A Merry Christmas message from all staff at Coombe Dean – for Year 11 and the 45 hour challenge

"We wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year".

We do wish you a merry Christmas, and a happy New Year for that matter, but more importantly, we wish you lots of merry Christmases and lots of happy New Years. We hope that you find time to rest and reflect as you are about to start the most important year in your education so far, so that you come back, ready to give your very best during your mock exams.

***'Do something today that your future self will thank you for.'***

***Would your 'future self' thank you for not spending some of your Christmas break preparing for your mock exams?***

You have 16 days off school before your mock exams kick off during the week commencing 7th January. Some of you have been busy preparing for some time now, giving yourself an advantage before you go in to compete against other students in your classes to get the best score. Remember, in the summer, you will be competing against hundreds of thousands of students across England.

***Would your 'future self' thank you for thinking "they're only mocks – they don't count"?***

The thing that students often tell themselves is "they're only mocks", it's a lot easier to say that than, "my result is a reflection of what I know and can do in exam conditions". Saying "they're only mocks" tends to relieve a lot of pressure in the short term because you might then expect less of yourself, lower your expectations of yourself and of your potential.

Would your 'future self' thank you for taking this approach, or might you imagine a situation whereby, come May (in just 15 weeks – 75 days of 'normal school') and the external GCSEs are about to start, you thank yourself for the effort you put in to revise key pieces of information or revisit key techniques in answering questions?

***So, what can you do? Try the 45 hour challenge!***

5 hours a day over 9 days leaves 7 days completely free for yourself (and 19 hours on each of those 8 days), your family and friends. 5 hours a day over 9 days allows you to prepare for 9 subjects (although you should vary the subjects you study each day and distribute your practice) – would your 'future self' thank you for having spent 45 hours or even more over Christmas, preparing for your mock exams (which is actually preparing for your formal GCSEs in May and June 2019)?

Would your future self, sat in your exam venue about to open your first mock paper in January thank you for planning now to use some of your time off to prepare for your exams?

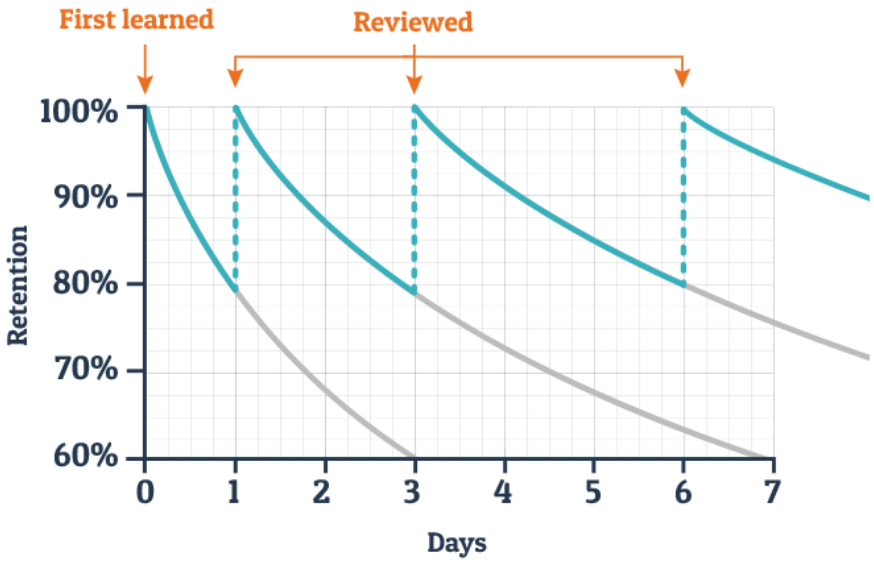
We do wish you a merry Christmas and time off to recharge but we do also look to your futures and want the very best for you, so spare a thought for your 'future self' this Christmas.

Please take some time to read the following advice on effective revision to make sure you make the very most of those 45 hours!

Wishing you a very successful 2019.

Mr Koehler-Lewis, on behalf of all staff at Coombe Dean.

**Typical Forgetting Curve for Newly Learned Information**



## What does research say about effective revision?

The most powerful or best strategy is to plan ahead and not do all your revision on one subject in a block before moving on to the next - a technique called 'distributed practice'.

A good dose of cramming that **follows up** on lots of distributed practice is the best way to go. Start by reading the text book and then make flash cards of the critical concepts and test yourself. A century of research has shown that repeated testing works.

Testing itself when you get the correct answers appears to produce a more elaborative memory trace connected with your prior knowledge, so you're building on what you know.

How have various techniques fared when they were tested for effectiveness?

| Revision technique | Efficacy |
|---|---|
| Practice testing - Self-testing to check knowledge - especially using flash cards | HIGH |
| Distributed practice - spreading out study over time | HIGH |
| Elaborative interrogation - being able to explain a point or fact | MODERATE |
| Self-explanation - how a problem was solved | MODERATE |
| Interleaved practice - switching between different kinds of problems | MODERATE |
| Summarising - writing summaries of texts | LOW |
| Highlighting/underlining | LOW |
| Keyword mnemonics - choosing a word to associate with information | LOW |
| Imagery - forming mental pictures while reading or listening | LOW |
| Re-reading | LOW |

## So here are five evidence-based tips on how to learn:

### 1. Space your practice

Analysis shows that people who leave longer gaps between practice attempts go on to score higher. In fact, the longer the gaps, the higher the scores.

The difference is huge: people who leave more than 24 hours between their first five attempts at the game and their second five attempts score as highly, on average, as people who have practiced 50% more than them.

If you want to study effectively, you should spread out your revision rather than cramming. This is easier said than done, but if you are organised enough, you can spend less time revising and remember more.

**2. Make sure you fail occasionally**

Analysis shows that people who are most inconsistent when they first start have better scores later on. These people are exploring how the game works, rather than trying to get the very highest score they can every time. The moral is clear: invest some time in trying things out, which may mean failing occasionally, if you want to maximise learning in the long run.

**3. Practise the thing you'll be tested on (so check with your teacher(s) if you aren't sure)**

The big mistake many students make is not practising the thing they will be tested on. If your exam involves writing an essay, you need to practise essay-writing. Merely memorising the material is not enough.

Writing exam answers is a skill, just like playing an online game is a skill. You wouldn't try and improve at a game by trying to memorise moves, you'd practise making them.

Other research confirms that practising retrieving information is one of the best ways to ensure you remember it.

**4. Structure information, don't try to remember it**

Trying to remember something has been shown to have almost no effect on whether you do remember it. The implication for revision is clear: just looking at your notes won't help you learn them.

Instead, you need to reorganise the information in some way – whether by making notes of your notes and Self-testing to check knowledge - especially using flash cards, thinking about how what you're reading relates to other material, or practising writing answers. This approach, called "depth of processing", is the way to ensure material gets lodged in your memory.

**5. Rest and sleep**

New research shows that a brief rest after learning something can help you remember it a week later. Other experiments have shown that a full night's sleep helps you learn new skills or retain information.

Even napping can help consolidate your memories, and maybe even make you more creative. This is great news for those of us who like to nap during the day, and is a signal to all of us that staying up all night to revise probably isn't a good idea.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-22565912

https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jan/08/five-secrets-of-successful-revising