



# Effective Learning Strategies:

## Spaced Practice

Much research has been carried out to find the most effective learning strategies. Just because they are effective doesn't mean that they are easy! In fact, you may find some of these strategies quite difficult to implement consistently. However, it is partly because they are challenging that they are so effective, so don't give up.

Research has shown that **SPACED PRACTICE** is far more effective for long-term retention of information than cramming. Whilst cramming for a test may work in the short term, i.e. if you have a test tomorrow, it is not going to help you retain that information for any future tests. This is problematic because it means test scores for individual tests might not be reflective of what you might achieve in your final exams where cramming is unlikely to be successful due to the volume of information you will need to revise.

### What is SPACED PRACTICE?

**SPACED PRACTICE** is essentially learning materials over an extended period of time.

Rather than cramming your revision in like this:

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19 3hrs revision	20 <i>TEST!!!</i>	21	22

With **SPACED PRACTICE**, It should look more like this:

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
9	10 30mins revision	11	12 30mins revision	13	14	15 30mins revision
16 30mins revision	17 30mins revision	18	19 30mins revision	20 <i>TEST!!!</i>	21	22

Doing the same amount of revision over a longer period of time will not only help you perform well on your end of module tests, but also will mean you have less revision to do later because you will have retained the information better. Like with learning a musical instrument, learning subject

material takes sustained practice over a long period of time. If you want to keep being able to play the musical instrument well in the future, you have to practice little and often.

How do I implement SPACED PRACTICE?

**Step 1:** Use your planner and timetable to identify times in the week you could work on your subjects. This could be during study periods, after school, or at weekends. Make sure you have considered your other commitments like clubs, employment, family time, etc...

**Step 2:** Plot what subjects you will study, when, and for how long. For example:

	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri
Period 1	Biology	French	30mins Bio	Geography	French
Period 2	Biology	Geography	30mins Geog	Geography	
Period 3	30mins French 30mins Geog	30mins French	French	30mins Bio	Biology
Period 4	30mins Bio	Biology	French	French	30mins Geog 30mins French
Period 5	Geography		Biology	30mins Geog 30mins French	30mins Bio

**Step 3:** If this is your first time following your schedule, at the end of the week make a record of what you have achieved. Reflect on how you used your time – what did you manage to get done? What times worked well? What times didn't work so well?

**Step 4:** Make any necessary adjustments to your schedule. If you have identified a time that doesn't work well for you then that's good, change it! It is important to remain flexible and there may be some weeks where you find it more difficult to stick to your plan. Perhaps there is a family wedding or you need to step your swim practice for an upcoming gala. If you can foresee any potential obstacles, then you can plan for them and make the necessary adjustments to your schedule.

**A Final Note:**

This is a difficult learning strategy to implement consistently. Not least because planning for the future is hard. Much educational research, however, shows that it is one of the most effective strategies for learning. Give it a go for yourself and don't beat yourself up if it doesn't go perfectly first time!