

# **Building Study Habits**

The Ramsey Academy  
2026-2027



# Building Study Habits

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*“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”*

Your GCSE years are not just another stage of school—they are a pivotal transition point between compulsory education and the pathways that follow. The grades you achieve at the end of Year 11 influence access to sixth form courses, college placements, apprenticeships, and, ultimately, future career opportunities. However, what is often less visible—but arguably more important—is that this period is where you begin to develop the habits that determine how effectively you learn, not just what you learn.

Research in cognitive psychology is very clear on one point: success in exams is not primarily determined by intelligence or effort alone, but by *how* that effort is directed. Students frequently invest hours into revision that feels productive—re-reading notes, highlighting textbooks, or copying information—yet these strategies are consistently shown to be far less effective than approaches that require active thinking. Put simply, the method matters as much as the motivation.

This booklet, and the three revision evenings that accompany it, are designed to address that gap. Rather than asking you to simply “revise more”, they focus on helping you revise *better*. Each session introduces strategies that are grounded in decades of research into how memory works. These are not trends or opinions: they are among the most well-established findings in the science of learning.

The structure of the three evenings reflects this evidence. You will begin by learning how to organise your time and establish routines that make revision possible in the first place. You will then move into strategies such as self-quizzing and flashcards, which are designed to strengthen memory through effortful thinking. Finally, you will focus on deliberate practice and exam execution—applying what you know under realistic conditions, which is essential for translating knowledge into exam performance.

Alongside these academic strategies, there is a strong emphasis on wellbeing. This is deliberate. Effective study is not just about techniques; it is about consistency. Regular sleep, stable routines, managing distractions, and maintaining focus are all factors that influence how well your brain can learn and recall information. Even the feeling of difficulty—such as struggling to remember an answer—is not a sign of failure, but a key part of the learning process.

Ultimately, this programme is about helping you take control of your learning. GCSE success is not about last-minute effort or short bursts of motivation; it is the result of small, consistent actions repeated over time. By building strong study habits now, you are not only preparing for your exams this year—you are developing skills that will support you in every stage of education that follows.

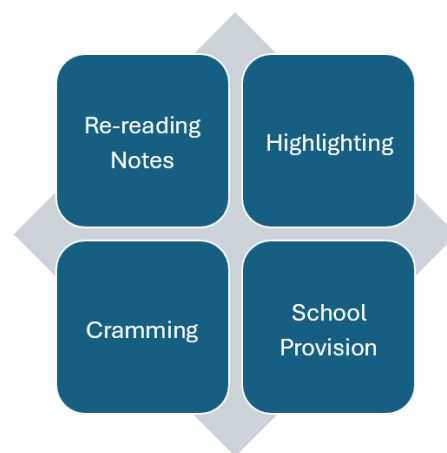
# Ineffective Vs. Effective Revision

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Revision is the process of returning to previously learned material to strengthen your understanding and improve your ability to recall it. It involves actively working with knowledge—such as testing yourself, practising questions, and identifying gaps—so that information moves from short-term awareness into long-term memory and can be used effectively in an exam.

It might feel surprising that some of the most common revision strategies—highlighting, re-reading, cramming, or simply attending revision sessions—are among the least effective. They *feel* productive and give a sense of effort, but this can be misleading.

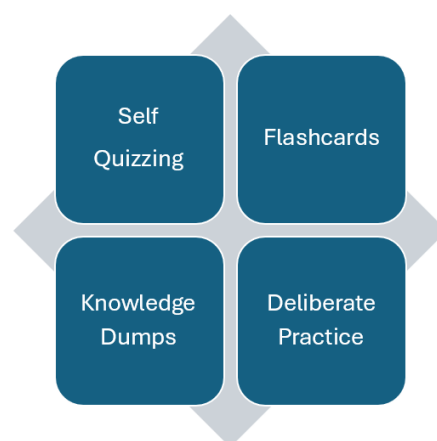
Research into how memory works shows that what feels like learning is not always what leads to lasting understanding. When you re-read notes or highlight text, the material becomes familiar, creating the illusion that you know it well. However, exams require you to retrieve knowledge from memory without prompts.



It is not accidental that strategies such as knowledge dumps, flashcards, self-quizzing, and deliberate practice are consistently recommended—they are all rooted in how memory actually works. Unlike passive approaches, these methods require you to actively think about and retrieve information.

This matters because memory is strengthened not by seeing information again, but by *trying to recall it*. Each time you successfully bring something to mind, you make it easier to access in the future.

A key principle behind these strategies is *retrieval practice*. For example, when you complete a knowledge dump – writing down everything you can remember on a topic – you are forcing your brain to search for and reconstruct information without support. Similarly, flashcards and self-quizzing require you to generate answers rather than recognise them. This process strengthens the connections in your memory and highlights gaps in your knowledge.



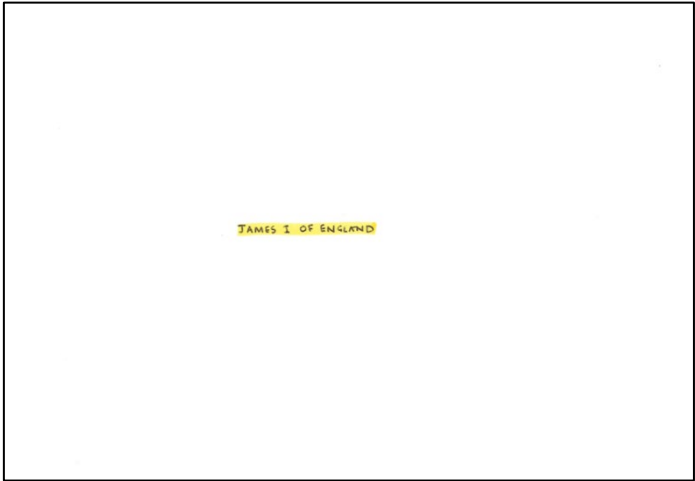
# Evening 1: Knowledge Dumps

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Knowledge dumps are an effective revision tool because they force active recall, which is one of the most powerful ways to strengthen memory. Instead of passively rereading notes, you write down everything you can remember about a topic from scratch. This process highlights what you truly understand versus what you only recognize, making gaps in knowledge immediately visible. By struggling to retrieve information, you reinforce neural pathways, improving long-term retention and making it easier to recall the material in exam conditions.

They are also efficient and flexible, allowing you to quickly review large topics without needing structured prompts or resources. After completing a knowledge dump, you can compare it to your notes or mark scheme, correct mistakes, and fill in missing details—turning it into a targeted feedback loop. Over time, repeated knowledge dumps help organize information in your mind, improve clarity of explanation, and build confidence, as you can clearly see your progress with each attempt.

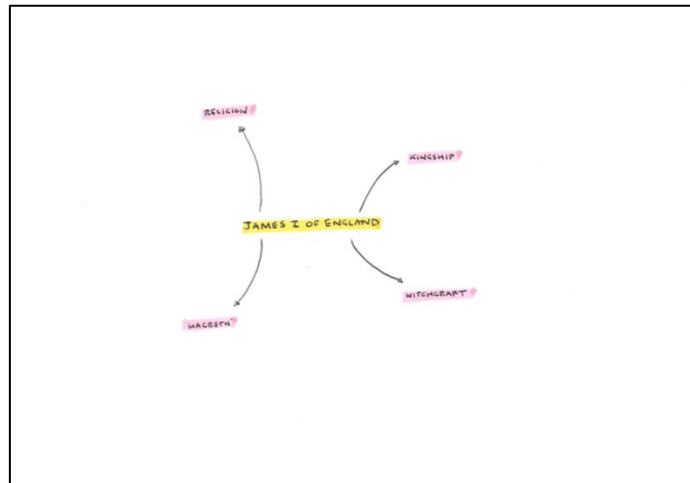
**Step 1:** take a blank piece of paper and write down the topic you would like to revise. This shouldn't be too specific – aim for a key idea, theme, character, topic etc.



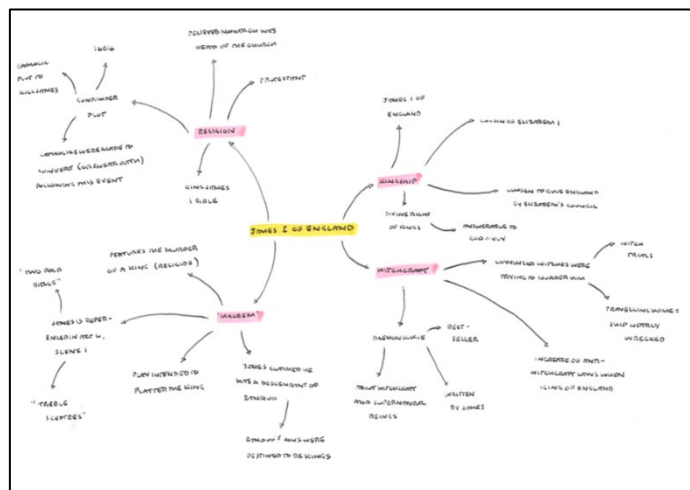
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**Step 2:** around your topic, try to create a series of subheadings or smaller categories. This helps you organise the information on your knowledge dump.



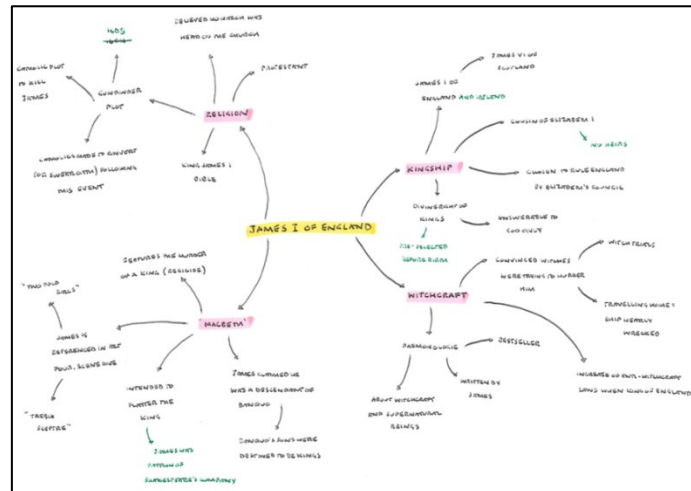
**Step 3:** around each subheading, write down as much knowledge as you can. This should be done from memory by using a series of individual arrows.



# Evening 1: Knowledge Dumps

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**Step 4:** you should now use your exercise book or a revision guide to check through what you have written. Any mistakes or additions should be written in a different colour to differentiate what you were able to recall and what you needed to check.



# Evening 1: Knowledge Dumps

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# Evening 1: Self-Quizzing

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Self-quizzing is a highly effective revision strategy because it actively tests your ability to retrieve information, rather than simply recognize it. By asking yourself questions and answering them from memory, you immediately strengthen recall and deepen your understanding of the material. This process moves learning from short-term familiarity to long-term knowledge, helping you remember key concepts more reliably in exam situations. It also reveals the difference between what you think you know and what you can actually recall under pressure, making it easier to identify gaps that need further attention.

In addition, self-quizzing is adaptable and easy to use across any subject or topic. You can write your own questions, generate examples online, or use past exam questions to test your knowledge in different formats. After each attempt, checking your answers and correcting mistakes creates an effective feedback loop, allowing you to focus your revision where it matters most. Over time, regular self-quizzing improves accuracy, boosts confidence, and helps you develop exam-ready thinking, as you become more familiar with recalling and applying knowledge independently.

**Step 1:** locate information you need to know for an examination. This may come from an exercise book, revision guide or textbook.

Testing the pH of a solution means using an indicator — and that means pretty colours...

**The pH Scale Goes From 0 to 14**

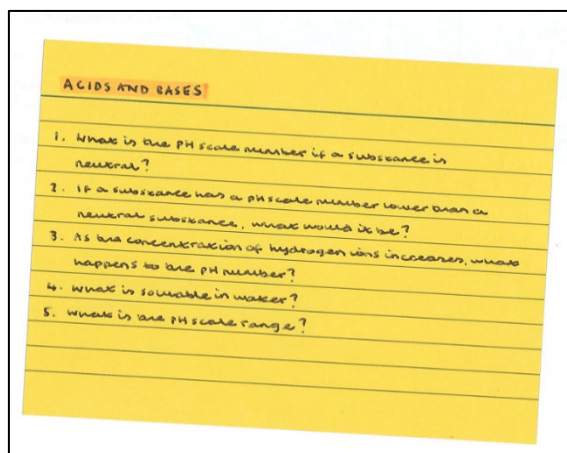
- 1) The pH scale is a measure of how acidic or alkaline a solution is. A neutral substance has pH 7.
- 2) An acid is a substance with a pH of less than 7. Acids form H<sup>+</sup> ions in water.
- 3) The higher the concentration of hydrogen ions in a solution, the more acidic it is, so the lower its pH will be. In other words, as the concentration of hydrogen ions increases, the pH decreases.
- 4) A base is a substance that reacts with an acid to produce a salt and water.
- 5) An alkali is a base that is soluble in water. All alkalis have a pH of more than 7 and they form OH<sup>-</sup> ions (otherwise known as hydroxide ions) in water.
- 6) In alkaline solutions, the higher the concentration of OH<sup>-</sup> ions, the higher the pH.

**You Can Measure the pH of a Solution**

# Evening 1: Self-Quizzing

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**Step 2:** on a postcard, write a set of clear questions based on the important information you've just read. These questions should test your understanding.



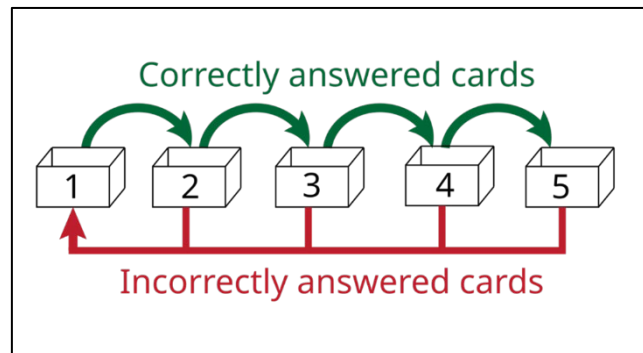
**Step 3:** write the answers to these questions on the back of your postcard to help you check your answers



# Evening 1: Self-Quizzing

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**Step 4:** use the Leitner system to organise your self-quizzes into appropriate piles depending on how successfully you were able to answer the questions on them. Quizzes in box 1 are visited daily; those in box 5 are visited weekly

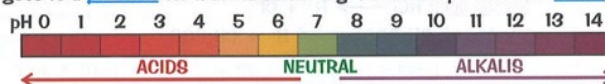


# Evening 1: Self-Quizzing

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## You Can Measure the pH of a Solution

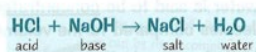
- 1) An **indicator** is a **dye** that **changes colour** depending on whether it's **above or below a certain pH**.
- 2) Indicators are simple to use — **add a few drops** to the solution you're testing, then compare the colour the solution goes to a **pH chart** for that indicator. E.g. here's the pH chart for **Universal indicator**.



- 3) Some indicators that you need to know about are:
  - litmus — is **red** in **acidic** solutions, **purple** in **neutral** solutions and **blue** in **alkaline** solutions.
  - methyl orange — is **red** in **acidic solutions** and **yellow** in **neutral** and **alkaline** solutions.
  - phenolphthalein — is colourless in acidic or neutral solutions and **pink** in **alkaline** solutions.

## Acids and Bases Neutralise Each Other

The reaction between an acid and a base is called **neutralisation**. It produces a **salt** and **water**.



Neutralisation reactions in **aqueous solution** can also be shown as an ionic equation (see p.13) in terms of **H<sup>+</sup>** and **OH<sup>-</sup>** ions:



When an acid neutralises a base (or vice versa), the **products** are **neutral**, i.e. they have a **pH of 7**. At pH 7, the concentration of hydrogen ions is **equal to** the concentration of hydroxide ions.

Front:

Back:

# Evening 1: Revision Timetable

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A good revision timetable helps you use your time effectively and stay consistent. By planning short, regular sessions and spreading your subjects across the week, you can avoid cramming and build your understanding over time. It also helps you stay organised, focus on the areas you find most challenging, and feel more confident as exams approach.

|   |                   |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                              |
|---|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Little and often  |    | Studying little and often is effective because it spreads learning over time, improving memory retention and preventing overload or burnout. |
| 2 | Repeat regularly  |    | By repeating material regularly, information becomes embedded more securely into long-term memory.                                           |
| 3 | Active revision   |   | Actively revising involves ensuring planned activities engage the brain in thinking about the information or content that needs recalling.   |
| 4 | Balance subjects  |  | Balancing subjects ensures variety within revision, as well as creating desirable difficulties which leads to better retention.              |
| 5 | Plan specifically |  | Rather than planning revision by subjects, clearly stating the topics that will be revised helps sessions become purposeful.                 |
| 6 | Build in rest     |  | Working for extended periods of time lessens the impact of revision and can lead to feelings of increased anxiety or burnout.                |

# Evening 1: Wellbeing

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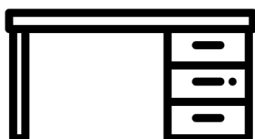
Wellbeing is an essential part of both academic success and everyday life. For students studying for their GCSEs, looking after your mental, emotional, and physical health can make a real difference to how effectively you revise, manage stress, and perform in exams. When your wellbeing is supported, it becomes easier to concentrate, stay motivated, and cope with challenges. This revision booklet is designed not only to help you achieve your best grades, but also to encourage healthy habits that will support you during exam season and beyond.

Keeping a regular sleep routine helps your brain rest and recharge, improving memory, focus, and mood so you can revise more effectively.



Removing distractions, like phones or background noise, makes it easier to concentrate and reduces frustration, helping you feel more in control of your time.

Eating balanced, regular meals gives your body and brain the energy they need to stay alert and manage stress.



Having your own dedicated study space—even a small, organised area—can also make a difference, as it creates a clear boundary between work and relaxation, helping you stay focused when studying and switch off more easily afterwards.