

Revision Strategies and Activities



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Revision is an essential part of learning, particularly at the end of the year and in preparation for final exams for Stage 6 students. When undertaking revision, students are engaging in the process of 'retrieval practice' which is the "act of trying to recall something without having it in front of you" (Gonzalez, 2017).

Research into the importance of retrieval practice shows that getting information 'in' to students heads, is equally important to getting information back 'out' of students' heads, and that the latter is an incredibly important and powerful part of the learning process. In fact, recent studies have shown that retrieval practice is the most effective strategy for cementing long-term learning (Agarwal & Bain, 2019). The following strategies can help students to revise and practice retrieval strategies in class, and also independently.

The 'Hat' Game

This is a fun game for students to revise key terms, and concepts. It works very well for topics such as Urban Dynamics, or Population Geography.

In this activity, students are split in groups of 5-6. Each student brainstorms key terms and concepts from the unit in focus and writes each term on a separate slip or paper, and places them into their group's 'hat' (you can use a container instead). The teacher can also prepare terms and concepts for students to revise instead of students generating them.

The game has three rounds in which students are required to complete different tasks with the terms they pull out of the 'hat'. In each group, students take it in turns to pull a term from the 'hat'. The other team members have to try to correctly guess the term, and get a point for each one they correctly identify. Each round goes for 2 minutes.

In the first round, students have to explain the term or concept without using any words from the actual term, similar to the game Articulate. At the end of the round, all terms are put back into the hat.

In the second round, students have to draw the key term whilst the other students guess, like Pictionary.

In the third round, students have to act out the term, similar to Charades. The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

Revision grids

This works best in small groups in class, but students can also use revision grids for independent revision and study.

Students, or the class teacher, creates a 6x6 grid of key terms or ideas from a unit, with the numbers 1 to 6 down each row and column. Students roll two dice (or roll twice), and then using the corresponding numbers on each dice and the grid select a word. Repeat the process to select a second word. To earn a point, students then have explain how the two words are connected to each other (eg. Spinning and low-pressure system).

Urban Dynamics – Revision Grid						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Suburbanisation	Social character	Spatial exclusion	Change	Advantage	A large city in the developed world
2	Residential land	Exurbanisation	Location	Urban renewal	Lifestyles	Noise
3	Population	Country town/suburb	Urban decay	Poverty	Growth	Economic character
4	Ecological sustainability	Disadvantage	Commercial development	Culture of place	Urban consolidation	Colour
5	Counterurbanisation	Future trends	Wealth	Streetscape	Vitality	Ethnicity
6	Architecture	Industrial development	Decentralisation	Vitality	Urban village	Street life

Create a stimulus booklet

A unique way for students to revise the HSC or Preliminary course is to have them create a stimulus booklet. This also allows students to focus on the skills section of the Senior course as they will need to think about a range of skills which can be assessed using their booklet. Students will need to include a topographic map, as well as relevant images and text excerpts relevant to the course. As a follow on to this activity students could write a set of multiple choice and short-answer questions to accompany their own stimulus material, or could swap with another class member and write a series of questions on a classmate's stimulus booklet.

Progressive brainstorm

This is a great way to revise a variety of different topics, and also pick up on gaps in student's knowledge. Write various topics, or parts of topics on the top of butcher's paper and place these around the room.

Students each choose a different piece of butcher's paper to begin with. There should be no more than 3–4 students per topic. Students have 2–3 minutes to add ideas and knowledge to one of the pieces of butcher's paper. They then move clockwise around the room to another piece of butcher's paper. The process then repeats itself with students completing a full circuit. Students cannot add items that are already on the paper but must add new and additional information each time.

This activity can also be done with exam-style questions. Students plan a response to the question together in 5 minutes and then move around to the next plan and review another group's response.

Classroom Trial

Split the class in two. One group of students is accused of not knowing anything about a topic, and the other group are the 'prosecutors', who come up with probing questions on the given topic. The group on trial has time to revise and prepare, whilst the prosecutors create their questions. Each group member must either ask, or answer a question. At the end the teacher can cover anything that students may have missed.

Double flash cards

Many students find making flashcards with key terms and definitions a helpful way to revise and study in Geography. In addition to having students create flashcards on key concepts, students also create another set of 'activity' flashcards.

The activity flashcards feature a range of small tasks students can do to further consolidate their understanding of the items they are revising, such as:

- Draw a labelled image of the concept
- Summarise the concept in three words
- Come up with a real-world example to illustrate the concept
- Pick another card and explain the similarities/differences between them
- Create a question about this term/concept

A similar activity can be done with a set of flashcards containing directive terms, and another set with syllabus dot points. Students can practice a variety of HSC style questions using these flashcards. This could also be done online using flashcard websites such as Quizlet.

Recall and Rank

Students recall as much information about a topic in 5 minutes as they can in small groups. Each group then has to rank the information from most important to least important. Each group then compares and justifies their rankings to another group elaborating on reasons why they ordered their information in the way that they did. This works best if students write each idea on a separate post-it-note or slip of paper so they can easily be moved around.

Write an exam and marking criteria

In groups, or individually, students create an exam on the whole course, or a single unit. It is beneficial to have students also write an accompanying marking criteria. This helps them to become familiar with the requirements of each directive term, the HSC exam packs, and also what differentiates great responses from good ones. Students can view previous marking criteria to help them to create their own. Students can then swap exams, and also have a go at marking their peers' responses based on the marking criteria they created.

Generate, Sort, Connect, Elaborate

This is a Thinking Routine generated by Harvard's Project Zero that is useful for revision. This works best in small groups in class. This activity works well for covering whole units, or large parts of the topic including case studies.

Students generate as much knowledge as they can on a given topic. Students should write each idea or fact on a separate post-it-note or a slip of paper.

In groups, students then sort all of the ideas into categories that they think are appropriate for the topic.

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You can encourage students to see if they can organize it according to various parts of the syllabus. Once sorted, students can stick the slips of paper down onto a larger piece of paper or surface in the categories they have created.

As a group, students then have to draw connecting lines between each group of ideas and explain how they are connected or related. They should write their elaborations on their mind map.

Finally, students elaborate on what they recall and can add further ideas and knowledge to their mind map that may have come up in the connection stage. You can also have students check their notes to see what they may have missed during this stage and add it to their visual board.

Be the teacher!

Split students into small groups and assign them each a part of a topic. Each group is responsible for helping the rest of the class revise this topic in 10 minutes. Students can create Kahoots, games, a worksheet, a short video or may choose to re-teach the class a particularly difficult part of their assigned topic. This also works well when revising skills.

Shorter Activities

The following activities work well as small activities that can be done at the start or end of a lesson.

Celebrity Heads

Play celebrity heads but with key terms or concepts from the course. Students have to ask the class yes or no questions until they can successfully guess which concept or terms they are.

The 'Um' Game

Students have to speak about a topic for one minute without pausing, hesitating or saying the word 'um'. This can be played in small groups with students adjudicating.

Colour, Symbol, Image

This is another Harvard Visible Thinking Routine, and is a great strategy to implement at the end of a lesson to recap and recall key ideas. Students have to summarise what they have learnt by choosing a colour, symbol and image that captures the key parts of the idea or topic. Students have to justify their choices. This makes for interesting discussion, and can also help the teacher to pick up on any misconceptions in student's learning.

Reference List

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Retrieval practice is a learning strategy focused on getting information out.

The act of retrieval is about recalling information and strengthening our memory for that information to make forgetting less likely.

Retrieval practice is a powerful tool for improving learning.