

1. Space your practice

Our analysis showed 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.

Our finding confirms lots of other research: 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

A new result from our analysis shows that people who are most inconsistent when they first start have better scores later on.

Our theory is that 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

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, 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.