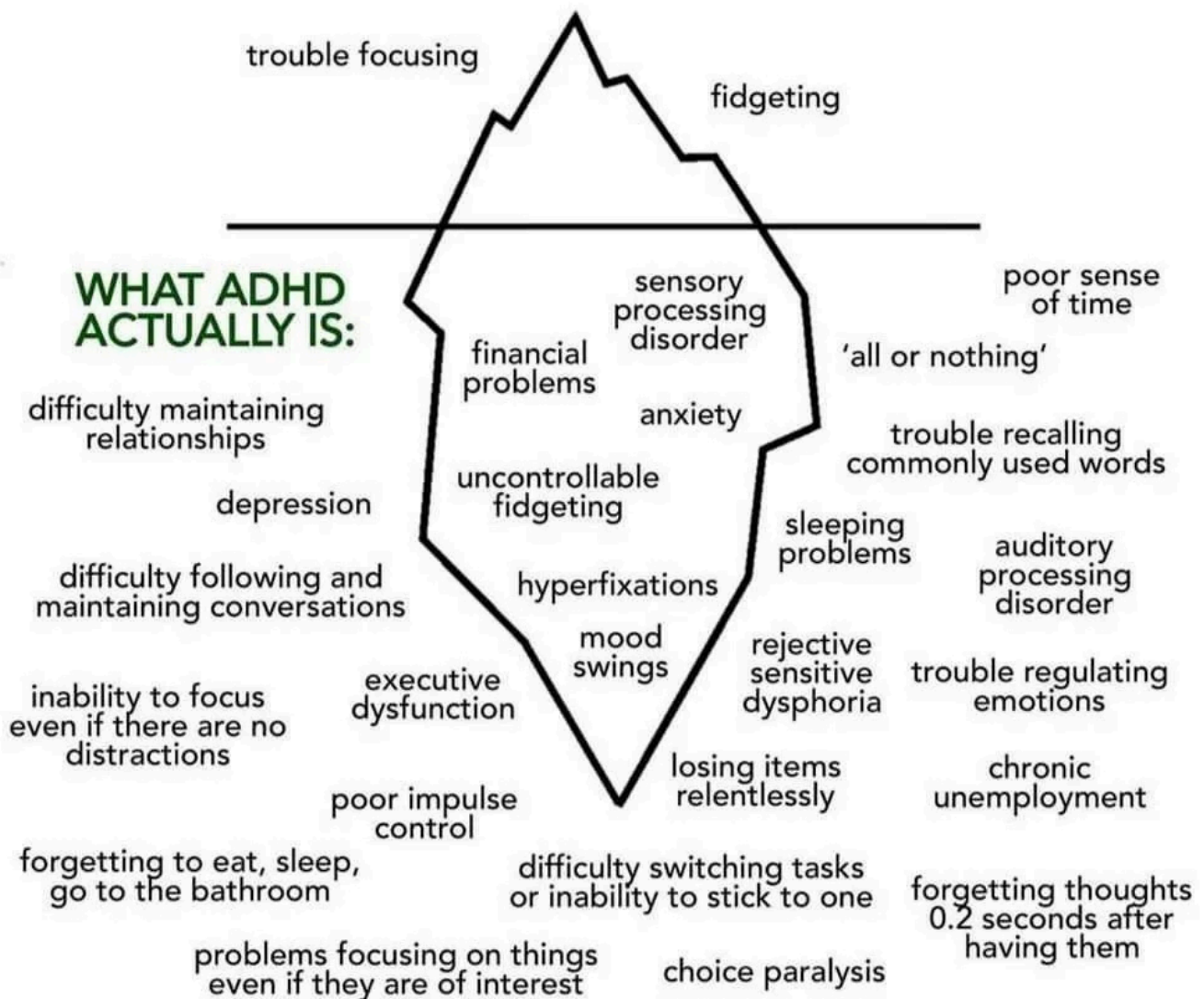


Revision Skills for Students with ADHD

Strategies for focus and organisation

THE ADHD ICEBERG

WHAT PEOPLE
THINK ADHD IS:



Understanding the Challenges

Students with ADHD can face various different struggles when it comes to academics. Sometimes, focusing in a classroom can be difficult as people with ADHD tend to be quite easily distracted. However, in a classroom scenario there are clear tasks, a structure and direct support that is usually available. Revision on the other hand, requires the individual to manage their own structure, stick to their own time frames and essentially take their learning into their own hands - this doesn't always help!

Students with ADHD often face unique challenges during revision, including:

- **Difficulty focusing:** Distractions and hyperactivity can make it hard to concentrate on study materials.
- **Organization issues:** Managing notes, assignments, and deadlines can feel overwhelming. Generally poor organisational skills: Having a structure to stick to is important for students with ADHD, and with revision, it is usually their responsibility to create one and stick to it. Organising thoughts into linear arguments for essays and extended answers needs practice.
- **Poor time management:** Students with ADHD don't pace themselves right and can lead to rushing and making careless mistakes.
- **Procrastination:** Starting and staying on task can be a significant hurdle. An inability to focus or prioritise, often starting new tasks before finishing current tasks: This can make revision seem daunting, particularly if there are multiple subjects to cover.
- **Impulsivity:** Jumping between topics or getting sidetracked is common.
- **Working memory limitations:** Holding information in mind while working can be tough. Difficulty remembering information: Revision is unproductive if nothing you revise can be remembered, but unfortunately for students with ADHD, forgetfulness is a significant symptom. Finding the most appropriate revision technique is vital.

Know this: ADHD doesn't have to do with intelligence. Poor testing performance is a reflection of ADHD, not of inability. Know this, too: you can learn strategies to improve your performance on exams.

TRIAL AND TEST THINGS EARLY ~ DON'T LEAVE IT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE!

This document offers some practical strategies to help students with ADHD try and overcome these challenges and revise effectively.

A Day in the Life ...

Trying to write about a day in the life of someone that has ADHD is a tricky thing. No two days look alike. For some they may mask and find the day exhausting, only to get home and let off steam and become unproductive as they are too overwhelmed. For others it can be adventure and (somewhat) controlled chaos that can be their constant companions. Everyone has their own unique experience, but here are some things that make up one person's experience of ADHD:

- a roller coaster of successes and failure
- feeling like a genius one moment and then guilty and a failure the next
- staring at the wall for five hours

- beating yourself up for things that aren't your fault
- good intentions having unintended outcomes
- being judged by others - and yourself - for your emotional wounds
- thinking people think I'm lazy and getting frustrated they don't understand
- having 200+ unfinished projects and not knowing where to start

Some of these will also sound very familiar to someone who is not living with ADHD, but for those that are on a daily basis, it can feel like having the engine of a Ferrari with the brakes of a bicycle. There is always light at the end of the tunnel and if you're kind to yourself, seek support you can work out what works for you.

Revision works differently for everyone, and some techniques may be more useful than others. With that said, it's important to take the time to work out what's best for you so that you have the best chance of success.



Take the time to work out what works best for you - start this early to give yourself time.

Where to begin ... at the end Sleep

This is essential for everyone but even more so for those managing ADHD symptoms and it goes a long way to promoting positive mental well-being. Some students stay up all night playing their XBOX, doom scrolling TikTok, YouTube and form of social media. Less sleep can impact anyone's performance in things like work and exams. Sufficient sleep can improve a persons mood, focus and memory and reduce stress. Create a sleep routine:

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day - or at least try to!
- Most people need to sleep eight to nine hours a night to retain memories, but teenagers need more. Thirty-minute afternoon naps can help some students - but not all, work out what works for

you but be sure these siestas aren't longer than 30 minutes, since extended naps can interfere with sleep at night - set an alarm!

- Wind down before bed:
 - Avoid stimulating activities and screen time in the evening. Instead try a relaxing activity like reading or listening to music.
- Avoid substances:
 - Stay away from caffeine, sugar, nicotine and alcohol at least 4-6 hours before bed.
- Optimise your sleep environment:
 - Keep your bedroom dark, cool, and quiet.
 - Maybe play white or brown noise to block out noise.
- Don't sleep with your mobile phone next to your bed or under your pillow:
 - It's too tempting to pick it up and start scrolling. If you use your phone as your alarm clock then think about buying a separate alarm clock.

Creating a Focused Study Environment

- **For Some Minimize Distractions:**
 - Find a quiet space.
 - Maybe use noise-cancelling headphones.
- **For others:**
 - Have some background noise (white/brown noise help block out distractions) <https://add.org/brown-noise-adhd/>
- **Mobile phone:**
 - Put your mobile phone in another room & eliminate 'high focus' distractions like social media.
- **Set Time Limits:**
 - Use the Pomodoro Technique (25 minutes of study, 5 minutes of break). <https://pomofocus.io/>
 - Set realistic goals for each study session.
- **Break Down Tasks:**
 - Divide large assignments into smaller, manageable chunks.
 - Focus on one task at a time.

Creating the right environment is key for effective revision. A dedicated study space helps to cue your brain that it's time to focus. Experiment with different locations to find what works best for you – a library, a quiet corner in your home, outdoors, coffee shop. In school consider the Study Hub. Consider using apps or website blockers to minimize digital distractions. Maybe try an app blocker on your phone like Opal <http://www.opal.so/> or Cold Turkey <https://getcoldturkey.com/>

Remember to **take frequent breaks** to avoid burnout; short, structured breaks can actually *improve* your focus. Set a timer though as otherwise time will run away with you!

**NEVER UNDERSTIMATE
THE IMPORTANCE OF
SMALL STEPS.**



Organisation Strategies

- **Use a Planner:**
 - Record all deadlines and appointments.
 - Break down large tasks into smaller steps.
 - Ms George has some goal setting sheets you might want to ask about.
- **Colour-Code Materials:**
 - Assign different colours to different subjects.
 - Use colour-coded folders, notebooks, and highlighters.
- **Digital Tools:**
 - Explore apps like Trello, Asana, or Google Calendar for task management.
 - Use AI to help plan and revise and create a sustainable timetable.
- Check Google Classroom regularly for your subject and Year group - lots is communicated through this.

Effective organisation is essential for managing your workload and reducing stress. A planner, whether physical or digital, helps you stay on top of deadlines and break down large projects into smaller, more manageable tasks. Colour-coding can make it easier to quickly identify and retrieve materials. Experiment with different organisational systems to find one that suits your learning style. Don't be afraid to **ask for help**. Ask your subject teacher, discuss concerns with your form tutors, use the VESPA subject chats to find out what your next steps are. If you still feel overwhelmed then speak to *Ms George, the Sixth Form Learning Mentor* - her office can be found in the Sixth Form Study Hub.

Check your emails - if Ms George wants to meet with you then she'll send you an email!

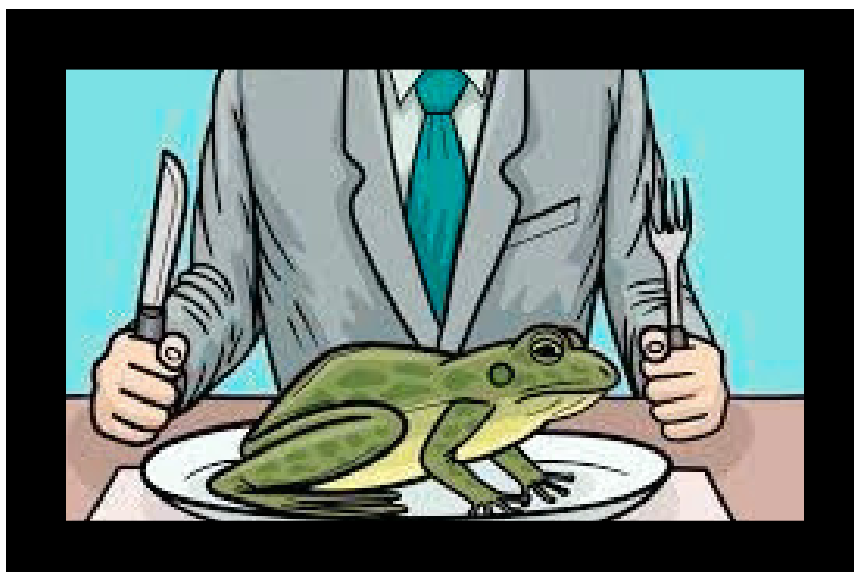
Effective Revision Techniques

- **Active Recall:** Test yourself frequently on the material. Use flashcards, practice questions, or quizzes.
- **Spaced Repetition:** Review material at increasing intervals to improve long-term retention. Apps like Anki <https://apps.ankiweb.net> can be helpful. This is also known as the 2357 technique.
- **Teach Someone Else:** Explaining concepts to others forces you to understand them thoroughly.
- **Mind Mapping:** Create visual diagrams to connect ideas and concepts.

- **KISS:** Keep It Super Simple: Small manageable chunks that you've planned and can tick off. if the tasks are too big then you'll never get started.
- **Eat the Frog:** Do the hardest or least exciting task first and get it out of the way; it can motivate you to get started and feel like you've really achieved something straight away. We all have the tendency to gravitate towards the easier tasks first leaving the hardest to the last minute or forgetting - you can't afford to do that with revision - you have to revise ALL topics in ALL your subjects!



- **Eat the Ice cream and leave the Frog until last:** Some students with ADHD find the difficulty of the task does not matter. Some prefer more difficult tasks for the challenge. Instead, task management is all about the energy, and for the ADHD brain, that energy is fueled by interest. FUN FIRST. Rather than eating the frog, eat the ice cream! Do the task that excites you most. Interest-driven activity provides fuel for some students with ADHD, the type of fuel that allows you to power through the more difficult tasks - load up on good stuff first then eat the frog! But you have to have eaten it by the end of the day - you can not put it off until the next day! You have to eat a frog every day to keep on top of things! It's good for you!

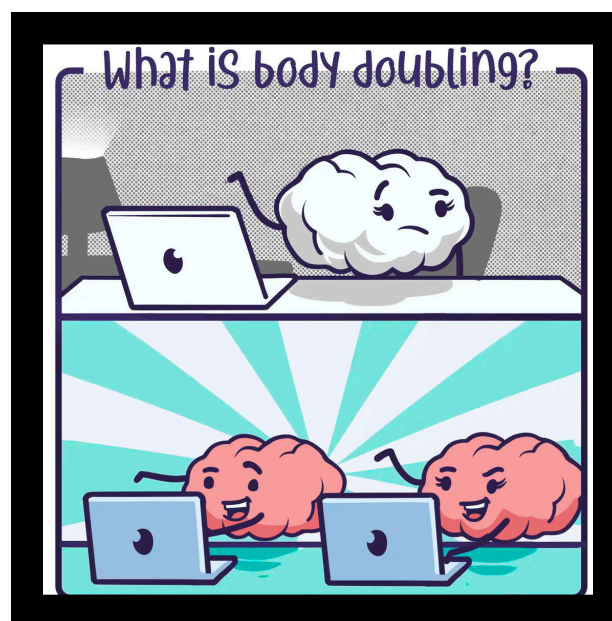


- **Watch educational videos:** ... but watch them sped up between 1.5 and 2x speed or put captions on or follow the transcript to make it more interactive and stimulating
- **Blurting:** This involves writing down all the information you can remember on a topic (it doesn't matter about the order or if it's correct at the start) then going back to your notes to find out what you've missed or got wrong. Then you study the topic again, paying extra attention to the parts you didn't remember the first time and keep repeating this process until you remember everything you need to know for your exam.
- **Body Doubling:** Your Body double could be working on a similar task and study alongside you alternatively they could be doing something completely different, like reading but by studying with friends is another way to create accountability. You can also agree to exchange study notes with a friend and have a deadline for both of you to trade notes.
- **Past Papers;** Practice them under timed conditions. Either get your subject teacher to mark them or if you'd like a quick turnaround then copy and paste in Chat GPT and ask it to 'mark your A Level AQA paper extended answer for Biology'.
- **Vary your Study Methods:** Switch between reading, writing, and problem-solving to keep your brain engaged.
- Ms George has study sheets on various revision techniques - pop into the Study Hub to discuss.

PLAN & WORK OUT WHAT WORKS FOR YOU - DO NOT TO LEAVE IT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE!

Tips for Maintaining Focus

- **Movement Breaks:** Incorporate physical activity into your study routine. Stand up and stretch, do some jumping jacks, or take a short walk outside. But set a timer!



- **Body Doubling:** Study with a friend or classmate, even if you're working on different tasks. The presence of another person can help you stay focused or begin the study and revision in the first place!
- **Reward System:** Set small rewards for completing study tasks. This can provide extra motivation.
- **Mindfulness Exercises:** Practice mindfulness techniques to improve attention and reduce impulsivity. Apps like Headspace or Calm can be helpful.

- **Medication:** If you are prescribed medication for ADHD, take it as directed by your doctor.
- **Hyperfocus:** Study in short sharp bursts but, if you get into hyperfocus then don't cut yourself short - keep going! Study well in advance of any assessments, exams and study for short bursts rather than cramming for hours the night before - cramming can undo all your hard work, try not to do it!

Night Before and Day of the Exam

- Get a good nights sleep.
- Get your bag and pencil case ready the night before and include a water bottle - stay hydrated.
- Remember, you're not alone, and with the right strategies and support, you can achieve your academic goals.
- Visualise yourself staying calm and doing well in the exam.
- Leave the house in plenty of time to arrive at school relaxed and with time to briefly catch up with your friends.

In the Exam

- Some students find looking through the entire text before beginning the exam helpful but set a time - whatever works for you!
- Have a focus object to look at as you think and to turn your attention to when you catch yourself wandering. This can be a small object you place on your desk, a special pencil, a pen - anything to draw your attention back and help you concentrate.
- Double check your answers when you finish to catch any careless mistakes and fill any gaps.
- Don't rush, but be mindful of the time.

Key Takeaways

Revising effectively with ADHD requires understanding all the specific challenges you face and implementing strategies that address those challenges. By creating a focused study environment, using effective organisation techniques, practicing active revision methods, and maintaining focus, you can improve your academic performance and achieve your goals. Remember to seek support when needed and be patient with yourself. Success is achievable with the right approach.

Going Forward

If you are diagnosed with ADHD and believe something should be amended then please go and speak to Ms Louise George the Sixth Form Learning Mentor - this document is by no means the answer to everything and very much a starting point and a work in progress 😊

Please note that all information in this guide is gathered from across the WWW and various organisations and is by no means the only information out there but you will find more information on Google. Please do your own research and use this document as a platform to get you started.