



# **The Dixie Grammar School**

**Top Tips & Techniques  
For Examination Preparation**



Dear Students

In the summer term you will be taking a set of exams in the subjects you have studied throughout the year. These are called internal exams and are organised by your teachers at the Dixie Grammar School. There are a few reasons why we have these exams. It is one method how your teachers and you can find out what you know and understand about each subject and also what you don't understand so well. It is also an opportunity for you to demonstrate what skills you have developed and to show them under exam conditions. This is also a time to give you some practice before you have to do the really important external exams that will occur later in your school life.

It is quite natural to be anxious about exams but it is important not to be overly worried by them and to avoid getting too stressed. This can be helped by being well prepared and by knowing what to expect. This booklet has been put together to give you some advice and hopefully make you more confident so that you can do your best. It is divided into two main parts:

- . general tips on preparing effectively for the exams,
- . examples of different types of revision techniques.

You have been given this booklet now so that you have plenty of time to study it and then prepare for the exams. It should be used as a sensible guide on what to expect, how to go about preparing yourself and tips about how to revise properly. It is also about finding methods of revising that work for you. Not all of the suggestions will work for everyone but some should work for you. Take this opportunity to experiment with as many of the methods and techniques as possible. Hopefully this will enable you to learn how to revise and prepare in the way that is best suited to you so that what you learn now will stand you in good stead for a successful future.

Subject related revision material will be provided by your subject teachers who will probably give you further information nearer the time of the internal exams. If you have specific questions about revising a subject, then you need to talk to the relevant teacher.

Good Luck,  
Dr Ketchion, Head of Lower School.



# General Tips on Preparing Effectively for the Exams

Everybody would like to do well in exams. The trick is what should you do in order to do the best possible. Below is information about how to organise yourself, how to prepare for the exams and what to expect in the exams.

## Brain Smart



To do well in exams, good preparation is essential. However, it is not always HOW MUCH preparation you do but how SMART is your preparation. There are 1440 minutes in a day, so this means using your time wisely.

You are ALL blessed with a brain and how you use it could help you do well exams.

Your exams involve you thinking and using your brain. In order to think and use our brain better we need to:

### Understand how the brain works

When you are working at something your brain is making connections, when you keep practising something, even if you find it difficult, it gradually improves and you get better at it - practise makes perfect. If you were an actor or actress would you get up on the stage without learning your lines - NO you would make a complete fool of yourself. You need to practise your lines. This needs time and work. That's why you need to revise.

### Look after your brain

The brain is important for learning and thinking, so how do we keep it working well and efficiently so it performs at its best - we need to look after it and treat it well. If you want your brain to be working well it has to be healthy just like an athlete. This means:

- . Sleeping well - a good 8 hours every night,
- . Eating and drinking well. Have a healthy diet that's rich in fruit and vegetables,
- . Having plenty of exercise and relaxation.

### Reduce the worry and stress that often happens.

Most people get anxious about exams just like lots of athletes get nervous before a big competition or game. It's quite natural to get nervous or even stressed. What's important is how you deal with it. Learn to relax, take plenty of exercise and don't put too much pressure on yourself.



## Tips for Exam Preparation and Managing Revision

So you know in order to do well in exams you have to be prepared. This means you have to study what you have done in each subject throughout the year. This is REVISION. But you might be thinking 'There's so much of it! Where do I start?' Well there's no need to panic, just get yourself organised. A lot of people will put a job off if the job seems big and scary, and revision can seem like that. However, once you're into the routine of revision you'll feel good that you're getting on with it, and it won't seem scary. Here are some tips:

- . Find somewhere quiet to work, somewhere that you feel comfortable.
- . Prepare a revision timetable where you allocate set times of the day for revising, study certain subjects on each day and then try to stick to the plan. Leave space in the timetable for other activities you want to do. Get a member of your family to have a look at it to see if it seems sensible and realistic.
- . **Important** - Avoid distractions when you are revising. Do not have a TV on, switch off your mobile phone and other communication devices. It is much better to get 30 minutes of good revision with 15 minutes complete break than 45 minutes of looking at books but not concentrating fully. It might seem difficult at first but you will feel so much better afterwards knowing that you have done some productive revision and then you can do something else.
- . Leave time for yourself. Even though you need to revise, you also have to do some other activities too. You will sometimes need to put your books down and do something else you enjoy for a while if you want to stay in a good mood. Leave sections in your timetable for every aspect of your life while revising.
- . Do not do all your revision on one subject in a block before moving on to the next subject. Do two or three different subjects every time you have a revision session.
- . Take frequent breaks, work in short bursts. Every 30 minutes or so, change topic or subject. Work towards little rewards like every 30 minutes eat a nice snack or have a 15 minute break.
- . Be realistic. It is important not to over revise, you only need to know what you have studied in the year. If in doubt have a chat with the teacher the next time you have a lesson.
- . Drink plenty of fluid while you are revising. It is best just to drink water. This will help keep you fresher for longer, so you will be able to learn more. Try to steer clear of tea and coffee; these will give you a boost for a short time, but will hinder your concentration skills.



. Find out the best time of the day for revision for you - when you are most alert. Study at this time.

. If you don't understand something that you have to know, then go and ask questions. It does not make you look weak if you do not know the answer. There are unlikely to be revision classes at Y6 / Y7 level but do ask your friends or family for help if any bits confuse you.

. If you have any particular problems, do not keep them bottled up. Confiding in someone you trust will do wonders for your confidence.

. Always keep positive. If you find that your mood is slipping because of revision, be nice to yourself. Don't beat yourself up because you haven't revised all you need to, or you can't recall an answer. Instead, make a quick list of five things you have done that you are proud of. This will improve your mood, and you will learn more.

. If you feel like you are starting to lose it and the studying is overwhelming you, take a bit of time out. Breathe deeply, tell yourself how well you are doing, remind yourself that everything will turn out OK, and it sounds stupid, but stand up, and smile. You are guaranteed to feel better straight away!

. Learn to use and develop your planning skills. Work backwards from your exam dates to plan out what you will do, when and how much. Little and often is better than leaving it all to the last minute.

. Do not do lots of revision the night before the exam - this is called cramming. If you do, it is most likely that you will forget much of the information. Try to spread your revision over a number of weeks, because this will help the information sink in more and will help you to remember it in your exam. Students who cram may pass the exam but they don't retain the material in their memory for very long. If you were doing a dance routine you wouldn't start practising an hour before the event, so avoid cramming for an exam.

. The night before your exam, make sure you have a relaxing evening, doing only a little revision. Find something relaxing before you go to bed, get a good night's sleep, and try your best not to worry; you have already done all your revision anyway! On the day, make sure you have plenty of time to get ready, have a good breakfast and arrive at school in plenty of time.

. As you get older you will find what works for you, learn other helpful tips and gain confidence about how to cope with preparing for events like exams. Treat these internal exams as part of learning. The more you do them the better you will get. Exams are a test of character so believe in yourself.



## Practical Information about the Internal Examinations

- . You will be sitting your end of year exams in May in the week before the summer half term break.
- . Your normal time-table will be suspended for about a week so that you can take all the exams together within that week.
- . Each student will receive an exam time-table a few weeks beforehand.
- . Each of your subject teachers will probably outline details of the exam format in their subject in the lessons leading up to the exams.
- . Normally you will take all your exams in your form room. Your Form Teacher will probably talk to you about exam rules in the days leading up to the exams. Most of these are common sense.
- . Arrive on time and have all of your equipment.
- . You must take the exams seriously and follow completely the instructions given to you by the supervising member of staff.
- . Different teachers will come into the room to supervise. They may not be your normal subject teacher. For example, your Mathematics exam might be supervised by a French teacher.
- . The teacher will give you relevant instructions but will probably not have specific subject information.
- . Sometimes you will have time for private revision BEFORE the exam starts so make sure you have some revision notes or a relevant subject book with you.
- . You might be sitting quite close to another student but avoid looking at their work.
- . You will probably be sitting in alphabetical order.
- . If you finish the exam early, check your work carefully. You must wait patiently until the member of staff has said the exam has finished AND has collected in the papers.
- . If you have something to say, you must raise your hand and wait until the member of staff comes to you.
- . You will not be allowed to read books or study material until the member of staff has collected in all the exam papers. So there is no point rushing to finish early.



## Top Tips for Exam Success !

- . On the day of an exam, relax and clear your mind of all negative thoughts.
- . Just think positive thoughts - I have worked hard and prepared well. I can only do my best and I will do very well.
- . Make sure that you have all the necessary equipment that you need (clear pencil case, pens, pencil, calculator & spare batteries, ruler, etc.).
- . Check the instructions on the front page. Check how much time is there for the exam. Check how many questions you have to answer.
- . If you get stuck on a question, don't waste time on it - move on and come back to it later if you can.
- . If your mind 'goes blank' just start jotting down ideas on paper.
- . Check to see how many marks each bit is worth. Don't write huge chunks for one-mark questions, you won't get any extra marks.
- . If a question is worth two marks, you probably need to say two different things. (Not say the same thing twice!).
- . Allow more time for questions that have a higher mark value.
- . Underline 'key words' in questions, for example compare, describe, explain.
- . Use diagrams if this explains your view.
- . Read each question carefully. Each year thousands of people lose marks because they rushed into an answer before they'd understood what the question was actually asking.
- . Keep on checking that you are answering the question.
- . Keep your work neat so that the examiner can read your writing.
- . Keep an eye on the time.
- . Don't worry about what other students are doing.
- . Try to allow time to proof-read at the end.



## Revision Techniques

When you're revising, the trick is to be **active**. That means not simply reading your books and hoping that it'll sink in, but actually doing something with the information. But what should I actually do? That's what the next section on revision techniques is all about.

Some of these ideas work for most people, most of the time. However, everybody is different and **YOU** need to figure out what works for **YOU**. By trying out different revision techniques **NOW** you will see what works best for you before the important external exams later on in your school life. Even if you have found a revision technique that seems to work for you, try some of the other ones. If you experiment with the different techniques suggested, revision will be more fun and enable you to concentrate for longer. It may also help you understand the topic and subject more. You may, for instance, find one method that works better for Maths than for French and not all the suggestions will be suitable for all subjects.

### So what kind of learner am I?

There are many ways to revise and learn, and as mentioned before, **you** need to find out what works best for **you**.

Many people remember things **visually** - in other words, they remember a **picture** of what they saw when they read the page. If you're one of these people, try writing notes or equations onto one piece of paper and then colouring them in, adding curly bits, trees, animals and anything else that makes it stick in your mind. Then look it over once a day, and notice the shapes on the paper, maybe colour in a bit more; in the exam you'll find that you can "see" the paper and remember what was there. If this is you, you're likely to find "spidergrams or mind maps" really helpful techniques.

Or maybe your mind works more on **auditory** recall - you remember **sounds**. If this is you, and you like to have music playing when you work, try noticing what music is playing when you revise each bit, and this ought to help you remember the stuff you're revising. Say things out loud, perhaps record your voice and listen to it later. Or you could get adventurous and make up songs or rhymes to help you remember

Other people remember "**kinaesthetically**" - they remember the **muscle movements** they made when they did something. So write things out on a sheet of paper, cut it out to make a jigsaw, then sort it out. Practice your jigsaw each evening - with practice it'll only take a minute or so. In the exam, cast your mind back to that jigsaw, and the stuff should come flooding back. If this is you, then **moving around** as you work may help you to remember, as

will any kind of cutting-and-sticking. If you play a musical instrument, you could combine the muscle movements and the sound to recall ideas, just as you did when you learned to play the instrument.

Other people are better at recalling **feelings**. If you're somebody who is particularly aware of how people around you are feeling, or particularly aware of how you're feeling yourself, then use this to help you recall the stuff you need for exams: *"...oh yes, I remember that - it was in the lesson when xxxx was upset because of what yyyy said..."* - make a point of noticing at the time, but not at the expense of paying attention to the work in the lesson! When revising History for example, think about how Anne Boleyn might have felt about the way Henry VIII treated her.

So which type of mind do you think you have? You're most likely to be a mixture of all of these, but by picking out a few of these ideas that you like the sound of, you can make life much easier.

So what does work? Studies of students revising over many years have shown that the really most effective techniques are:

. **Testing Yourself** and

. **Spreading out your revision over a long period of time.**

This is because the student is more engaged and it is harder for the mind to wander. Other techniques include:

### **On-line.**

There are many on-line revision sites such as [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/). There are also many sites that deal with specific subjects such as French that can be found by using a search engine or asking a teacher. Some of these can be fun as well as educational. However, be careful that if you are going to use these for revision, only revise the parts you need to.

### **Revision Books.**

There are many revision guides and books that can be bought at bookshops and newsagents. These can be useful but what you have studied at school may not be the same as in the books. So if you have some or are intending to get some, please look at them carefully and compare the content with what you have actually studied.

### **Work Out "What could they ask me about this?"**

For example, if you are revising Acids and Alkalis in Year 7 Chemistry, it's a safe bet that you'll be expected to know about the numbers on the pH scale, the colours that Universal Indicator goes, and what "neutralisation" means. So practise writing out the pH scale and adding the correct colours of the U.I. paper.



## **Progress Tests.**

If you have done progress tests during the year, look carefully at them, re-try the questions and study carefully what you had to do to get full marks.

## **Remind Yourself Over and Over.**

If you revise something tonight, by this time tomorrow you'll have forgotten at least some of it. So take another quick look at it tomorrow to "top up" your memory. Take another quick look next week, and keep "topping up" until the night before the exam. This doesn't take long to do and is usually quite comforting - you feel good because you find that the stuff looks familiar each time you look at it.

## **"Look, Cover, Write, Check"**

This is probably the way that you learned spellings in Primary School.

- 1) read it,
- 2) hide it away,
- 3) write it out,
- 4) check to see if you got it right.

This technique is good for spellings, diagrams, equations, lists of facts and a whole lot more.

## **Remembering Labelled Diagrams.**

Draw a copy of the diagram - but without the labels. Then try to fill in the labels from memory.

## **Highlighting.**

Go through your books highlighting key words / key ideas. Not only does this make it easier to revise later, but the act of scanning through your books looking for the key stuff helps you to remember it. (Might be an idea to ask your teachers first, before you do this to your exercise books, but if you explain why they'll almost certainly be delighted that you're getting on with your revision).

## **Identify Your Strong and Weak Areas.**

By doing this you'll know where to concentrate your efforts. Go through your books and put green blobs beside stuff that you're happy about and red blobs beside the bits you find more difficult. Then you know what to concentrate on when revising in more detail.

## **Make Summaries of the Information.**

For example, try to get the whole topic onto one side of A4 paper. It's the act of making the sheet which fixes the information in your mind. You might like to use "spidergrams" (more details later) - they really help to show what's in a topic.



## Work with Somebody Else.

There's an old saying: "the best way to learn is to teach". Try it! If you can explain stuff to somebody else, then you know that you've got it straight yourself.

## Make Your Own "Cue Cards" .

These are small cards (typically 10 cm x 5 cm) which you can write important facts and information. You can buy index cards in any good newsagent that will be a convenient size. Business cards are also good. You could put headings on one side and details on the other. Alternatively you could write French words on one side and the English translation on the other. You can also list definitions and rules you need to know. The idea is to carry these cards with you and look at them when you have a spare moment (in the queue at the supermarket, break times, on the bus - there's no limit).

You can also use them as visual reminders, use numbers, different writing styles, drawings, lists, highlighters and different coloured pens. You can also ask friends or family to test you on the cards. You could read them aloud, record yourself and listen back to them - it is up to you!

Below is an example of two cue cards used to recall capital cities of European countries.

### Cue Card 1 (Front)

Q: What are the capital cities of:

1. Sweden?
2. Germany?
3. Finland?
4. Switzerland?
5. Austria?

### Cue Card 2 (Back)

A: Capital cities

1. Stockholm
2. Berlin
3. Helsinki
4. Bern
5. Vienna

## Key Words Post-its.

A useful way to memorise information is to write a list of KEY WORDS and then tell yourself all the details that go with those key words. These can be written onto Post-it notes which can be posted around your room. For example, you may be revising Music composers and their work. You could write the names of each composer on a Post-it (Mozart, Ravel, Britten, Gershwin) and tell yourself details such as dates of birth, country of origin, symphonies, concertos, operas and songs written, most famous pieces of music etc.



## Mnemonics.

A mnemonic is a word or a rhyme that helps you to remember a fact or a spelling. The first letter acts a memory prompt.

Here is an example:

1. The colours of the rainbow.

**R**ichard **O**f **Y**ork **G**ave **B**attle **I**n **V**ain

Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet

## Acronyms.

Acronyms are a useful way of remembering important information or condensing key facts about a topic. You use the first letter of the key words or names of the topic to create a word or words that you will then remember. For example, in Geography you could use the acronym ANA'S PIE to remember the tectonic plates that float on the earth's mantle:

**A**frica, **N**orth America, **A**ntarctica, **S**outh America, **P**acific, **I**ndo-Australia, **E**urasia.

So if you are studying a piece of information you'd like to memorise, see if you can make up an acronym to help.

## Asking Questions.

In order to learn faster and improve your understanding of a topic, you can ask questions. Here is an example for the History topic 'The Great Fire of London'.

1. **WHO** started it?
2. **WHERE** exactly did the Great Fire start?
3. **HOW** far did it spread?
4. **WHEN** did it start and when did it end?
5. **WHY** did the fire do so much damage to London?
6. **WHAT** happened to London and the people after the fire?

## Rhymes.

You are more likely to remember the words of a song or a poem rather than a paragraph from a book. That's because rhymes often stick in your mind. You can use this 'sticking power' by making up a verse about the topic you are revising, for example remembering the number of days in each month.

30 days have September, April, June and November.

All the rest have 31, except for February alone.

When leap year comes once in four, February then has one day more.



## Make "Jigsaws"

List things on a sheet of paper, **cut** the paper up, **jumble** it, then **sort** it out. For example in Biology write down the different parts of the body involved in digestion and what they do.

### Body Part                  Function

Mouth	grinds up the food
Oesophagus	connects the mouth to the stomach
Stomach	adds acid to the food to break it down
Duodenum	connects the stomach to the small intestine
Liver	makes bile to break down fats
Small Intestine	absorbs nutrients into the bloodstream for transport around the body
Large Intestine	recovers water from the digested food
Rectum	waste is stored here, ready to leave the body
Anus	waste leaves the body

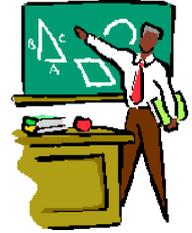
This works for Kings, Queens and dates, who did what in a play, and much more.

Note: the important thing about this is not that you have it - it's the act of making and using it that does the job!

### Annotations.

For poems, you could photocopy it, enlarge and stick them on large paper and annotate it in different colours for content, and various ideas. For books and plays, chapter or scene synopses can be useful (4 points will do).

This can also be useful if you own your textbooks - you can highlight key points and ignore the waffle if you're struggling and write down helpful notes on how to remember things.

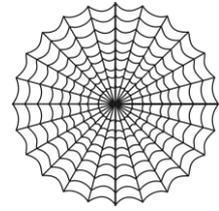


## Timelines.

Timelines can be helpful - especially for History. They are invaluable for making sense of a series of events, because you can trace improvements, factors etc. Pin them up in your room or on the loo wall! For example cut out the dates below and put the correct period of British history above it.

Modern Britain Including World War 2 	Anglo-Saxon Britain 	Pre-historic Britain 	Medieval Britain Normans 	Stuart Britain 
<b>BC</b>	<b>1714</b>	<b>793</b>	<b>1837</b>	<b>1485</b>
<b>450</b>	<b>1066</b>	<b>1603</b>	<b>1902+</b>	<b>43AD</b>

Roman Britain 	Victorian Britain 	Tudor Britain 	Viking Britain 	Georgian Britain 
---	--	--	---	---



## Spidergram.

Spidergrams are an excellent tool for creating an overview of a topic or idea and remembering it crisply. For essay writing in particular, there's nothing like having at your disposal a bird's-eye view of the subject matter at hand. You want to be able swiftly to look over all that could be said and pick out the most relevant parts.

For example you would write the title in the middle and all the points you want to cover in spokes radiating from the centre. If you had to write about what you could do with money, here is what a spidergram might look like:



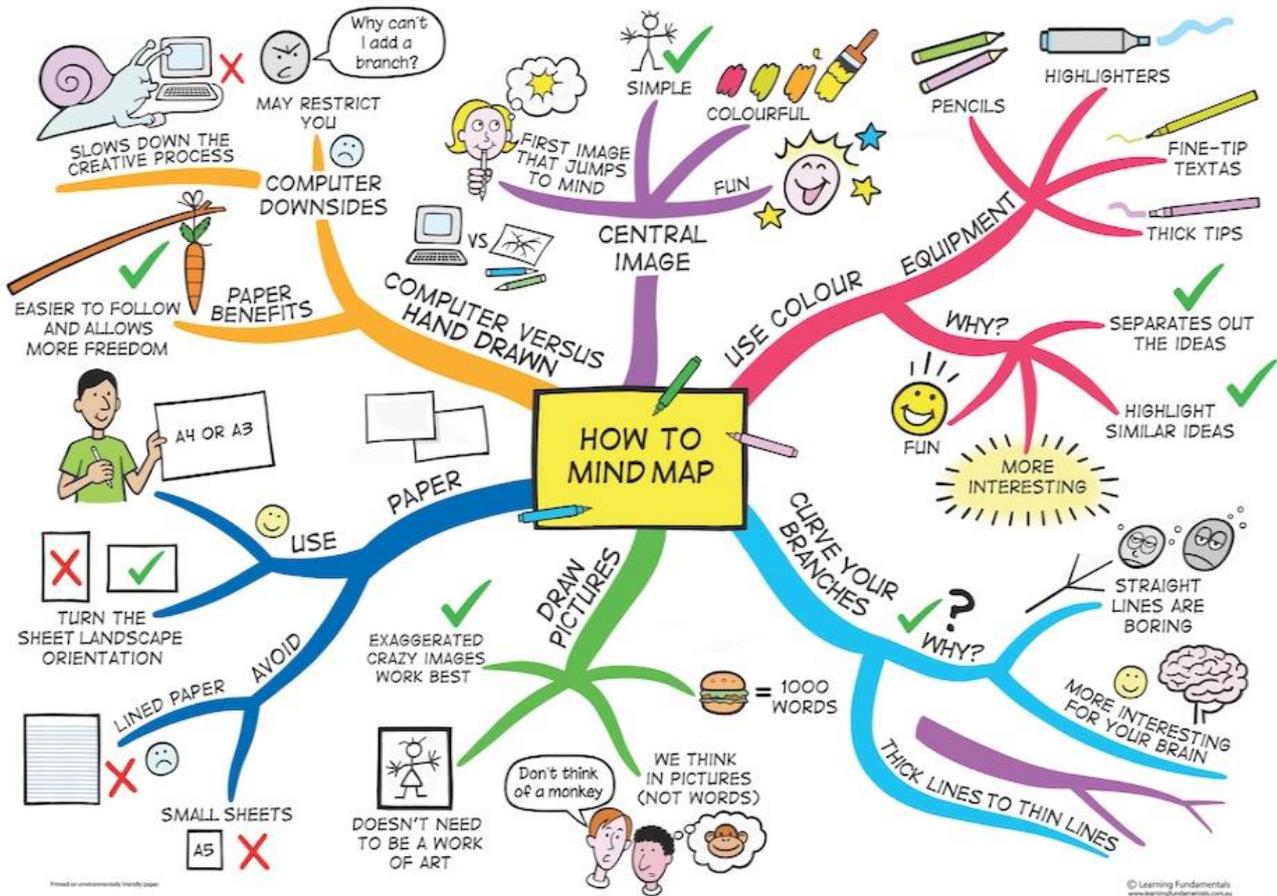
## Mind Maps.

Mind maps are similar to spidergrams but often have more information, use colour and have images rather than just words or phrases. Mind mapping is a very visual form of note taking and encourages students to begin with a central idea and expand outward to more in-depth sub-topics. You can make them as simple or as complicated as you want.

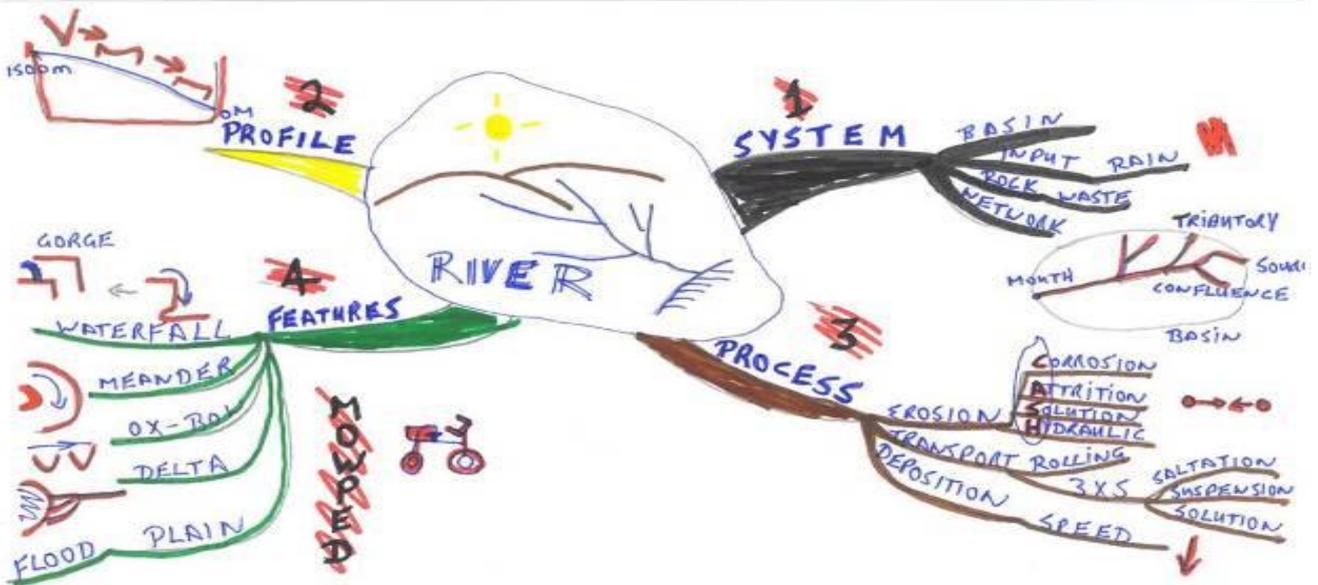
## How to Mind Map

Start with a large blank piece of paper (A3 is a good size) and then create an image or write a word that represents the main idea of the topic that you want to mind map in the centre of the page. From that main idea, create branches (as many as needed), that each represent a single word that relates to the main topic. Then, create sub-branches that stem from the main branches to further expand on ideas and concepts. These sub-branches will also contain words that elaborate on the topic of the branch it stems from. Including images and sketches can also be helpful to remember the sub-branch topics. Using different colours to represent different themes is also useful. The whole idea is to make it interesting and memorable so that when you have to answer a question on the topic you will 'see in your mind's eye' the mind map of the topic. As this might seem complicated, some typical mind maps are shown next. Experiment and try it out!

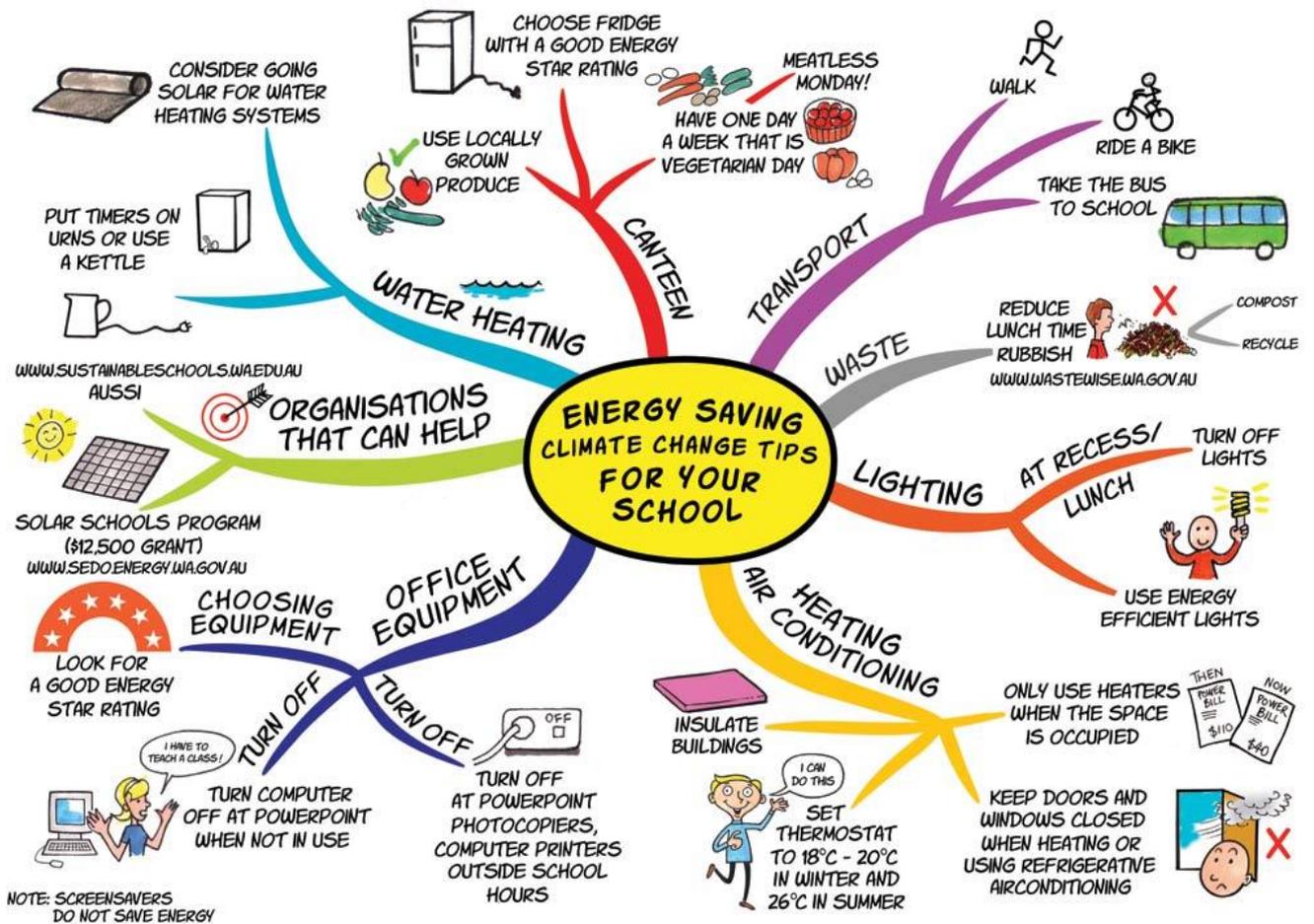
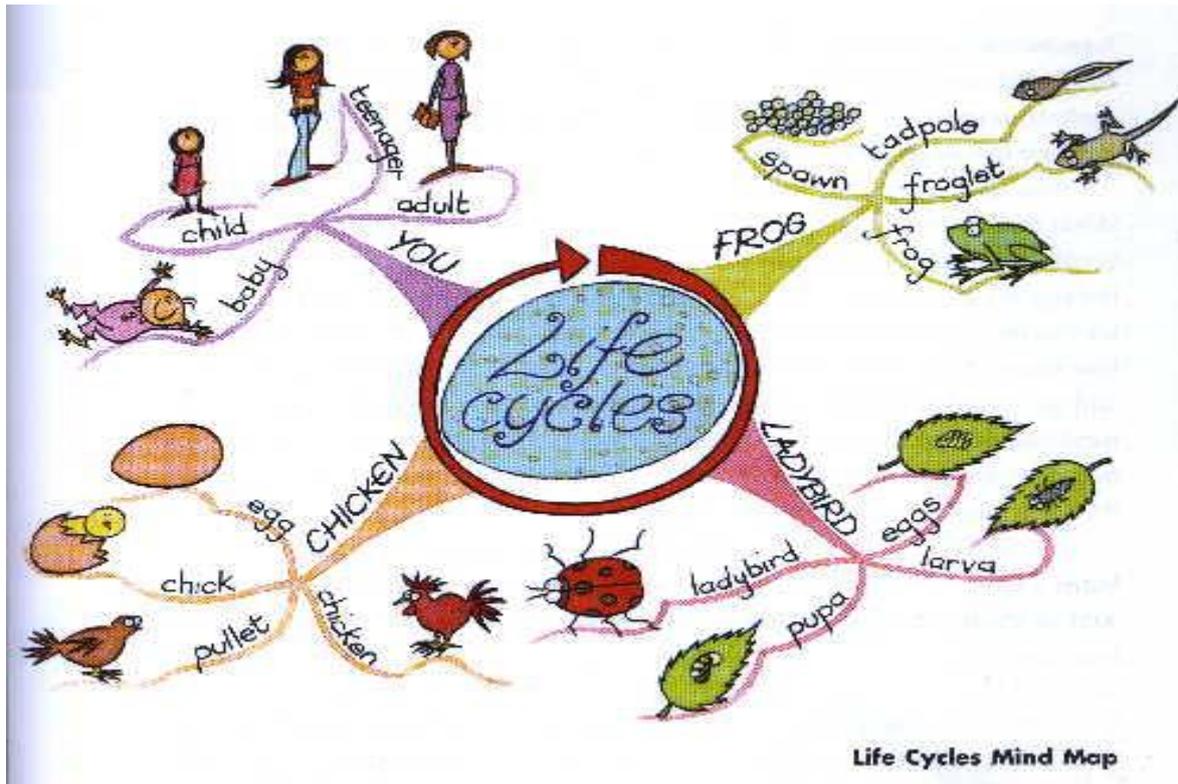
## Here is a mind map of how to mind map

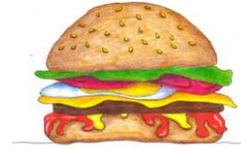


## Below is mind map of the main themes for the Geography topic of Rivers



# Mind Map of Life Cycles and Energy Saving





## The Burger Plan.

You can use a 'burger plan' to plan out an essay and then memorise this plan ready for an exam. The Plan is normally in 3 parts, an introduction, the middle bits with all the information and the third part that will involve a conclusion.

For example if you were preparing to write an essay on "Why eat healthy food?"

1. Introduction: The need to eat healthy to avoid diseases and obesity;
2. Middle Bits: What is a healthy diet? Low fat, lean meat, fish oils, vegetables and fruits x5, low salt.  
Consequences of an unhealthy diet - illness, less energy, hospital costs.  
Consequences of a healthy diet - less stress, less illness, happier life, live longer.
3. Conclusion: What I think? - You should opt for a healthy diet for a healthy future and a longer life.

## Constructing a Balanced Written Argument

Using this format might help you to remember the different points when you are writing about a topic:

The Arguments For:	Topic:	The Arguments Against:
	My Personal Opinion:	

## Mini Revision Booklet

Take the topic heading for your subject and a few pieces of paper and then attempt to write concise summaries containing key information under each. This is a useful way to see what you know and create a resource that is easy to understand. It is important that this is done completely from memory towards the end of your revision. Points you miss out can be put in an appendix section called 'points to remember'. Don't forget you're not writing a book - this should use up no more than 10 A4 sheets (both sides)

