

Mr C's Revision Hints for S1-3

There are basically three aspects of preparing for a physics exam, outlined below. Most people don't work smoothly through these but mix and match for different parts of their course, possibly working back over areas they have had difficulty with.

It is good practise to organise your study and more effective to have lots of small chunks rather than many hours on one topic. This helps avoid your brain getting tired and mixing up different ideas. The exact size of the chunks is up to you but I would suggest a minimum of twenty minutes and a maximum of an hour.

PLEASE COME AND SEE YOUR TEACHER IF YOU NEED ANY HELP.

Basic Understanding

1. Work your way through the course checking that you understand the basic concepts. Write summaries in your own words as this makes phase 2 (Learning Work) much easier. The most successful students do this every night after class while it is still fresh in their mind.
2. Writing in your own words really forces you to clarify your thoughts and gives a much deeper understanding. You would be amazed at how many teachers comment on the fact that they didn't really understand something until they explained it to someone else. If it helps, discuss the ideas with someone else.
3. If you identify anything you are unsure about check the book or online resources. If you are still unsure ask your teacher.
4. You can use the Learning Outcomes or the "Target Setting" documents available on Myrtle to make sure you have covered the course, as well as to identify strengths and weaknesses which need particular attention.
5. You can ask your teacher to check over your summaries for accuracy and to give you an idea if they are detailed enough.
6. Reattempt the homework and tutorial questions relevant to the area you have just studied. Once again this reinforces the basic ideas as well as helping you check your understanding.

Learning Work

1. This tends to be the bit of exam preparation that people gloss over most of all because it involves repetitive exercises to get your brain to remember everything it needs to. There is no “quick fix” for this it requires time and effort.
2. Your brain is bombarded every day with information (adverts, road signs, notices etc.) and most of it is stored in short term memory. You need to give your brain a clear signal that what it is learning needs to be remembered. **SIMPLY READING OVER NOTES DOES NOT DO THIS.** Psychologists reckon you’ll remember 10 to 20% of what you read – nowhere near enough!
3. Unfortunately everyone learns in a different way and you will need to experiment a bit to find what works best for you. For many repeated writing out of their summary notes tends to help but other strategies are repeated speaking out, taping yourself and playing back (possibly when asleep!), discussing with someone else or getting them to test you. Some people prefer to do this in a comfortable seat; others like to pace up and down! For most a combination of methods works best.
4. If your summaries are written in your own words they are much more likely to make sense to you and to “stick”.

Exam Technique

1. Ask your teacher if you can look over your previous test papers to see where your strengths and weaknesses lie.
2. Use the second page of the “Target Setting” Documents to analyse your mistakes and see if there is a pattern to them. You can then try and eliminate the most common problems first or seek advice.