



study and revision guide

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It is a well known fact that you don't remember as much of what you hear as what you see, and that you remember even more if as well as hearing and seeing you also do something.

That's why you can do a lot to help yourself to prepare for exams if you organise your work and study times *whilst you are learning in the first place*, and don't just leave it all to the last minute, or even the last couple of months before exams.

We all need to discover the best way to study for ourselves---different people will do it in different ways. But often, when you've discovered it, it will work for a variety of different subjects.

In particular, it can be applied to **Bible Study**. So, in these notes, I am going to use the Bible for different ways of study which you can also use for your GCSEs, A Levels or beyond.

The Filing Cabinet

Although I said above that we remember more if we do and hear, rather than just see, there is a theory that we actually remember *everything* we experienced in life --- but we forget "where" we remembered it!

What that means is that your brain is like a filing cabinet, and your memory is like a secretary. Now a good secretary will file papers and documents under sensible headings, in order, and also keep an index showing how linked papers can be traced.

A poor secretary simply puts all the latest papers in the filing drawer at the back, planning to "sort them out later", but never gets round to doing so.

When we come to an exam, or any other occasion when we want to remember something we have learnt or done in the past, we don't



want to have to start training our secretary to sort out the files *then*! Instead, we want them neatly in order before that time comes.

So, the question is, *how* do you train your secretary (your memory) to find things for you? Actually, however badly organised your memory is, it is a hard worker. We can all think of times when we've tried to remember the name of a song, a person or a place and just can't think of it. Then, hours later, when we're doing something else, it pops into our head.

What's been happening is that you set your memory a task and it has been working away in the background until it has done it. If your filing cabinet (brain) is totally disorganised then it has simply gone through file by file until it comes across the right one. Probably, however, there is *some* form of order or indexing at work, and it has been able to make some links to get to the answer more quickly.

What we need to do is to train our brains to keep tabs on the links and to get to the answers we want as quickly as possible. It's no use remembering who fought in the Battle of Hastings ten minutes after the end of the exam!

Short Term / Long Term

If you were asked at the end of a lesson what it had been about you would doubtless be able to say straight away. After two hours you probably still could. After two days it would take longer to remember, but after two weeks? Two months? Two years??

Your short term memory is good because the secretary is still carrying the papers to the filing cabinet and can just look straight at them. A day or so later and even a poor secretary ought to be able to remember where they put that batch of papers, but as more papers get piled on top the harder it becomes, unless....

The secret to developing a good memory is to keep asking the memory secretary for the papers until it is so certain of where they are that it can go straight to them every time. And it's far better to start training it to do that one or two years before an exam period than just a month before.

Enough of the theory, now let's get some practical ways of training your memory secretary!

Weekly Plan

The best way to be able to locate something in your memory's filing cabinet is to get it out again fairly soon after you put it in.

An easy way of doing this is to set aside about half an hour every week to review from memory the week's work.

Get a paper file, and each week take a sheet of A4 paper. Divide it up (using both sides) between your subjects so that each gets roughly the same amount of space.... about a quarter of the sheet per subject (slightly less if you do more than 8 subjects).

Put the date you are doing this at the top of the sheet, and then **from memory** and without referring to any notes or exercise books take each subject in turn and write down everything you can remember doing in that subject in the previous week.

At first you will find this quite hard, but as you begin to do it regularly it will become easier. Don't write sentences, just phrases that describe what you did. Put in formulas, important dates or names, etc. You must be concise, you are *not allowed to take up extra space!*

Once you have done it for all subjects take a different coloured pen and go through your exercise books and add in anything you had forgotten. The aim is that you will not write anything... you are trying to train your brain to remember it all.

Date: 31st February 2012
ENGLISH

MATHS

RE

SCIENCE

When you have finished, file it away in order so that week by week the file grows.

As well as having begun to train your memory, you are generating the revision crib notes you will use in the future. If you use these sheets properly throughout the course, as described in the next paragraph, you might not need to look in your exercise books at all just before exams!

Every school holiday, go back over all the sheets so far. That way, you keep revising your work as the course progresses. When you read through something on a sheet that you can't remember properly, refer to it in your exercise book or text book. As your sheets were dated, it should be easy to find the right place in the exercise book because you always write the dates in those when you do work, *don't you?!*

An example of such a sheet is given on the next page, based on my studies before I wrote this booklet in 1998. (I have used a different font for the bits I added after re-reading my "exercise book")

DATE: 3rd August 1998

Subject: Psalm 37

Don't worry about wicked people. Don't be envious of sinners.

Trust God

Commit your way to Him ...> He will look after you (safe pasture)

Delight in Him....>He will give you desires of your heart

Be still / rest with God. Wait on Him. **HE WILL VINDICATE YOU.**

Subject: John chapters 1 - 3

Jesus was with God from beginning, referred to as the Word

Came to earth to make those who receive Him God's children

Grace and truth come from Him

**JOHN BAPTIST, NOT THE
CHRIST BUT JESUS IS**

First miracle...water into wine ..>God is a god who makes the party last!

Heaven is celebration.

**NICODEMUS CONVERSATION
WITH JESUS**

TRUTH...>did not allow God's temple to be abused

God loves world(people) so much sent His Son as sacrifice to get us back, if we will accept Him

Subject: "Surprised by Power of the Spirit" book by Jack Deere

Must not be half hearted about walk with God

Miracles/healing/gifts are for today as well

God gives gifts to those who are intimate with Him

John 17:26...that we might love Jesus even as the Father loves Him

Need to develop passion for Him

NOTE

It does not matter if you already knew something before it came up in the lesson...if it was talked about during that week write it down on the weekly review sheet

Of course, it goes without saying that a well kept exercise book is essential as an aid in all this.

It helps (as already said) if you date each new piece of work and also if you number the pages. Then when you fill the exercise book you can use the back page to write a contents page or index for the book! So afterwards, if you want to find something quickly, you can do so.

Also remember, you won't necessarily have the same text book that you use in year 10 by the time you come to the exams in year 11 (or whichever level of exams you are working on). The only text you can guarantee having is your own exercise book plus any revision notes you make as the course progresses. So if there is something in a text book you want to remember, copy it into an exercise book *by hand* - you are more likely to remember some of it that way and it is, in any case, breaking copyright to use a photo-copier to do it!

Down to Revision....

If you've been keeping (and reviewing) your weekly records of your work then you've already started revising! As the exams approach, however, you will need to do more. The first thing you'll need is **STRUCTURE**. Without this you won't do enough, or you may even do too much but feel guilty that you are not doing enough.

Structure also helps with the other big problem of exam time...*parents!* They get stressed about exams too and many end up shouting at their offspring when they see them relaxing "*shouldn't you be revising???*"

It's important to build in times of relaxation (and exercise!) into a revision schedule, also to make sure you allocate enough time to each subject and not just work on the ones you like. You also need to vary the way you work frequently, and take regular short breaks (more on this later).

At first you will still be receiving homework as you approach revision. This must be a priority, but a revision programme can be built on top of that.

From about Easter before the exams a working week of 40 hours is a good thing to aim at. During term time, school accounts for 25 hours (if you are in the sixth form you will get free periods, if you do not study during those you will need to add the time on to the evening/ weekend programme). This leaves 15 hours to make up out of school, Once you have finished term time, all 40 hours can be divided up to suit you.

During term time you have 15 hours to allocate. You could do 3 hours every evening Monday to Friday and leave the weekend completely free. If you do 2 hours in the evenings and take one evening off altogether you have 11 hours to do over the weekend. *However*, you are strongly urged to take one complete day off studies each week. As well as being a biblical principle (one sabbath day in seven) it really is a good thing to have a day of refreshment to look forward to each week. So I strongly recommend doing enough work in the evenings to only leave 5 or 6 hours at the weekend.

During other times you have 40 hours to allocate through the week. The best advice is to work in 2 to 2½ hour sessions and to allocate three slots of these during the day. Working like this for 6 days will give you about 40 hours. You know the best times for you; when I was studying I liked to work in the morning, have the afternoons off and then come back for more study in the evening but you might prefer to arrange your day differently.

Each session should then be subdivided so that you do different things during the 2½ hours. This keeps your brain more alert. If you just read for the whole time, you won't be storing very much information away. You might choose to revise different subjects in each section, or the same subject in different ways. For instance, doing a written answer to an exam question in the first section followed by reading up on that question and making notes on what you missed out in the second, then finally a maths question or something totally different in the third (such as revising facts or dates, for example).

You should always decide which subjects you find to be easier and which harder and then allocate more time to the harder ones.

Also, when setting out a revision plan make sure you never finish the day with a hard subject. Always end with something you enjoy or at least find easy, that way it will be easier to change into relaxation mode and get to sleep.

So, if you sub-divide the 2½ hours into three 45 minute slots with a 5-10 minute loo break or get-a-drink break between them you might use the session something like this:

Start: Read your notes on chosen subject and then make shorter notes (ideas on how to do this later)

after 45 minutes....short break. At the very least stand up and walk round

after 50 minutes...written answer to an exam question or two

after 95 minutes....short break.

after 100 minutes....mark the exam question by looking up the information in exercise/text book and using a red pen correct mistakes or add in stuff missed out. Make separate notes of

these things because this is what you had not remembered properly and is what you need to learn

after 145 minutes...STOP, long break.

There's no reason why the whole session needs to be on one subject, you could revise two or even three different subjects in that time if that is better for the way *you* work. Doing some maths, for instance, is a very different sort of work to learning facts from history, and it would be a good way of splitting up the time to vary the slots by doing very different types of work.

It's important that you decide early on which subjects you like or find easy and which ones are harder or less enjoyable. You must be tough with your self and allocate *more time* to the harder ones.

On school days you will need to decide whether to keep working as soon as you get home, or have a break then and work later.

In holiday time or the study period before exams once lessons have ended you should make a revision timetable that structure your week completely. There is an example below, it includes one day off and keeps in place the fun things you like to do. If you prepare this and show it to your parents then you all know what is what, and they will be relaxed about seeing you doing 'nothing' in the free-time slots.

Day	9am	10am	11am	Noon	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm
S	← Day Off →													
M	Maths	Eng	Eng	←	Swimming	→	French	Phys	French	EAT!	Geog	Geog		
T	RE	Maths	Maths	←	Cinema	→	Phys	Phys	French	EAT!	Eng	Eng		
W	Hist	French	Hist	←	Shops	→	RE	RE	Media	EAT!	Media	Media		
Th	Maths	French	French		Phys	Hist		Geog	Geog	EAT!	← Youth Group →			
F	Lie in/Relax →				Maths	Eng	Eng		RE	EAT!	Plan next week's timetable based on review of this week's work			
S	Project	Project	Project		←	Sport	→				Family time			

The Friday evening slot is not supposed to be a quick thing. Make notes about the things you struggled with during the week and go back and review them. Evaluate which subjects need more time the following week, think about how well you have worked at different times of the day during the week and prepare a good timetable for the following week. If you think you can cope with more than 40 hours study plan it in but *don't aim for less!*

Once you have planned it, stick to it and don't make excuses. This is your priority for the week. Get into the routine long before exams come. Try it for a week of the holidays in year 10, for instance to find out what works for you.

Make the programme one week at a time, because you will learn which things need more time allocated as you go on. When you know the exam timetable you can make sure you give more time to the earlier exams at first, and leave the later exam subjects a bit until they get closer.

Don't fall into the trap of working seven days a week. You will very quickly burn out and get depressed; we were created to have one day off in seven and we work much better that way. Aim that one day each weekend includes **no** study and instead includes other things that you enjoy doing (if you *enjoy* working at the supermarket that day but if not do you *really* need a job for the few months before the exams? - after all, you haven't got much time to spend any money!)

Exam Papers

At first, use past exam papers to test your knowledge one question at a time. Answer the question from memory, then open your exercise books and revise that topic thoroughly. Always be looking to find out what you *did not* remember and work on learning that. Unless directed by your teacher, do not aim to "do a whole" exam paper in the early stages of revision. Save one paper at least to attempt in full in the last week or so before the exam.

You *will* need to practice exam timing, but you actually do not need to do a whole paper to achieve this. If it's an essay paper lasting 2 hours and you need to answer three questions you know that each question should take a third of 120 minutes (40 minutes) to read, consider and then write your answer. You can therefore do a timed attempt at one answer. Then, as suggested above, revise the topic the question is about and write down the things you had forgotten or had been wrong about. It is much better for your information retrieval skills (i.e. your filing cabinet and memory secretary) if you do it this way rather than revising the question before answering it. Remember - you are trying to be at your peak when the exam comes, not a month before it, so don't just mark something as wrong and forget about it; do something that helps you to remember the correct answer; just reading it is not enough, get a different coloured pen and write the correct answers on the essay you just wrote; you have got to train that memory secretary!

In an exam such as maths, the easiest way to work on timing is to divide the number of minutes for the exam by the total number of marks. 120 minutes divided by 80 marks (for instance) means each mark can take 1.5 minutes. So if a question is worth 5 marks you can spend up to seven and a half minutes on it.

Using your Note Diaries and Exercise Books

☑ If you have spent the course making the sort of diary of your work that was suggested on pages 3 and 4, you now have a complete record of all your courses. One way of using these in revision is to look at each week in turn for each subject. Can you remember what those lines you have written are talking about? If you can, tick them. If not, use the cross-referencing with your exercise books to look them up. Revision is always about finding out what you have *forgotten* in order to re-learn it. You do not need to spend much time on the things you tick, it's the things you had to look up that need your attention.

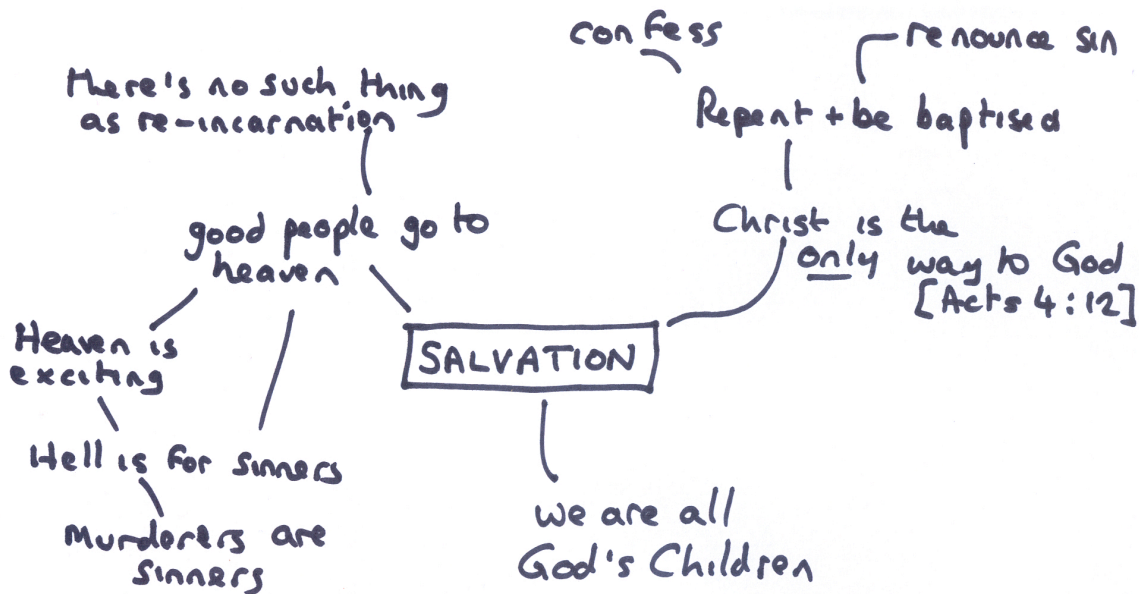
☑ When you have worked out what it is you need to re-learn, read 2 or 3 pages of the relevant part of your exercise book or text book. Then turn the book over and get a clean sheet of paper and write down from memory what you have just read, with any explanations you feel you want to add. Having done that, re-read the notes to see if you missed anything out and if so get that coloured pen again and write them in once more. Next time you revise this subject start with this piece of paper and make sure you can remember it all, especially the coloured bits.

☑ Alternatively, instead of writing what you read you might prefer to record them in audio. Making an audio version of your notes is useful not only because speaking it out helps the memory secretary with the filing, but also because you can then stick your headphones on and listen to the recording on the bus or somewhere else where you would not be able to revise in any other way.

☑ One more idea is to start with a topic and a blank sheet of paper. On that sheet of paper create what is known as a mind or memory map. Write the title of the topic in the middle of the page and then the main points you can remember of it spreading outwards, linking points that relate to each other. When you have written down as much as you can remember, turn to your notes or text book and start reading up on the topic. Whenever you come to something you had not written on the sheet, add them in in a relevant place in (you guessed it) a different colour. Also correct anything you may have been wrong about.

When you have done this you know that it is the things written in the different colour that you need to learn, what you originally wrote is already filed away in an accessible place.

An example of this is done on the next page.

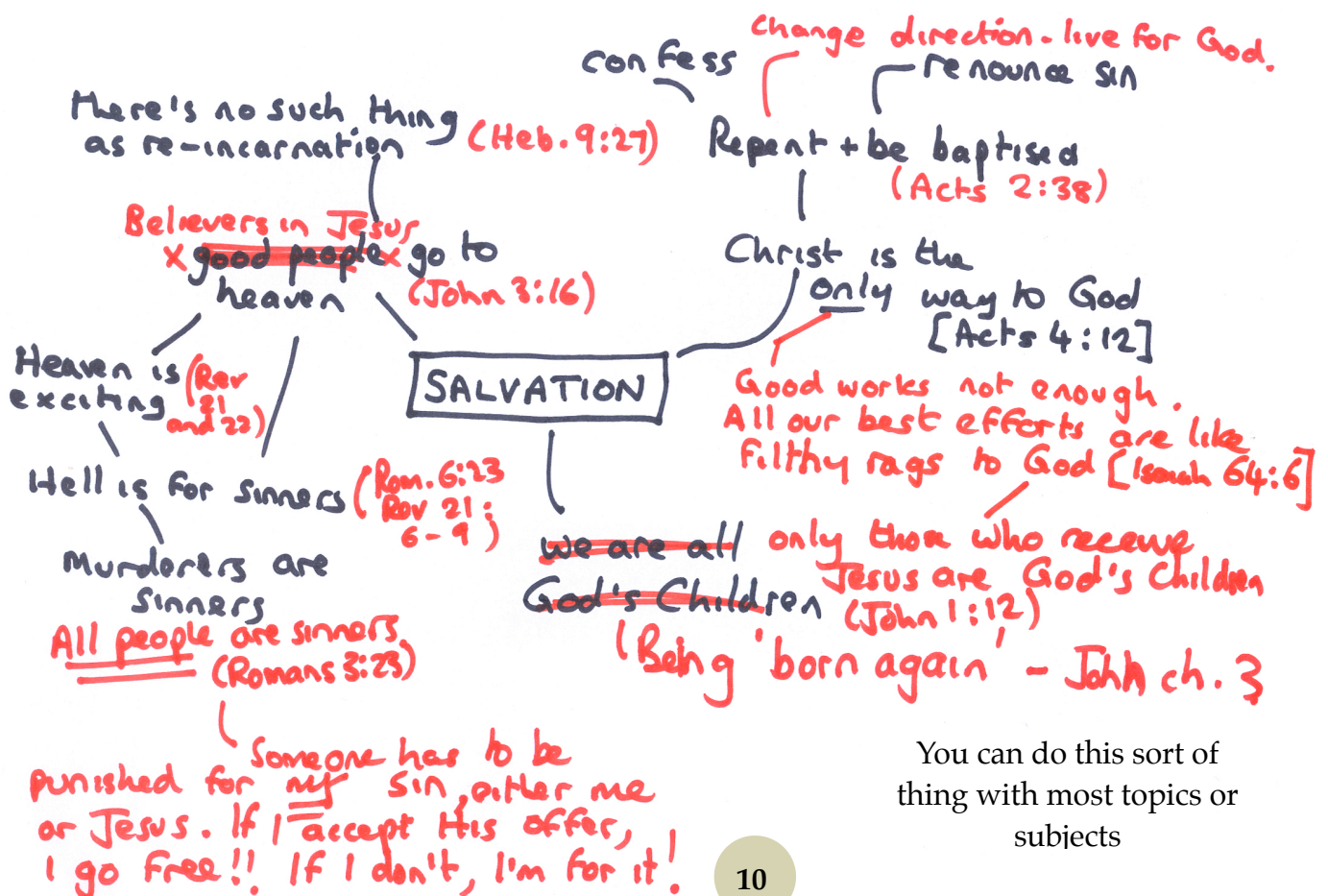


Above is my 'from memory' attempt on the subject of Salvation.

Lines link related topics. This is a bit squashed up, you should aim to fill a whole page.

Below is what I did when I read my notes. I can now clearly see that the things in red are what I was unsure of (loads!!) The black bit are what I already know, though I must be careful to see where I got things wrong too.

If I do this again in a few weeks hopefully I'll do better.



You can do this sort of thing with most topics or subjects

The ideas on the previous pages all make use of the filing cabinet and memory secretary and therefore train your mind to remember where the information is stored and so to make it easier to access it during an exam.

Teachers

Each subject requires special skills and you should ask your teachers for recommendations about how to prepare for their subjects; remember they were once in your position and they succeeded and passed the exams (at least for their own subject!) It's always good to aim to learn from those who have experienced something before.

From all the ideas in this book and those that your teachers give you, choose the methods that suit you. Some ideas will not be right for you, others will work for one subject but not another.

All of them involve **work** which you have to do. There are no short-cuts, only more efficient ways of working. In the end, you have to do the work and no-one else can do it for you.

Day of the Exam

If it is a morning exam, don't try to revise on the day. Relax, if you have revised properly there is no more you can do now and you may well make yourself panic if you try to 'cram' before you enter the exam hall.

If it's an afternoon exam and you are free in the morning you might do an extra hour of revision but aim to give yourself a couple of hours between revising and the exam so that your brain is not tired when you go in.

When you are in the exam room, relax! This is your opportunity to demonstrate what you know. When you are told to begin, sit without looking at your paper and pray for a couple of seconds, that you might keep calm and not be panicked by a question that you do not understand.

If you do sense panic in the exam, put your pen down and have another time of quiet prayer: you can talk to Jesus in an exam (just don't move your lips!)

Answer the questions you can do easily first, this will help you to get into the swing of the exam and the harder looking questions may then begin to make more sense. You can answer questions in any order, just make sure that you number them clearly so that the marker can easily see which answer is which.

When you leave the exam room, whether you felt it went well or went badly, don't spend time checking over what you did, that exam is over; have a break and then carry on preparing for the next one.

Summary

- ✓ Unless you have a sensible plan for your studies, you will not make the best use of your study time.
- ✓ Make a chart for the week and fill it in with a programme for revision and breaks and let your parents see it
- ✓ Start the day (when you are fresh) with something you find harder (a subject you don't like or one that needs more concentration)
- ✓ After that reward yourself with something you like (not just chocolate, choose a subject you enjoy next)
- ✓ Keep varying the work during the day, aiming to vary the work style and well as the subject

For instance, if you start by reading notes, move on to problem solving or essay writing. Then perhaps a multi-choice paper or making notes *from memory* without referring to any books.

- ✓ By continually varying techniques as well as subjects you keep more alert. The recommended time span on one type of revision is about 40 minutes, so in a 2 hour session you ought to aim to do 2 or 3 different things, with a short gap (no more than 5 minutes) between each one. During that gap walk away from your desk, because your body is not designed to be sitting for too long.
- ✓ The final session of the day is often the least productive, but that does not mean it should be wasted! Choose something easy to do, a subject which you enjoy for instance. Aim to end the day on a high note so that you go to bed feeling successful; it's not a good idea to go to bed still puzzling over a problem you couldn't solve or trying to compose an essay that is proving difficult.

Finally, don't forget that you study best when your body is being looked after well. You need:

- ✓ To eat well, especially if it is cold. Don't miss a meal, and maintain a balanced diet
- ✓ To sleep well. Your brain needs plenty of sleep in order to work well. When you are studying it is working harder than it has ever had to before!
- ✓ To exercise well

Good luck!

I went for a run but came back after two minutes because I forgot something. I forgot I'm out of shape and can't run more than two minutes.

someecards
user card



If you were going to run the London marathon you would have to start training months and months before to get your body into peak condition.

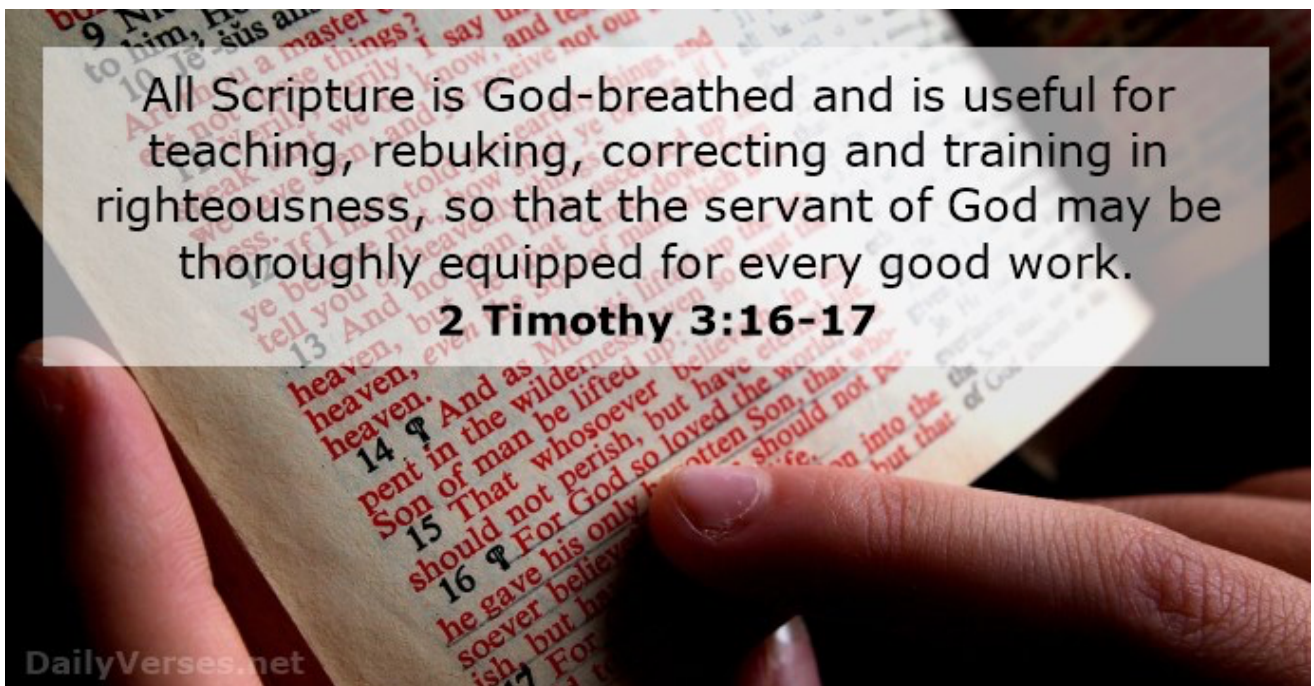
It's the same with exams, you have to start training your brain months before to get it working properly.

Using the ideas in this booklet you can begin to train for exams 2 years in advance, because sensible note taking and regular review of your subjects is exactly what the brain needs in order to do well in the exam marathon season.

But it's not just about exams. The most important thing to study for life is God's Word, the Bible. The techniques described in this booklet also help us to develop ways of reading, remembering and applying the instructions for life that the Bible gives us.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17



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