

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF REVISION

How to enjoy your Easter holiday - a personal view from DCH

This is a pamphlet based on the talk I gave for many years to our GCSE and A level pupils (separately). I spoke ex tempore from my summary sheet (published separately) and it was obviously interspersed with a few humorous anecdotes and the like. However, this is an abbreviated version but I hope may prove useful.

To prepare this talk I read quite widely on the topic, but the book I found most useful, illuminating and readable was "The Psychology of Study" by Professor (of Psychology) C. A. Mace. Though it was originally published in 1932, it was regularly updated and you can still buy it at somewhere like Amazon. It is very brief at only 125 pages but is full of excellent advice. I am indebted to his excellent work for many of the ideas here.

SOME PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

The fable of the Hare and Tortoise I hope needs no introduction. It was, of course, the tortoise who won the race. Or, for revision, as Mace puts it: "Moderate ability methodically employed is more productive than greater ability employed in an unmethodical way". Another famous quotation was regularly spouted at me by my piano teacher when I hadn't in his view done enough practice: "Genius is 1% inspiration, 99% perspiration".

On a slightly different tack, but also to do with music, let me offer you another famous quotation and you must realise that "mark" is another word for target: "If you would hit the mark, you must aim a little above it" and yet another which I often quoted in class: "We must aim to do too much, to be assured of doing enough".

When a choir is struggling to hit quite a high note, the standard method is for the conductor to ask them to sing a series of scales (la, la, la etc) going ever upwards until the highest note is way higher than they need to sing in the piece they are rehearsing. After that, the (quite) high note is easy-peasy. It is also the basis of getting people to choose demanding subjects rather than teaching them what they need to know for daily life. If they can translate Virgil's Aeneid into blank verse, then filling in a form (though boring) is a piece of cake.

A third preliminary thought comes from Nelly Dean in "Wuthering Heights": "A person who has not completed half his day's work by 10.00am stands a good chance of not completing it at all".

PLANNING YOUR REVISION

As I write this in 2019, the school world has gone completely mad when it comes to revision. It is utterly pointless sending pupils home for “study leave” and “revision weeks” and the like, and it is equally pointless, indeed counter-productive, when parents with the best intentions but hopelessly ill-informed prevent their children from doing anything other than “revise” for weeks on end.

In theory, all revision should happen during the whole course of study (eg two years to A2) but this is not a perfect world and we all know that it will be left to last-minute cramming. Well, not last-minute, but endless hours supposedly “revising”. This probably, at best, means vaguely staring at books, revision sheets or whatever. [Funnily enough I did hear yesterday of somebody who said she did indeed revise throughout the course and when others were frantically doing last-minute revising, she was knitting].

Absolutely useless. Follow this guide and you can live a fairly normal life with **BETTER results**.

- 1) Do not spend a huge amount of time “planning your revision”. I knew one pupil who spent more time planning his revision than actually doing it.
- 2) You need to sort what you need to do into **small, identifiable, achievable tasks**. “OK, I need to know these key 10 points by heart.”
- 3) **What? When? By when?** Right, that should take 5 minutes at most. I shall start at 10am tomorrow morning and finish by 10.05, call it 10.10.
- 4) **The revision habit:** start at the same time every day, finish at the same time and **have breaks** (see below) at the same time.
- 5) **Your timetable/midnight oil:** it seems rather romantic to “burn the midnight oil” but actually your brain works far better in the morning. Sorry about that, chaps. Choose a sensible hour, say 10am, and stick to it.
- 6) **Your blood-sugar level:** you need to eat proper food, not junk, at regular intervals – say breakfast, lunch and supper (or whatever you call it in your part of the world). The brain as well as your body needs sustenance and you can’t concentrate if you’re hungry.

- 7) **Relaxation, refreshment, and variety:** do not fool yourself that you are working really hard if you are shut up in your room for hours on end vaguely looking at your revision materials until your eyeballs are going round in circles. **That is completely useless.**

Our brains cannot cope with doing nothing but revise. **It is actually counter-productive** because they sort of go on strike, which may be called brain-fatigue. To quote Mace: “In normal work **there should be regular steady spells of activity at a reasonable level of effort separated by equally regular spells of rest and recreation. A rough general rule for the avoidance of undue fatigue may be stated in the following terms. Some form of relaxation should be taken for a few consecutive minutes in every hour; work should cease for two or three consecutive hours in every day; one complete day of rest and recreation should be reserved in every week.**

- 8) **Priorities:** do not spend endless hours on a topic which has, say, only 5% of the marks. Concentrate on the areas which have the most.
- 9) **Good health:** look after yourself. You cannot concentrate if you are feeling under the weather. **But it is most important that you take some physical exercise, and that should be something that you enjoy. The point is that it is completely different from studying and your brain can have a rest.**
- 10) **Personal motivation:** you are probably keen to succeed but don't quite know how to achieve this effectively. Nobody can motivate you better than yourself. Bullying, nagging etc from parents (especially) and teachers tends to be counter-productive for anybody, not just adolescents.
- 11) **Needles in haystacks:** you cannot remember anything unless you are quite clear what it is you are trying to remember, just as it is pretty difficult to find a needle in a haystack but virtually impossible if you don't know it is a needle you are looking for.

MEMORY

Since revising in practice means largely memorizing what you need to know for your exams, it is helpful to know how memory works. It is a three-stage process. A fourth is added here in the forms of some possibly useful aids.

Memorising

Understanding/patterns/meanings

It is more or less impossible to remember anything that you don't really understand. Just try to remember the following; xmeoa-ehxjspe,c98qbv. See what I mean?

If you don't understand something, then ask somebody who does understand to explain (again?). **THEN, explain it back.**

Try to see for yourself any kind of pattern that may exist. That is a help. If there is any word or phrase you don't understand, there is no point in trying to memorise it until you do. Look it up (nowadays you can look up almost anything).

Many short stabs, not one long one

Don't spend all morning on one complicated topic. Just spend half an hour on one aspect and then study something *completely* different. Different subject altogether, preferably. This specially applies if you feel yourself getting bored with something and your concentration is fading.

Identifying the task - needles in haystacks (again)

You can't remember anything unless you are entirely clear what it is you are trying to remember.

Recognition and recall

Here is an important distinction. It is very much easier to recognize the correct answer in a given set of answers (as in multiple-choice tests) than in being given a blank sheet to remember the answer. **What are you going to be asked to do?** Spend much more time on material where you have to recall the answer with no possible prompts.

Active rather than passive memorising/active and passive vocabularies

Now we get on to very important stuff and the reason why schools should not send their pupils home to "revise". In fact, I think they are being irresponsible in doing so, because it is very much the worst way of revising. **Passive memorizing** is when you simply look at what you are trying to remember. Frankly, this is what almost everybody does most of the time when "revising". **Not far off useless.**

Active memorising is when you are *under pressure* to **produce** your knowledge. Something simple like learning your 12 times table. Just looking at it endlessly is passive memorizing, ie sort of taking it in. Fine. But after about, say, **one minute**, hide the answers and try to recite it. You probably can't. Check again and then re-try. Keep doing this until to your own satisfaction you can answer your own question "what are seven 12s? etc etc". Then you really need **somebody else** to quiz you: "4x12?" "9x12?" etc. You will observe that the testing part – **giving out** - takes, deliberately, far longer than the original "passive" taking in. That is **active memorizing** and is far more effective than just looking at pages.

Your **active** vocabulary is the language you yourself regularly use. Your passive vocabulary is words which you recognize but don't normally use. **It is far easier to remember words in your active vocabulary than the passive ones.** So, if you have a difficult topic to master, then **re-write it in your own words** (ie your active vocabulary). This is the same principle at work as the well-known observation that the best way of mastering any subject is to teach it to somebody else. This talk/ pamphlet is just such a example.

Over-learning

A big mistake often made is to learn something only until you can just about remember it. You need to do too much to be sure you have done enough. Learn **and test yourself** (even better done by somebody else) until you can answer questions in rapid-fire, not just "oh, I think I can just about remember this".

Find new questions

Try to think of new ways of approaching whatever it is you are trying to master. What would happen if....? Etc. This may help you to master the material

Card-index cards?

Some people find it useful to put their material onto card-index cards (if they still exist) and then, in an idle moment at a bus-stop, for example, pluck one at random from their pocket and then startle others around them by reciting the second law of thermodynamics without looking. The key to this, of course, is having carefully written out in your active vocabulary (see above) what it says.

Retention

OK, you hope you've now memorized stuff and eventually in the exam you will have to reproduce what you have memorized (a very small fraction actually, but

that is the nature of exams). However, there is an intermediate stage: what happens between the original memorizing and then finally reproducing it.

Interference: a varied programme of revision

Things get interesting here. If you revise things which are too similar, then your brain will confuse the two. Thus, do not revise Spanish verbs after revising French verbs. After revising some French, revise some Geography or Maths. Even within the same subject, go for as much **variety** as possible. After studying Macbeth, do not then try a spot of Othello. Try Auden or Yeats.

Sleep is good for retention

This is because your mind should switch off and you can dream of a beach in the British Virgin Islands. Anything to stop your mind confusing stuff you were revising earlier.

Regular revision (decreasing frequency): card-index cards?

This is really crucial. It appears from a glance at, say, the National Curriculum that it is assumed that once you have done quadratic equations that is it. Any teacher will tell you that you have to go over every topic several times. I always used to say 17 times. The same applies to revision. **Once you have memorized something you need to revise it at regular intervals.** But here's the good news. It can go in extending intervals: at first daily, then every two days, then every week, then every fortnight, then every month. Then you will remember it forever. See what I mean about ideally doing your revision throughout the whole course?

An excellent way of doing this is through revision card-index cards (see above), because you can use idle moments (also see above).

Remembering

Recognition

If you've done all the above, then doing a multiple-choice is easy-peasy (see the beginning about singing)

Recalling

If you've done all the above, then this is a bit trickier but should still be easy-peasy.

Repeated production, especially to an audience, under pressure

If you've done this regularly since the original memorisation, then it's a piece of cake.

Use the sub-conscious

This is quite giddy stuff. It is using your sub-conscious effectively. Your subconscious is effectively your hard drive: every bit of knowledge, experience etc etc you have ever discovered or known but which you have probably long forgotten. However, it is still there though you don't consciously know it. So – here goes.

How to use it is not a great secret though it is rarely expressed. Here it is. Everybody has probably had the experience of wrestling with trying to remember something (more so as one ages, admittedly). What on earth is that pretty girl's name? How do you do that? I'm sure I know him etc etc. Then you go and do something else completely different and it suddenly comes to you. That is how to tap into the sub-conscious: don't spend ages wrestling with the problem, however, simple or complex, but **do something completely different and it will come to you**, sure as eggs is eggs.

A. E. Housman, the celebrated poet, demonstrated this in a famous passage of recollection which I shall summarise. He had spent the morning wrestling with a poem but he wasn't getting anywhere, so decided to go for a walk on Hampstead Heath. Then he went to the pub for a pint and probably got chatting. Suddenly the entire poem came to him in complete form and he just wrote it down.

Therefore, do not go on and on trying to remember something. Do something completely different and it will come to you.

Mnemonic devices (pronounced "nemonic")

This section is slightly different. **Different people find different methods useful.** The expression means clever ways of remembering things.

Patterns (Psalm: rascals, layabouts, drunkards and blackguards)

This thought dates back to a revue sketch I was singing in where the bit in brackets featured and it was really difficult to remember which order they came

in. Once I realised that the initial letters were in reverse alphabetical order, it was easy to remember. So find a pattern if you can. Much the best if you devise it yourself.

Artificially imposed patterns (numbering?)

If you cannot find a pattern which is built in, then invent one if you can. Better to know that there are 7 things to remember than just have a vague feeling that there are various things to remember about the causes of the First World War. [As if it were that simple!].

Crazy pictures

This is the sort of thing which brilliant memorisers do. They associate, say, a name with a *bizarre* image which reminds them of the name. For example, to remember Benedict Cumberbatch's first name when you bump into him – when you first meet him, as one does – just picture him with a delicious breakfast of Eggs Benedict perched on his head. However, this is probably a bit far-fetched for normal revision but certainly some people find a pictorial prompt useful.

Do you dare use your subconscious?

As you can see from the above, **the sub-conscious only works when you are thinking of something else. Nothing will emerge if you keep trying to remember something.** This has an interesting bearing on exams themselves. Almost everybody with, say, four essays to write in three hours will work on the first one first (see below) and finish it, then move on to the second one etc. However, it is really extremely likely that when you are writing the second one, something will strike you out of the blue about what you should have written in the first one, but it's too late by then; it's done.

It follows that the best way to cope with, say, four essays is to work on one (see below) **but not actually write it.** Then the second, third and fourth. You will find that ideas about the others crop up while you are thinking about a different one. The snag is that it is a brave person who can leave a blank sheet of paper for, say, an hour in a three-hour exam. A personal note: I did so once, in my degree finals. We had three hours to write one long essay. I did not write a single word of the actual essay until nearly two hours of note-writing (a long list of **evidence**) had passed and then I wrote it straight out and I reckon it was probably the best essay I ever wrote.

EXAMINATION TECHNIQUE

Preliminaries

Last-minute cramming (ask the invigilator before writing anything)

There is nothing wrong with going over some key points before you enter the hall and then, when you have the opportunity, writing them down. You may or not be allowed to do this before the exam actually starts, but can do it immediately it does, even if it turns out not to be relevant. Every mark counts.

Instructions, titles, questions

You'd be amazed how many people do not do as well as they can in exams because they do not very carefully study the instructions, the title and what you are being asked to do. I remember one unfortunate pupil who spent the whole time on the first question and only far too late discovered that there were actually four questions, three of them on the other side of the paper.

Timing

This is crucial. Don't get carried away answering the first question because you know a lot about it, but then leave yourself with too little time to do the others justice. Make a quick calculation of how long you should be spending on each question.

Time-wasting

Make sure everything is ready before you go into the hall. You don't want to be looking for a lost pen, sharpening a pencil or anything else. Similarly, **it is pointless finishing half an hour early**. It means you have rushed your answers and you just waste the last half-hour. Ideally you will "finish" with just enough time to read through your answer(s) and correct any glaring errors.

Similarly, do not rush at an answer and start "thinking" later (gazing into space). *Incidentally, I thought of adding this while I was writing the bit about research below; that's the sub-conscious at work.*

HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY

Especially one on literature

This section applies whether in an exam or not, the only difference being that in an exam you (probably) don't have the text with you.

Ask 10 people how you should set about writing an essay and I'd guess that 9 would say "start with a plan". This is completely wrong. It is the equivalent of a detective deciding first who the murderer is and then start looking for the evidence (that does happen; indeed, it notoriously happened to a close colleague of mine). Making a plan is literally the last thing you should do before writing, not the first.

My mnemonic for this is **T.R.A.P.**
Title, Research, Analysis, Plan

If you ever watch a programme like Question Time, you will probably have observed the frustrated chairman (now chairwoman) demanding that the panellist should **ANSWER THE QUESTION**. This is the same mistake made by countless examinees who are then surprised to find their grade isn't as good as they thought it should be.

Let us take "Hamlet". The question assuredly does not say Tell us everything you know about "Hamlet", but this is how it is surprisingly often treated. Worse, this random method lapses into the worst of all possible sins in essay-writing "telling the story". I used to have an acronym for this which my pupils – too many of them – came to recognize fairly soon: **BILHPIR** = Book In Left Hand, Pen In Right. This is the lazy way of writing an essay. Open the book at page 1 and work through chronologically making random comments but probably just telling the story.

Let us now suppose that of all the questions the examiners might have asked about this magnificent masterpiece, he or she has simply asked you one question: Was Hamlet mad?

Exams work on the basis of testing only a tiny fraction of what you know. You can't possibly be examined on absolutely everything you have learned over two years.

So, you now concentrate on this single aspect of the text and this alone. Anything else is completely irrelevant and will be marked down. Thus we proceed. Timings are for a 45-minute exam essay.

TITLE
(1 minute)

The title I have chosen is pretty straightforward, but this is by no means always true. **Look very carefully at the question and its precise terms** – it might say “what.....and why?”). Don’t forget either part.

RESEARCH

(12 minutes)

This is the central part of writing an essay: collecting the evidence (just like our detective, we hope). Thus, in this fairly straightforward question, jot down every single instance you can either find or remember where Hamlet behaves very strangely, people commenting on his behaviour, his own comments on his behaviour etc etc. **Anything at all** which may have some bearing on the question even though in the end you may not use all of it. This will take time but it is worth it. If you do this thoroughly, the essay nearly writes itself. Indeed, when you start writing, it is far better if you feel you have too much to include rather than sitting there thinking “what am I going to say about this?”

ANALYSIS

(1 minute)

This should not take too long. Just look at what you have jotted down and see what sort of pattern occurs to you. The three mentioned above, for example (or anything else which occurs to you). Let us call them A, B, C and perhaps D

PLAN

(1 minute)

The plan is now simple. I shall do D first, then B, then C and round off with A.

WRITING THE ESSAY

I have been talking about writing a 45-minute exam essay on “Hamlet” so let’s stick with that for the moment. Nobody is expecting a masterpiece of literary criticism in 45 minutes.

We are back to our detective but he is now in court, represented by a barrister. What is the most important factor in establishing guilt? Not “take it from me, m’lud, this man is guilty” and saying it 45 times. It is the witnesses “where were you when....?”. This is the **evidence** to prove a point. You do exactly the same in

your essay. Wherever you possibly can, support any point, however simple, with **evidence (ie what you jotted down under Research)**, either an exact quotation or just simply a reference. Thus

“Hamlet’s behaviour in the later stages becomes increasingly erratic, such as when he stabs Polonius almost accidentally, or in his frantic conversations with his mother in III4.” However, when....

or

“We wonder in II2 (as do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) whether he is joking, just deliberately teasing or is quite serious when he says he is “but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw”. In fact, etc etc.....”

or

“If I were American the answer would certainly be yes as Hamlet seems the archetypal Angry Young Man, at least until he returns from his refreshing sea-voyage (where he has no qualms in sending two innocent people to their deaths). However, in the English sense, Shakespeare seems himself to be exploring what we mean by the term. For example, Ophelia is.....”

The scene references don’t matter if you can’t remember. It is just a bit of mild showing off (see below).

Note here how it is not the brilliance of the point you are making (which may or may not be right; doesn’t really matter much, actually) but you are showing an easy familiarity with the text. “This girl knows the text extremely well” says the examiner approvingly and awards full marks.

SHOWING WHAT YOU KNOW AND HOW ABLE YOU ARE

Use your sub-conscious: spending time on the research bit before actually starting the essay will repay rich dividends because things will occur to you when you are thinking of something else. An essay is never going to be long in 45 minutes. It needs to be **rich in evidence. I’d say at least as much evidence as your own points. As I said before, once you have the evidence, the points more or less make themselves. If 10 people say they saw this man firing a gun at the victim, then the barrister hardly needs to say anything.**

Learn to use colons and semi-colons (see my guide to punctuation). They are very useful in literary essays and maybe elsewhere.

Presentation/handwriting etc (30 mins a day?)

It shouldn't really be so, but when an examiner is presented with a virtually illegible script and full of spelling mistakes, he or she is bound to feel this is a very poor candidate. I once had a brilliant pupil but with severe dyslexia. I actually wrote on his final report that he really ought to be getting an A, but I feared that his atrocious spelling would count against him. Full credit to the examiner who did indeed award an A.

Bluffing and pompousness

This always betrays a weak candidate. The less justification for the argument, the more pompous the language. "Believe me, m'lud, and here I have to allude to myonly an ignoramus could seriously not believe me when I say this man is guilty." It is much better to use expression such as perhaps (not *pre*haps!) or maybe etc rather than definitely (not *definat*ely anyway!) and certainly. You don't prove your point by admitting of no other interpretation.

Don't leave anything out

Even if you've made a mistake with your timing but still have a mountain of **evidence** in your scribbled notes, then just add a note at the bottom: "Sorry, should also have mentioned Hamlet's treatment of Horatio in III2, the graveyard scene (especially Ophelia's burial)" etc etc. It may or may not gain you an extra mark or two. One of my more brilliant friends, at the end of an English essay in her finals, wrote "This (meaning her essay) is all bosh anyway". I learned this from her examiner. She got a first.

Put yourself in the examiner's shoes

Examiners are real people and marking is not a great deal of fun as a lot of it is very dreary. It is a real joy to read a script which is, above all **relevant (ie answers the question and nothing else)**, **does not waffle**, and may even have a touch of humour. Sitting there, one is likely to say "Yes, yes, yes!" and almost give bonus marks for enlivening one's morning.

Confident humour, silly jokes and desperate rudeness

As in the previous paragraph, a touch of humour is always welcome to the probably bored examiner, but it has to be done with confidence and not just be silly sarcasm or whatever. Under no circumstances put in silly jokes, emojis or whatever. The examiner will (rightly) think you an idiot and award marks accordingly. As for rudeness of any kind (eg “this is a stupid question”), then you will deservedly get nul points.

DON'T PANIC

Ease/difficulty of exams

It may well be that you open the exam paper and think either “OMG, what can I say about that?” or, possibly worse “What a piece of cake; I know all about this”.

In the first you are likely to panic and start waffling (which is always a disaster). What you need to remember is that if you find this question difficult, then probably so does everybody else. The same is true of an easy question: if you find it easy.....

To use a cricket analogy, the side batting first struggles to put any runs on the board at all and you think you’ve won the game. Just wait until you try yourself. Alternatively, the first side makes a huge score. So conditions are probably very easy.

In other words, it’s all relative so always go about things in a methodical way, like our friend the tortoise. Just plod on.

Hit the bullseye; concentrate on the opening sentence and paragraph

If you are one of those who can’t bear a blank sheet of paper, you’ll be fine if you are very clever. However, if you have followed the advice so far so that after the research some sort of conclusion has formed in your mind, then use it as your first sentence. This is a rule of journalism. Make the first sentence count if possible. Launch straight in, don't ease your way to the answer.

If, on the other hand, you haven’t done the research bit either through fear of running out of time or whatever, then it is most likely that you will ramble away for the first two paragraphs while you trying to get round to what you think about something. At that point the examiner will start yawning and go to make another cup of coffee.

If, on the other hand, you make him sit up and pay attention, even if he doesn't agree with your point (that really doesn't matter, believe me; you don't have to be right!). You need to substantiate it later, of course, with **evidence**, but how about

“Of course, he was not mad” or “Mad as a hatter” or “Who knows? Shakespeare didn't seem to....”

ANYBODY CAN MAKE MISTAKES

Mis-timing: write brief notes

See above but be aware that it is always a possibility. Examiners are perfectly well aware that you are under pressure. That's the idea.

Leave room for additions

Therefore, leave a few lines of space after each question so that there is at least room to add a few bits and pieces (once your sub-conscious has got to work!). I can't guarantee you will earn extra marks but they won't be deducted if you add further **evidence**.

Make question numbers entirely clear

This may sound odd, but I have marked exam papers where I was not at all clear which question was being answered (wasn't much clearer after reading the answer either).

SOME FORBIDDEN EXRESSIONS

(pompousness department)

“Thus it can be seen that.....”

“It is definitely true that.....”

“Let us start by saying.....”

“My own view is.....” (unless you've mentioned others)

“In order to answer this question, one must first of all consider the question carefully, then consider all aspect of the topic and then when you are all fast asleep I may actually get round to answering the question”. As politicians would say “Let me be absolutely clear about this...” A more honest one would say “This

is a very difficult question and there is something to be said on both sides of the argument.”

I did have many more in a paper I once wrote called “How not to write an essay” culled from actual examples, but I have not as yet found it among my floppy discs (ask!).

DCH
February 2019

OK. With any luck, you’re read through my pamphlet. Do you want to see whether it’s true?

Without looking back, try to recall from my summary what I said in more detail above. You probably can’t. So give yourself **five minutes maximum** to find the answers. Then, without cheating, try again. Then, ask some forgiving person to read out the summary points (or better, random ones) and push you to answer quick-fire.

Even better, if you’re serious, you should write your own summary (ie **using your active vocabulary**).

DCH

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF REVISION

Summary

How to enjoy your holidays - a personal view from DCH

The Hare and the Tortoise

"Moderate ability methodically employed is more productive than greater ability employed in an unmethodical way"

"Genius is 1% inspiration, 99% perspiration"

"If you would hit the mark, you must aim a little above it"

"We must aim to do too much, to be assured of doing enough"

"A person who has not completed half his day's work by 10.00am stands a good chance of not completing it at all"

.....

A. Planning your revision:

- 1) Small, identifiable, achievable tasks
- 2) What? When? By when?
- 3) The revision habit
- 4) Your timetable/midnight oil
- 5) Your blood-sugar level
- 6) Relaxation, refreshment, and variety
- 7) Priorities
- 8) Good health
- 9) Personal motivation
- 10) Needles in haystacks

B. Memory:

1) Memorising

- a) Understanding/patterns/meanings
- b) Identifying the task - needles in haystacks (again)
- c) Recognition and recall
- d) Active rather than passive memorising/active and passive

vocabularies

- e) Use the sub-conscious: several shorter stabs rather than one long one

(but not too short)

- f) Over-learning
- g) Find new questions
- h) Card-index cards?

2) Retention

- a) Interference: varied programme of revision
- b) Sleep is good for retention
- c) Regular revision (decreasing frequency): card-index cards?

3) Remembering

- a) Recognition
- b) Recalling

- c) Repeated production, especially to an audience

4) Mnemonic devices

- a) Patterns (Psalm: rascals, layabouts, drunkards and blackguards)
- b) Artificially imposed patterns (numbering)
- c) Crazy pictures

C. The sub-conscious

- a) A.E.Housman
- b) Do you dare use it?

D. Examination technique

Preliminaries

- a) Last-minute cramming (ask the invigilator before writing anything)
- b) Instructions, titles, questions
- c) Timing
- d) Time-wasting
- e) Have the right equipment
- f) T.R.A.P.

Showing what you know and how able you are

- g) Use your sub-conscious
- h) Presentation/handwriting (30 mins a day?)
- i) Bluffing and pompousness
- j) Don't leave anything out
- k) Put yourself in the examiner's shoes
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Don't panic

- m) Ease/difficulty of exams
- n) Hit the bullseye; concentrate on the opening sentence and paragraph
- o) Launch straight in, don't ease your way to the answer

Anybody can make mistakes

- p) Mis-timing: write brief notes

- q) Leave room for additions
- r) Make question numbers entirely clear

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