

Arrow Blog Learning Together

Exam Season Success

In the Autumn Term we were pleased to host so many Year 11 students and their parents at our GCSE Success evening, where we shared a range of revision strategies alongside approaches to mindfulness to support students' well-being in the approach to examinations.

So, now that our Year 11 students have received their mock examination Statement of Results, it seems like a good time to revisit some of the key messages around revision and study skills.

Mastering your Memory

There are many ways in which you can improve your memory to hold onto all those important facts, key quotations and formulae. Here are some to try out at home:

- **Chunk** information in to 'bite sized' portions and try a '5 a day' approach to learning or recalling key ideas – **little and often** is the best way forward; remember to prioritise the areas where you are least confident in your knowledge and understanding
- Use **Acronyms**: **T3E** in English (Technique, Evidence, Explain, Effect); **FOIL** in Maths (First, Outside, Inside, Last)
- Retrieve information from one source and **write it down in a new format** (flow diagram, mind map, chart, bullet points, key words etc.)
- **Teach something** to someone else (make sure it's an area that you have been less confident with in the past – don't just stay in your comfort zone!)
- **Say things out loud** to use a multi-sensory approach which helps with recalling information
- Ask yourself "**What makes me think that?**" to check your understanding
- **Drink water** for superior focus!
- **Practice, practice, practice** – after all, practice makes permanent!

The Science of Revision

Research suggests that some approaches to revision can hinder success. For example, an article published in *Psychological Science* identified that a study had found that just highlighting phrases in revision guides got in the way of students understanding the 'whole' information. So what did they find to be the most effective techniques?

Testing yourself involves retrieving material from memory which improves learning in the long run. **Try this:** Read key information, then make Flash cards of the key concepts and test yourself repeatedly. The bonus is that when you get things right, the brain creates a memory trace which connects up with what you already know.

Planning ahead is the best strategy – cramming for an exam has never been the best approach to keeping information in your head! So **space out your practice** to build on your knowledge over time. **Try this:** 'Space' ten 30 minute sessions over an extended period; this is far more effective than doing 5 hours in a day as it allows your brain to re-learn material that may have become lost along the way.

Working to Maintain Well-being



Eat Breakfast – missing out on this important meal significantly reduces students’ attention and their ability to recall information. Boost memory and concentration simply by eating a bowl of cereal!

Get fresh air and exercise to feel refreshed, reduce stress and increase your focus afterwards – you’ll feel better for it.

Leave the phone alone! Researchers have found that being able to see a phone reduces students’ ability to focus. Time spent on screen gets in the way of grades so to avoid distractions, put the phone away – out of sight, out of mind!

Get enough sleep – establish a regular bedtime and stop screen time at least an hour beforehand to get quality sleep to improve concentration, memory and mood!

