

December Activities

This month's activities are exam focused. That's because most pupils in Year 11 take mock exams in December – the results of which often go on application forms for colleges. There are ways of revising that work better than others, but as learners we're often loyal to old habits. *This has always worked for me before*, you might think, *so I'll keep on doing it*. Some of the activities here might seem new and strange, and your first response might be to reject them. But research shows they work. You should give them a try. They might feel harder and more challenging than your usual methods of revision, but they'll take you further too.

14. Practice Activity: The Practice Questionnaire

We've found there is a strong link between the kind of revision someone does and the outcomes they get. So, which pupil will do better in an exam?

- » Pupil 1 does fifteen hours of revision – all of it reading through class notes.
- » Pupil 2 only does ten hours of revision – two hours making mind-maps, two hours creating flashcards of key terms, three hours writing timed essays, two hours working through past papers and looking for patterns in the questions asked, and half an hour doing the hardest question they could find, followed by half an hour talking it through with their teacher. Then they spend five hours shopping with their friends and watching TV.

You too can make less mean more. Try this questionnaire:

Name: Subject:

1. How many hours of independent work do you do on your subjects outside of class? Please state the time spent on each subject.
2. What sort of activities do you do? Use the table below:

		Always	Sometimes	Never
Reading through class notes	C			
Using resources on the school's VLE	C			
Using course textbooks	C			
Mind-maps/diagrams	C			
Making/remaking class notes	C			
Highlighting/colour coding	C			

December Activities

		Always	Sometimes	Never
Flashcards	C			
Using a revision wall to display your learning	C			
Writing exam answers under timed conditions	S			
Reading model answers	S			
Using past exam questions and planning answers	S			
Marking your own work to a mark scheme	F			
Studying mark schemes or examiners' reports	F			
Working with other pupils in groups/pairs	F			
Comparing model answers against your own work	F			
Creating your own exam questions	F			
Handing in extra exam work for marking	F			
One-to-one discussions with teachers/tutors	F			

3. Additional activities not mentioned above:

4. Write a brief account of what you do if you can't understand something (e.g. try again, read textbooks, check the school's VLE, see teachers, ask other pupils).

You will notice some activities have a 'C' next to them – these are the *content* techniques. Some activities have an 'S' next to them – these are the *skills* techniques. Others have an 'F' next to them – these are the *feedback* techniques.

Notice in our example that pupil 1 only does content revision, while pupil 2 does all three stages and then takes some time off. In our experience, pupil 2 will pretty much always get a better grade than pupil 1. And they put in fewer hours.

Have a look at the activities associated with each stage of revision and draw up a list of three or four you aren't doing at the moment but that you'd like to try:

1.
2.
3.
4.

Final Thoughts

We've found that pupils who get the best grades practise in a wider variety of ways. Our top performers often had ten or more ticks in the always column, pretty evenly spread across C, S and F.

Pupils who got lower grades nearly always had fewer ticks in the always column, often something like four or five. They were much more restricted in the way they practised, often spending hours repeating the same limited range of activities.

Aim to increase your ticks in the always column to ten.

Are there three activities that you currently don't do, that you could add to your revision approaches? Check the list and add them below:

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