

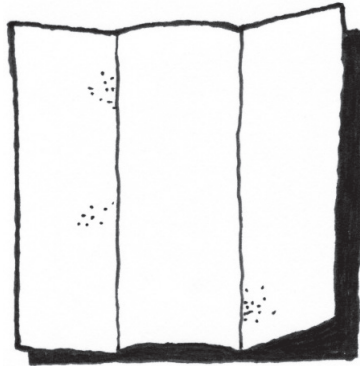
27. Practice Activity: The Nine-Box Grid

Before you really begin to attack your revision, you need to be able to actively recast the information you need to learn. That means rewriting or reorganising your class notes into something you have built yourself – something you've processed and created. No passive reading and highlighting of notes here – just active, engaged rewriting!

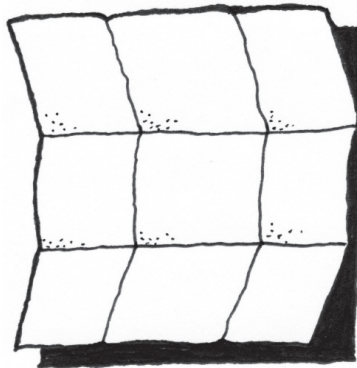
You don't want to be spending too much of your time on this – we recommend about 50% of your revision time should be recasting notes – but it's a crucial step.

One way to do it that we've really enjoyed is the nine-box grid. (An A level physics pupil taught us this one. He ended up at Oxford so we know it works!) And here's the best bit: all you'll need is a sheet of A4 paper.

Place the paper in front of you – orient it landscape – and fold it into thirds, like this:



Then, with it folded, do it again the other way so that when you open up you've got nine squares:



There are three steps to filling in the grid:

1. Your challenge is to summarise an entire topic (or, if you're feeling brave, an entire course) in nine boxes. First, you need to read through your notes on the topic/course and decide what your nine boxes are. Ask yourself: what are the nine key subsections? Ask teachers to suggest nine. Work with friends to identify the nine. Go through exam papers to see if they help you decide on the nine.

Subject or topic:

.....

Nine possible topic areas:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Once you've got the nine subsections, you need to find a way to summarise your notes using just the little boxes on the grid. You can't use any additional space. Don't try to write so small you can't read it! Use diagrams, pictures, mind-maps or other graphic organisers to condense your information. Do what you have to, but get it all down in the nine little boxes. Then photograph it in case it gets lost!

2. Now read through the whole grid and, on the other side, draw up a list of key concepts, ideas and vocabulary you're going to need to master. That's it. An entire course or topic on one sheet of paper.

Once you've got your nine-box grid, you're ready to attempt exam questions. You'll see other pupils laboriously rereading their notes or copying out the entire course in their lucky pen – but ignore them. You've got the content nailed on one sheet!

Final Thoughts

Remember, even if you're the greatest builder of nine-box grids the world has ever seen, you still need to be moving on to other revision activities – the ones that will test your skills and get you used to performing confidently under exam conditions.

We'd recommend you do two things next:

Check your responses to the revision questionnaire, and move onto activities in the S and F sections of the questionnaire now that you've mastered C – the content bit.

Try using your nine-box grid as the basis of another activity in this book; It's Time to Teach, aka C.A.S.T.T. If you've got a nine-box grid done, you've already completed the C. and A. of C.A.S.T.T.! Check out what to do next on page XX.