

# Chapter 1



## Mind the Myths and Monsters

**W**hat springs to mind when your teachers or parents mention the word revision? Are you the type of person who jumps up and down in excitement? If so, you're very lucky – and unique! If not, why worry? After all, most of us have in common the idea that revision is at the very least boring, and at the very most, totally gruesome. Are 'most of us' right, though? Just because most people **think** something doesn't *always* make them right.

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Until the mind-exploding discoveries of the Middle Ages, most people used to think the world was flat - how far off the mark could they have been?

Some people today think that they don't tap into 90% of their brain capacity - because that's what they've been told - but how do they know for sure? Is this belief based on myth or fact?

There are many uncertainties about what we really know about the brain and how it works, but one thing that we can be sure of is that we *can* program our minds to think more effectively. We can change the way that we see ourselves and the world around us – and the results can be amazing.

What often inhibits us from tapping fully into our brain's capabilities is the fact that most human beings are very likely to go along with what most people think. Like sheep, we tend to follow the herd, hang with the crowd and stay in our comfort zones.

As a consequence of this, most of us don't fully make use of our brainpower. In other words, because we follow what most people think, we don't spend enough time **thinking** for ourselves.

Most of the time, we allow *myths* to control what we think, and it's too hard or frightening to really think differently. We invent *monsters* to stop us from challenging these myths and kicking them into oblivion. The monsters are our blocks. They leave our minds with limiting beliefs and fears. This in turn stops us from achieving our full potential.

I am not describing everybody of course. There are some people who take time to really think outside of the box and work hard to challenge prevailing beliefs so that they can achieve everything they want in life. I'm sure you can think of many. These are the people who *max out their brains for success*.

So what about academic success? What about those people who earn outstanding grades in their exams? We all know of someone, younger or older who whizzed through every exam with flying colours. How did they do it? Were they born to succeed? Or was it because they worked really hard? Was it a mixture of both?

The answer is that students who achieve their exam goals are not born with the ability to pass exams; they make a choice about *wanting* to.

**DON'T FALL FOR THE MYTH THAT YOU EITHER 'HAVE IT' OR 'YOU DON'T'. THAT'S JUST AN EXCUSE TO STAY STUCK OR SET LOW STANDARDS FOR WHAT YOU CAN ACHIEVE**

It is true that some students have genes that may give them an advantage – grasping concepts quickly for example - but their success is really down to the way they *apply* themselves. They have a mindset for success!

Every year, students all over the world take exams. Some achieve grades beyond their wildest expectations whilst others under-perform. This book is about students of all abilities achieving of their very best in exams, far *beyond* their expectations.

How?

1. By challenging the way that you may have been conditioned to think about exam preparation and revision
2. By unblocking any limiting beliefs that prevent you from applying yourself properly
3. By showing you how to create the conditions for effective exam preparation
4. By teaching you practical techniques for maximum revision success.

These four elements will explode your mind in all the right directions. You will have the knowledge, skills, energy, focus and enthusiasm to achieve the grades you want. Underlying all of these elements is the power of your mind and its ability to THINK. Ten different approaches will be covered in this book so that you THINK and LEARN your way to success. These are outlined on the Thinking Page on page 16.

As you work through this book, open your mind to what you can achieve. These are tried and tested techniques that work.

You will come across the key icons that will **unlock pathways in your brain:**



Each key provides a principle, fact or idea that creates the groundwork for revision success.

You will also stumble across steps:

**Hello, I'm a STEP**

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Each step is about what you must actually do to maximise your potential for achieving your goals. In addition, each chapter ends with a brainstorm page for you to record what you have learnt and to add any other information that will help you on your journey. It is important that you interact with this book. Write in it. **Highlight** important points. Stick in some tabs. Many of the sheets can be downloaded on A4 from [mindexplosionbook.com](http://mindexplosionbook.com) if you need more space.

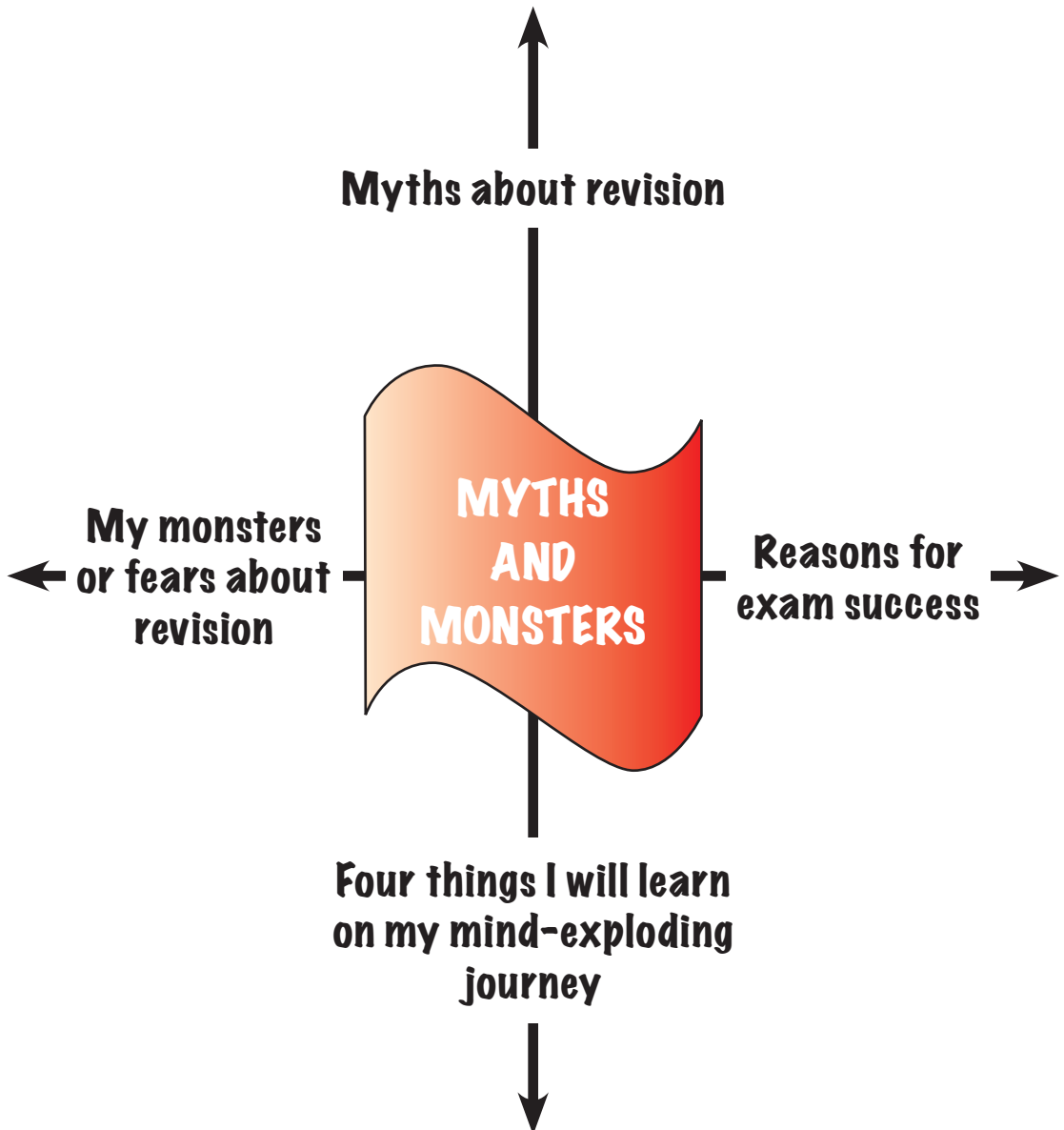
By the end of this book, if you have followed the instructions properly, you will have trained your brain to work like one of those awe-inspiring people who achieved something in their life beyond their wildest expectations. You will become a revision genius; able to maximise your brain capability to be fully prepared to attain the grades you want.

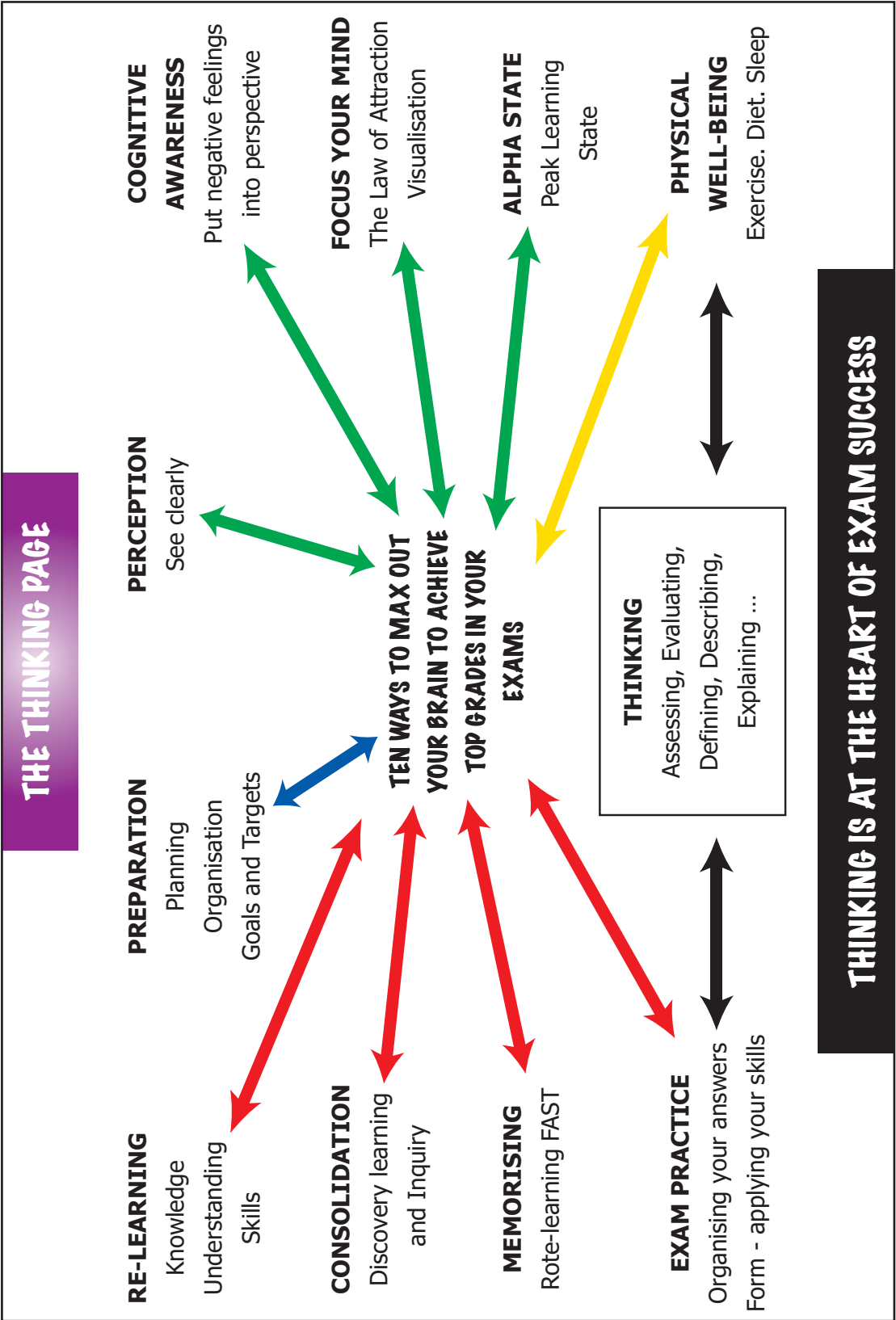
**It's time for your **mind-exploding** journey to begin.**



## Mind the Myths and Monsters Brainstorm Page

Energise this brain wave by summarising the main things that you have learnt from chapter 1.







## Chapter 2



### **Tuning In - The Real Meaning of Revision**

Myths become our reality if we let them. It is the myths we choose to believe about revision that give it meaning. Chapter 1 already mentioned words like 'boring' and 'gruesome', and I'm sure you can think of many others, but think about how powerful these thoughts can be in real life.

For example, what if you go about revision with the right intentions but end up staring at a page of notes, hoping the information will enter your brain as if through osmosis?

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Before you know it, the lure of the online chat room or mobile phone pulls you, like a magnetic force, away from your studies.

These experiences can cause you to spiral, making you dread getting back to the grind. You start to fear revision. You think you can't do it.

Maybe you go into denial, wasting hours of time staring at pages of notes, convinced that you're revising. Some students simply admit defeat and give up altogether.

Let us get rid of these myths and monsters and home in on a reassuring reality:

**REVISION IS SO MUCH EASIER AND MUCH MORE FUN THAN MANY STUDENTS REALISE. ANYONE CAN DO IT REALLY WELL IF THEY KNOW HOW**

You are not facing the impossible. You must not allow yourself to think you are. The truth is, revision is not a punishment, it's an opportunity for you to showcase what you know, and put yourself in your best light. Instead of focusing on the myths that surround revision, let's focus on what revision actually is. By demystifying the word, we can get to grips with its meaning. The key below allows you to unlock a pathway in your brain to store this simple yet powerful fact:



**Revision is about re-learning what you have been taught. It is about storing facts so they can be recalled quickly. It is also about know-how, or skills. Most exams test *what* you know and *how* you know it.**

Effective revision is the key to exam success. For many of you, it's the key to your future dream career. Yet there is little time at school to learn the difference between *effective* and *ineffective* revision. Most educators are busy trying to teach the curriculum; the school year may not always give them time to revise with you, let alone show you how to revise properly.

Here's your chance to play teacher and decide what you think makes good - or bad - revision technique:

**ACKNOWLEDGE THAT EFFECTIVE REVISION IS UP TO YOU**



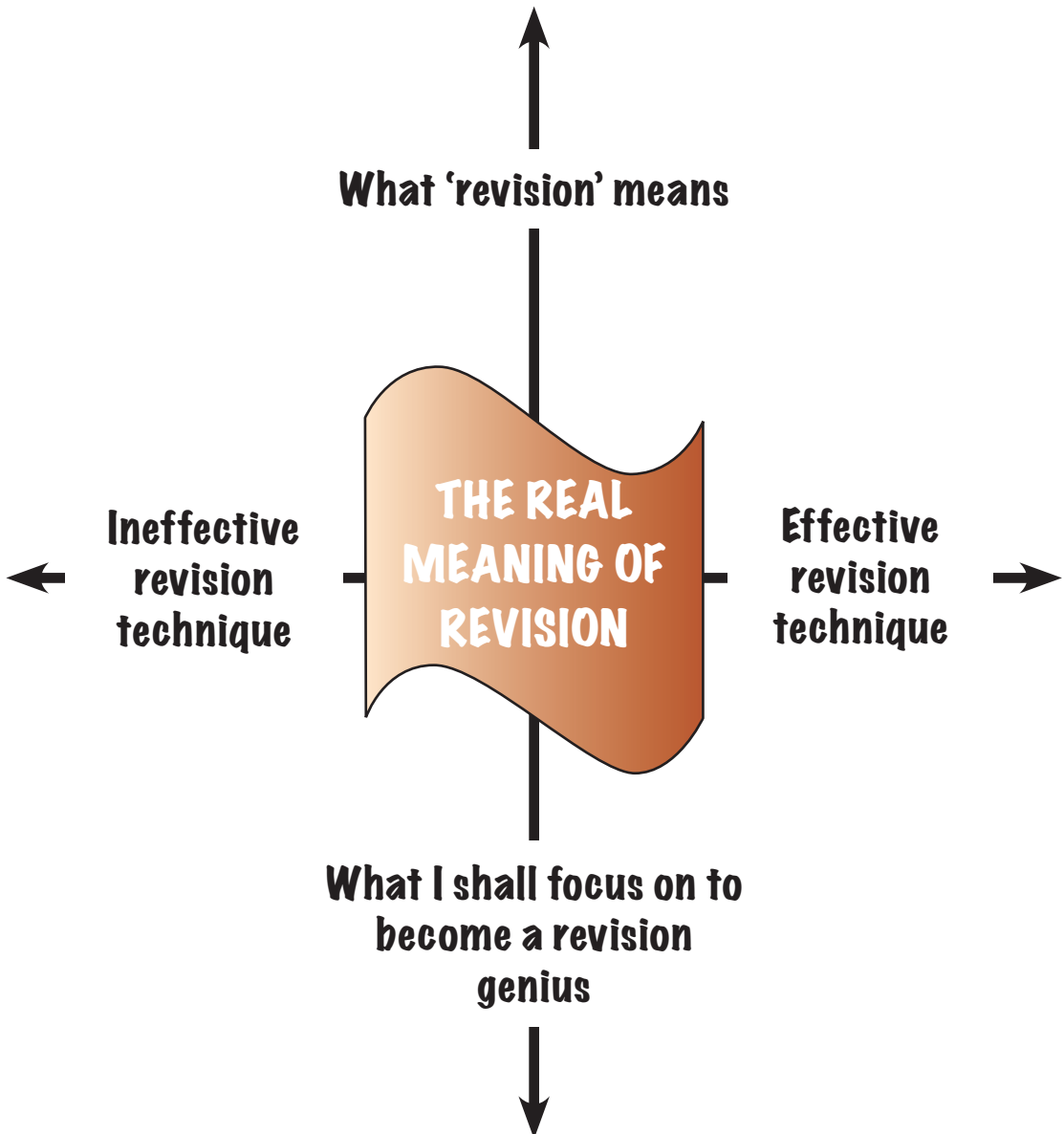
Revision technique	True	False
Good revision is about staying up all night and getting three hours sleep		
Good revision is about memorising what you have been taught		
Bad revision is about looking after yourself		
Good revision is when you have no idea what to expect in the exam and revise anyway		
Bad revision is when you set clear goals and work out a timetable		
Good revision is about just re-reading your notes		
Bad revision is when you leave it all to the last minute and go into the exam in a panic		

*Answers in the Appendix Page 116*



## The Real Meaning of Revision Brainstorm Page

Add power to this brain wave by summarising the main things that you have learnt from chapter 2.



## Chapter 3



### **Mind Reading Your Examiners**

The thought of revision makes some people turn green, but the thought of writing an exam makes most people want to run for the trees at some point. Exams have a bad rap too, just like revision. Many people have trained themselves to *think* of exams as being like a prison sentence, imagining themselves being herded into a sweaty hall, glued to their seats and forced into silence to write for what seems like an eternity. They imagine having sweaty palms, answering the wrong questions or their mind going blank.

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These thoughts lead to limiting beliefs that we may not even realise we have, and this can affect exam performance. It may certainly seem rational to think of exams in a negative way, but this is not productive. Undue worry only causes stress and distracts you from the truth about the real purpose of exams.

To prepare fully for exam success, it is important to change the way that we think about them if we are to get the most out of them.

So how about putting some new ideas about exams into your head? Could you think

**OVER 100 MILLION CHILDREN IN THE WORLD  
WOULD TRADE PLACES WITH YOU FOR THE  
OPPORTUNITY TO WRITE AN EXAM**

of them as fun? Or does that seem ridiculous?

How about empowering? Could you focus on them as a useful stepping-stone to where you want to be in the future? It might help to put them into a wider context, and think about the millions of young people in the world who don't have the opportunity to take exams because they are impoverished or don't have the rights to education that so many of us take for granted.

Sobering thoughts, but where else might this lead? Well, if you start to appreciate exams as an opportunity, then you'll value your school career differently. An 'Attitude for Gratitude' will help you to see learning in a different way. Perhaps you'll see the prospect of mind reading your examiners differently.

#### **What All Examiners Want**

Some students think that if they know the questions and rote-learn the answers ready to regurgitate them in an exam, they have guaranteed exam success. In a way, for closed-question exams (where your answer is either wrong or right) like multiple-choice papers, this may be the case. However, **there is a global trend in education towards more open-ended questions in exams that test how well you think.** Examining bodies and universities all over the world are putting a higher premium on thinking skills.

Thinking is about *dealing* with the information you learn in class. Thinking is not simply about repeating what you remember.

All exams, increasingly, are about:



**Knowledge** – *What do you know about your subjects?*

Knowledge is about what information you can remember. In Science, this might include what you know about how digestion works. In Maths, it might be about recalling formulae; in English, how well you know a particular book. In History, the facts you can recall.



**Understanding** – *have you grasped the **meaning** of information?*

In days long gone exams used to be simply about recalling facts, but during the information explosion of the twentieth century, educational expectations changed; the requirement to think about what you know became more important.



**Skills** – *How well can you **demonstrate** your understanding?*

Skills are taught by subject teachers and then identified by examiners for assessment. Every subject requires skill, if it is to be properly understood. In Mathematics, skills include being able to work out the answer to a sum, not through guess-work, but with a process – a technique of working. In English, an exam might be testing how well you can apply your grasp of the English language and grammar to a piece of creative writing. In Science, you may be tested on how effectively you can carry out an experiment to test a hypothesis. In History, it might be about how well you test the reliability of sources, or how well you explain the reasons for a past event. What is interesting is that most exams may award you for how well you use your skills to reach a conclusion, even if you do not reach the 'right' answer.



**Organisation** – *How well can you organise your answers and perform to time?*

Whether it is a written, practical or oral examination, timing is crucial. Formal examinations are not only about fulfilling simple expectations like turning up on time, not cheating or suddenly breaking into song in the midst of silence. This is an essential aspect of the revision process. The good news is that everybody has the same time limits in an exam situation. The tricky thing is to make sure you can plan and produce high-level answers consistently within that time.



**Exams** are also assessing **form**; in other words, *how well do you **present** your answers?*

In a language oral, how good is your accent? In written exams: is your handwriting legible and well planned? In Mathematics: how well have you shown your working-out? In English: how well have you organised your essays? - Is there a clear argument? Is it well developed and supported? Is there a clear structure? Is your writing accurate? Some exams require students to reach other expectations to do with spelling, punctuation and grammar. Under timed conditions, it is expected that some mistakes will be crossed out, and that it might not be absolutely perfect in form, but we should all be prepared to give of our very best, to maximise our chances of achieving the grades we want.

Knowledge and understanding are the foundation to exam success. Your skills are the real test of your depth of knowledge and understanding. To reach the top level of skill areas in each subject you need to **re-learn** what you have been taught, and train your brain to really **think** before you apply what you know.

### **So, are you a good thinker?**

Your ability to think effectively depends on many factors including: how you are taught *and* your attitude to learning. Both play a very important part in determining how well you use your brain in exams.



## How you are taught

There are two general ways in which teachers impart knowledge to their students. One is called **Teacher-centred**.

Imagine the scene where you're sat staring out of the window and the teacher is talking for what seems like an eternity. You feel sleepy and bored and start to daydream. There's not a great deal of student questioning or discussion, and the teacher gets edgy and worried about losing face if a question or opinion catches them off guard. You're under pressure to get top grades but you know that you and your friends - or even the teacher - will go through 'spot the question' sessions so that you know your exam questions in advance.

Many young people are used to this style of teaching, but often, they are being trained to remember rather than learn. They do not always *know* their subjects or *think* independently about them. There is often an absence of thinking. Students might not be given the opportunity to really *max* out their brains.

It is often with good reason that teachers opt for a Teacher-centred approach. Perhaps the class size is very large; the teacher is in a rush or under great pressure to get through the curriculum. If this is your general experience in lessons, don't blame the teacher. Blame the system. This is a changing world and **it is never too late to train your brain to think effectively.**



Enjoy the freedom of **thinking** on your revision journey.

The other teaching style that will affect how well you can tailor your revision to suit the examiners is called **Student-centred**. This is where the traditional 'Chalk and talk' approach is used less, and teachers *facilitate* learning. The teacher will probably address the whole class for less time and provide students with the opportunity to work independently or in groups. This is where thinking skills are important because students:

- a) Have to test their own **understanding**, thus engaging their own minds
- b) Have to follow lines of inquiry by raising and answering key **questions**
- c) **Communicate** with each other as opposed to sitting as empty vessels waiting to be filled up

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Although this method takes away the opportunity for daydreaming or an afternoon nap during class, it is about learning, rather than assimilating information, as a sponge absorbs water – only to wring it all out again. **Learning**, or in your case for revision, *re-learning*, is the key to knowledge, understanding and skills. It makes the process of revision work for you and switches your brainpower button **ON**.

### Your Attitude

This is the other side of the coin. If you really want to achieve top grades, then you must put in the effort. Whether you like a subject or not; whether you like the teacher or you don't; if you want to succeed, you can. It's up to you. Instead of seeing exams as an opportunity to purge your brain of information that you will probably never remember, how about seeing them as an opportunity to think?

**IF YOU TAILOR YOUR REVISION TOWARDS  
THINKING SKILLS THEN YOU ARE MIND READING  
YOUR EXAMINERS**

### How Exams Are Marked

Teachers mark internal exams, while Examiners mark public exams. Examiners are basically very experienced teachers who get paid to mark piles and piles of exam scripts. To make sure they all mark equally, examiners are issued with a mark scheme by the exam board. This helps them to differentiate between a weak, medium and strong answer, as well as award the correct number of marks. Examiners then moderate the marked exam scripts to make sure that each examiner has been consistent.

**It is helpful for you to know for whom you are writing the exam.** Examiners are your audience. They can tell the difference between a student who has put thought into their answer and someone who has regurgitated stacks of information. Your approach to revision must be based on knowledge, understanding and subject specific skills. It must be about thinking. This will prepare you for any question that the Examiner sets!

**TRAIN YOUR BRAIN TO THINK ON YOUR REVISION JOURNEY**

You should get all of these statements below right!  
 Check your answers on Appendix Page 116

Exams	True	False
Exams are a test of survival: whoever lasts in silence the longest gets the best marks		
Exams just test what you remember		
In exams, organisation is just about writing neatly		
Examiners are trying to catch you out		



## Mind Reading Your Examiners Brainstorm Page

Energise this brain wave by summarising the main things that you have learnt from chapter 3.

