION** must be the most solid part of your PEE, it has to hold your burger together. Without an explanation, your point and evidence will fall apart. Usually it should be the longest part of your PEE as it explains how your evidence supports your point and develops your answer to the question.




It is a good idea for your point and evidence to be in one sentence followed by your explanation in a new sentence. For example:

This booklet encourages note-taking, stating that it will help you to “concentrate and listen”. This implies that if you are focusing on taking notes, you will also be listening more to what the teacher is saying.

Point in blue
Evidence in red
Explanation in green

Exam revision

Look after yourself!	Approach to work:	Final preparation:
<p>This means:</p> <p>Avoid fizzy sweet drinks as they increase agitation.</p> <p>Drink plenty of water; dehydration can reduce brain activity.</p> <p>Eat healthy snacks, rather than sugary, sweet ones.</p> <p>Sleep well.</p> <p>Do the most difficult work at a time when you work best.</p> <p>Work little and often; avoid work building up as this increases your stress levels, making it difficult to concentrate.</p> <p>Take a small break after 30 minutes of work.</p> <p>Exercise.</p> <p>Make sure you have adequate lighting and a comfortable seat.</p>	<p>Create a revision timetable, being realistic.</p> <p>Prepare to do your best – take pride in your efforts.</p> <p>Use mind-maps, postcards and post-it notes around your room for reminders.</p> <p>Share revision with a friend, quizzing each other or making notes together.</p> <p>Review what you have learnt on a regular basis throughout the year. Check over your notes within 24 hours and again within 7 days and you will remember it. Much of what you have learnt will be forgotten without this reviewing.</p>	<p>Make sure you have all the right equipment in advance, e.g.: an eraser, a long ruler, a protractor, set square, compasses and a calculator if permitted. Include spare pens and pencils for emergencies.</p> <p>Sleep well. You have done the revision. Cramming at the last minute through the night does not help. In fact, it is during sleep that your brain can store and remember things.</p> <p>Drink water before and during the exam as it can help you concentrate.</p> <p>Take time and care over the questions, reading them carefully, more than once, and underlining key words.</p> <p>If you find yourself panicking in the exam, SMILE! It immediately helps you to relax.</p> 

Final Tips for Learning

Keep Calm:

The brain works most efficiently when emotions are calm and relaxed:

- quiz yourself on those French verbs while relaxed in the shower!
- If you are feeling anxious in the exam, force yourself to smile. This can immediately relax you and allow you to breathe better, increasing oxygen to the brain.

Questions:

- Quiz yourself about subjects; ask your friends and family to quiz you.
- Ask yourself questions about what you are reading and work out the answers. The brain works more efficiently when it answers questions in comparison to rehearsing information.

Verbalisation:

- When you have read something from a textbook or heard something new from a teacher, **explain** it back to someone or discuss it.
- **Repeat** ideas you have been taught but in your own words.
- Just by reading about something we remember about a third of the information but by note-taking and then **discussing** we remember closer to 80% of the information.
- Using verbalisation is actually the process of asking questions aloud, such as 'What have I just read?'

Small Chunks:

- Another effective way to verbalise ideas is to imagine teaching what you have learnt to a five-year-old. This involves breaking down what you have learnt and thinking about how you might explain it clearly. If you can explain it to a five-year-old then you have understood.
- Putting key ideas on post-it notes is another way of breaking large subjects into small chunks, keeping your studies 'bite-sized'.

Making Connections:

- Visualising what you have learnt by constructing mind maps to summarise and represent subjects helps the brain to store and recall ideas – pictures are easier to remember than text.
- Find something you can relate information to, for example, imagining the terms and concepts in chemistry to be part of a computer game.
- The process of making connections is supported by the physiology of the brain: as our brains learn new information, brain cells forge new connections so that making connections is one of the most powerful learning strategies.
- Answering questions and verbalising information are both forms of making connections.



Accuracy Take pride in your craftsmanship!

Checking your work carefully is an easy way of lifting the standard of your achievement in EVERY subject.

Developing the habit of slow checking early on will allow efficient checking when you have reached exam levels.

You should check for:

- **Words missing.** The best way to check for these is to read your work out loud.
- **Accurate spellings for basic word patterns:** learn the patterns of common words such as:

definitely disappear character choose/chose friend	grammar happened immediately interesting maybe	probably quiet/quite quotation receive sentence	separate Shakespeare their through/throughout tomorrow
--	--	---	--

- **Punctuation used clearly** to help the reader make sense of what you are saying – they are like road signs that stop your read crashing into your next sentence.
- Have you used a **question mark** after a question?
- **Capital letters** must be used at the beginnings of sentences and on the names of people and places.
- Have you used **paragraphs**? (Add two dashes // to show where a new paragraph should have been if you have missed one out.)
- Avoid beginning sentences with *and*, *but*, *then* or *also*. These are connectives within sentences, not starters.
- Make sure you are writing in **full sentences**.

Key Words

Exam questions have their own particular language. Here are some definitions of the kinds of words you will come across:

Account for	Give reasons for
Analyse	Find the main ideas, how they are related and why they are important.
Calculate	Solve a problem by a mathematical procedure.
Comment on	Discuss, criticise, or explain its meaning as completely as possible.
Compare	Show both the similarities and the differences.
Consider	Give balanced reasons for and against.
Contrast	Compare by showing the differences.
Criticise	Give your judgement or reasoned opinion of something, showing its good and bad points. However, it is not necessary to attack.
Define	Give the formal meaning by distinguishing it from similar or related terms. This is often a matter of giving a memorised definition.
Describe	Write a detailed account in a logical sequence or story form.
Differentiate	Explain how you can tell the difference between ideas.
Diagram	Make a graph, chart or drawing. Be sure to label it and add a brief explanation if necessary.
Discuss	Present arguments for and against a point of view and reach a conclusion. The arguments must be supported with appropriate evidence.
Evaluate	Give an opinion, supported by evidence and reasons or expert opinions, of the truth or importance of a concept. Show the advantages and disadvantages. Make a judgement.

Examine	Look carefully at all the details.
Explain	Describe clearly, considering how? Why? What?
Illustrate	Explain or make clear by concrete examples, comparisons or analogies that help to describe or confirm an idea.
Interpret	Judge the meaning of an idea using examples and personal comments to make something clear.
Justify	Give a statement of why you think something is so. Give reasons for your statement or conclusion.
List	Produce a list of words, sentences or comments.
Outline	Give a general summary of key facts without the details. Show the organisation of the idea.
Prove	Show by argument or logic that something is true. The word 'prove' has a very specific meaning in maths and physics.
Relate	Show the connection between things, telling how one causes or is like another.
Review	Give a survey or summary in which you look at the important parts and criticise if necessary.
Simplify	Reduce an equation or fraction to its simplest form.
State	Describe or explain the main points in precise terms. Use brief, clear sentences. Omit details or examples.
Summarise	Give a brief, condensed account of the main ideas.
Trace	Follow the progress or history of the subject.