**Technique: Lesson Summaries**

*This can be a useful for two reasons: 1. It helps you figure out which bits of the lesson you didn’t quite understand and 2. It’s a good way of reminding yourself what the lesson was about. Your brain remembers information much better if you revisit it ‘little and often’ rather than trying to cram everything in at the last minute (i.e. a week before the exam!) or trying to untangle something while you’re in the process of completing a project.*

*At the end of each day, take a sheet of blank A4 (or A3 if you like to work big!) paper for each of your lessons and write down as much as you can remember in as much detail as you can from each lesson. Then go back to your notes and in a* ***different colour pen*** *add anything to your sheet which you didn’t include first time round. Write a list of questions about anything you don’t understand – you can ask your teacher these questions in the next lesson.*

**Technique: Understand the Specification**

*Whether you’re studying for A-level, GCSE’s or BTECs, there’s always a set criteria of information you need to know, or tasks you need to complete. Get hold of this piece of paper and don’t lose it – it’s a how-to manual on how to get top marks. You wouldn’t go somewhere new without checking Google Maps to tell you how to get there, this specification will do exactly the same thing.*

*Spend time going through the specification and after each lesson, check what you’ve learned or what criteria you’ve fulfilled in that session. This will help you to highlight any gaps in your knowledge and have a better idea of what the exam board is looking for.*

**Technique: Make Use Of Your Spare Time – Part 1**

*The brain is much better at remembering things in short bursts then it is if you try and fit loads of information in there at once – so it’s much more efficient to create a system where you can easily return to your notes for short periods at a time. Recording a summary of each lesson into your phone or MP3 player at the end of each day will mean you always have those notes to hand when you’re on the bus, waiting for a friend or have a spare 5 minutes before going out. It might seem like 5 minutes here and there won’t have much of an effect – but you’d be surprised how much it can all add up over the course of a year.*

**Technique: Read Someone Else’s Work**

*Whether you’re studying for A-Level, GCSE’s or BTECs, being able to improve your work is a vital learning skill. A good way of improving your own work is to see what other people have written. If you’ve been set and essay, try and read 2 or 3 other essays before handing it in – you may find that you pick up some tips on structure, vocabulary or writing style that you can incorporate into your own work. If you’re working on an ongoing project, stop at various points and take the time to consider the different angles others have used to complete the same task. What good ideas have they had that you could use too?*

***Be warned:*** *While learning from others is an excellent way to improving your marks,* ***copying*** *others will bring no benefit to yourself and- if you’re caught – could jeopardise your mark for the whole subject.*

**Technique: Make Use of Your Spare Time – Part 2**

*Mind-maps are a tried and tested way of studying and they allow you to be very creative. You can use colour to highlight key points or make links between different concepts. Drawing pictures can act as memory ‘hooks’ (reminders) of key points.*

*At the end of each day, create a mind map summary of each of the lessons; or condense each lesson down onto flashcards. The mind maps you can put up around your room (and anywhere else your parents will let you display them) in places where you often stand (e.g. in front of the mirror, on your wardrobe door etc.). Seeing the information on a regular basis will help you to remember it in the long run. Flashcards can be carried with you for the odd 5 minutes that you find yourself left with throughout the day. Reading through just a couple in this time will make a huge difference to the amount you remember when exam time comes around.*

**Technique: Practice Past Questions**

*It may seem like every teacher is telling you to do this, but there’s a good reason for it – it works! There are only a certain number of exam questions that can be asked and a certain number of* ***skills*** *that you’ll need to employ to answer them correctly – so get practicing! You can use them alongside the mark scheme to practice phrasing your answers clearly, or you can use them to test yourself and then mark them with the mark scheme as well – always noting down anything you should have included to get the full marks. The more you answer, the more confident you can be when you walk into the exam room.*

*At the end of each day, set yourself one exam question that relates to each of the lessons you’ve had that day. Can you answer it? Spend some time planning your answer before you have a go. If you get stuck, write down what you don’t understand so you can clarify it with your teach in the next lesson.*

**Technique: Form a Study Group**

*Some people work much better with others than they do by themselves, and study groups (when run properly) can be very effective in raising grades. Find a group of people who you work well with (these might not be the friends you like to chat with) and arrange a time each week to get together and share notes and ideas. Organise a ‘focus’ for each session in advance so that you don’t waste time on the day deciding what to study. It could be a recent topic that you covered in lessons or a particular section of a report that you need to work on.*

**Technique: Understand the mark scheme**

*Whether you’re studying A-Level, GCSE or BTEC, your work will be assessed according to a set of criteria created by the exam board. Knowing what this criteria i a bit like looking at the answers – it tells you exactly what the exam board expects to see for each question or section. Sometimes mark schemes will use technical or unfamiliar language – don’t be put off by this. It’s worth taking the time to understand it, or asking someone to explain it to you, so you know exactly what you have to do to get the best marks possible.*

**Technique: Make a study plan**

*When you’ve got a lot of tasks to complete by a certain date that’s a long way in the future, it can be tempting to leave them all to the last minute – thinking you’ve got loads of time. This never leads to the best results and often leads to huge amounts of stress close to the deadlines. Create a timetabled plan and decide what you’re going to do when.*

*At the beginning of each week, pencil into your diary exactly which bit of work you intend to focus on for each evening – be strict with yourself about keeping to your schedule but allow it to be flexible in case you need more or less time on a particular topic.*

*If you stick to your study plan throughout the year, you’ll find the deadlines aren’t stressful and you might even have enough time to go back over your work and improve it further – getting an even higher mark.*

**Technique: Prioritise**

*You’ll often find you’ve been given a lot of work to complete at one time – but it won’t all be due in at the same time, so learn to prioritise the assignments you have. Make a list each morning or evening of the things that need to be done – in deadline order. Then work through them in that order. It might be tempting to pick your favourite subject first (or the easiest assignment!) that’s not due in for another 2 weeks, but that won’t help you if you have a deadline looming for a different project in 2 days time*

**Technique: Know when you’re going to be busy**

*Deadlines aren’t sprung on you at the last minute – most of the time you’ll be told far in advance important dates in which coursework, projects or assignments will need to be in by. So plan for that. Remember that over those deadlines you’ll still have other work to complete and other commitments – and it’s not an acceptable to let one subject slip just because you have a deadline for another.*

*So find out at the beginning of the year when the deadlines are and plan your other work around it. If you have a bit of ‘downtime’ in that subject, use it to make sure you’re fully up to date in your others, so when the work starts to pile on, you’re not struggling later.*

*If you do feel that workload is going to be a problem, talk to your teachers about it in advance and negotiate further support or an extension (teachers can’t help you if they don’t know there’s a problem). And don’t leave it until the day you’re supposed to be handing work in.*

**Technique: Don’t waste your time**

*Think of the school day as a working day – you have scheduled slots for break and lunch where you can relax and catch up with friends, the rest of your time should be spent studying.*

*It’s easy to time through indecision, procrastination or disorganisation, so be strict with yourself. Choose where you’re going to study after school. Excuses for not studying are rarely valid and once you’re in the habit of doing it, it will become a lot easier.*