

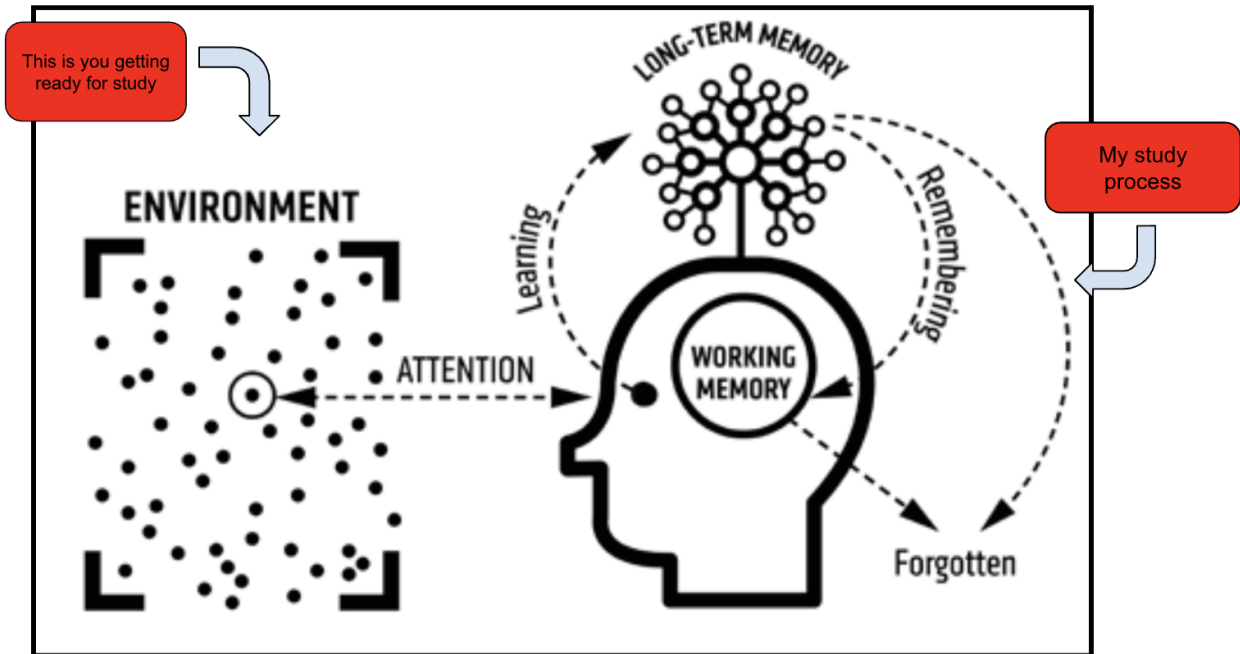
Mount Albert Grammar School



STUDY GUIDE

Part A - Know Yourself

HOW MY BRAIN LEARNS: 'learning is memory'



How you learn:

Learning is effectively using your working memory (WM) to encode information that you take through your senses. The brain then stores this information in your long-term memory (LTM) in a way that you can retrieve it when you need it.

Cognitive overload:

Your WM has a very limited capacity (5-9 pieces of information) and in a classroom or during study, it can be 'overloaded'.

If too much comes in at once (cognitive overload), your brain can't store it, and you won't remember it later. Memory relies on regular 'retrieval' and 're-membering' to be useful when you need it.

To learn well, you need to:

- Avoid overloading your **working memory (WM)**
- Get important info into **long-term memory (LTM)**

Study Style Questionnaire

This questionnaire will help you identify your strengths and discover strategies to thrive in your learning journey.

Instructions:

For each question, choose the option that best describes you. Tally your results at the end to reveal your Study Style Profile and personalised suggestions for improvement.

Study Style Questionnaire

Question No.	Question	Answer Options
1.	When do you usually prefer to study?	A. Early in the morning, when it's quiet B. After school/work, once I've had time to settle C. Late at night — I'm more focused then D. Random times when I feel motivated
2.	What's your ideal study environment?	A. A silent room with no distractions B. Background music or ambient noise helps me focus C. With others — I like bouncing ideas around D. I move around — different places help keep it interesting
3.	How do you usually take in new information?	A. By reading or writing notes B. By watching videos or diagrams C. By explaining it out loud or discussing it D. By doing something hands-on or practicing it physically
4.	What describes your study planning style?	A. I make detailed plans with time slots B. I have a rough weekly schedule C. I usually just go with the flow D. I cram when I feel the pressure
5.	What's your biggest challenge when studying?	A. Procrastination — I delay starting B. Staying focused — I get distracted easily C. Retaining information — I forget what I've learned D. Staying motivated — I don't always see the point

Question No.	Question	Answer Options
6.	What motivates you most to study?	A. Achieving good results B. Meeting deadlines or accountability C. Curiosity and genuine interest D. Avoiding negative consequences
7.	How do you handle long or boring topics?	A. I break them into chunks and schedule breaks B. I try to make them more engaging with visuals or games C. I talk them through with someone D. I struggle and often skip or delay them
8.	What best describes your note-taking habits?	A. Neat, organised notes with summaries B. Colour-coded or diagram-heavy notes C. I prefer audio recordings or talking through topics D. I don't take many notes — I prefer doing things
9.	How do you prepare for tests or assignments?	A. I revise regularly and start early B. I review a few days before and use flashcards or notes C. I talk about the content with friends or explain aloud D. I often leave it until the last minute
10.	What type of success makes you feel most accomplished?	A. A high grade or teacher praise B. Understanding a difficult topic C. Helping someone else understand D. Finishing something I didn't think I could

Scoring guide

Count how many times you chose each letter (A, B, C, D).

Mostly A – The Planner Studier

Description: You thrive with structure, organisation, and routine. You are likely disciplined and prefer to have a clear roadmap for your studies.

Tools & Strategies: Schedules, checklists, productivity trackers, detailed note-taking, regular revision, and early preparation are your best tools. You benefit from setting clear goals and breaking down large tasks into manageable chunks.

Mostly B – The Visual/Creative Studier

Description: You learn best with color, design, diagrams, and flexibility. Visual cues and creative approaches help you grasp and retain information more effectively.

Tools & Strategies: Use mind maps, videos, infographics, color-coded notes, and spaced repetition apps. Incorporate drawings, charts, and visual aids into your study materials. Turning information into stories or visuals can also be very helpful.

Mostly C – The Social/Verbal Studier

Description: You process knowledge by talking, teaching, and debating. Interacting with others and verbalising concepts solidify your understanding.

Tools & Strategies: Study groups, verbal summaries, podcasts, and explaining concepts aloud help you thrive. Engage in discussions, teach topics to friends, or record yourself explaining difficult subjects. Creating and participating in quizzes with peers can also be effective.

Mostly D – The Intuitive/Hands-On Studier

Description: You need movement, stimulation, or real-life applications to learn effectively. You prefer to learn by doing and experiencing.

Tools & Strategies: Try active recall, practical tasks, experiments, simulations, or walking while reviewing notes. Incorporate physical activity into your study routine. Relating concepts to real-world scenarios or building models can significantly enhance your understanding.



The Planner Studier

You thrive with structure, organisation, and routine. You're disciplined and prefer clear roadmaps for your studies.

Essential Tools

Schedules

Checklists

Trackers

Detailed Notes

Regular Revision

Early Prep

Key Strategies

- ✓ Set clear, measurable goals for each study session
- ✓ Break large assignments into smaller, manageable chunks
- ✓ Create detailed weekly and monthly study schedules
- ✓ Use productivity apps to track your progress
- ✓ Review and adjust your plans regularly



The Visual/Creative Studier

You learn best with colour, design, and diagrams. Visual cues and creative approaches help you grasp information effectively.

Essential Tools

Mind Maps

Videos

Infographics

Colour Coding

Spaced Rep Apps

Visual Aids

Key Strategies

- ✓ Create colorful mind maps for complex topics
- ✓ Use different colors for different subjects or concepts
- ✓ Turn information into visual stories or diagrams
- ✓ Watch educational videos and documentaries
- ✓ Draw illustrations to explain difficult concepts



The Social/Verbal Studier

You process knowledge by talking, teaching, and debating. Verbalising concepts solidifies your understanding.

Essential Tools

Study Groups

Verbal Summaries

Podcasts

Voice Recording

Peer Teaching

Group Quizzes

Key Strategies

- ✓ Form study groups with classmates regularly
- ✓ Explain concepts out loud to friends or family
- ✓ Record yourself summarizing key topics
- ✓ Participate in class discussions and debates
- ✓ Create and share quizzes with study partners



The Intuitive/Hands-On Studier

You need movement, stimulation, and real-life applications to learn effectively. You prefer learning by doing and experiencing.

Essential Tools

Active Recall

Experiments

Simulations

Walking Study

Model Building

Real Applications

Key Strategies

- ✓ Walk or move while reviewing notes and concepts
- ✓ Use hands-on experiments and practical tasks
- ✓ Connect theories to real-world examples
- ✓ Build physical or digital models of concepts
- ✓ Take regular breaks with physical activity

Part B - The importance of revision



Your teenage brain is literally rewiring itself to become a better learning machine! Cognitive theory explains why you get distracted easily (your brain craves rewards) but also why you have amazing potential to absorb knowledge. Understanding how your mind works - like needing breaks to avoid overload, why teaching friends helps you remember, and connecting new topics to familiar ones - lets you hack your own learning system.

It's basically your brain's instruction manual, showing you why techniques like active recall and chunking information actually work, so you can study smarter, not harder.

What does Neuroscience research say?

- Active beats passive learning
- Spaced practice is more effective than cramming
- Interleaving is more effective than blocking
- Retrieval practice is beneficial
- Metacognition is required by students

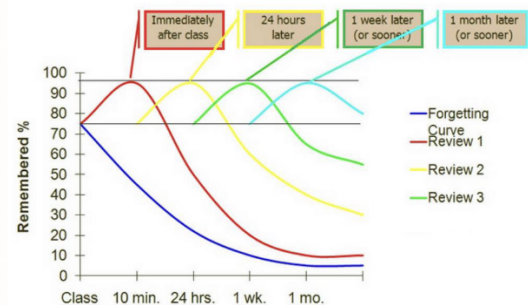
Active beats passive

Active learning	Passive learning
Create and answer questions Create flashcards Create mind maps Test what you recall Write concise notes with pen on paper in your own words Explain in your own words Gain greater understanding-wide range of sources Online quizzes Create your own exam questions Draw a flow chart Complete practice tests	Re-reading Highlighting 'Going over' powerpoints

Spaced Practice beats cramming

Spaced practice is the habit of spreading out study sessions over time instead of cramming all at once. Students review material at regular intervals over days and weeks. This helps to improve long-term retention of the material.

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
						
						

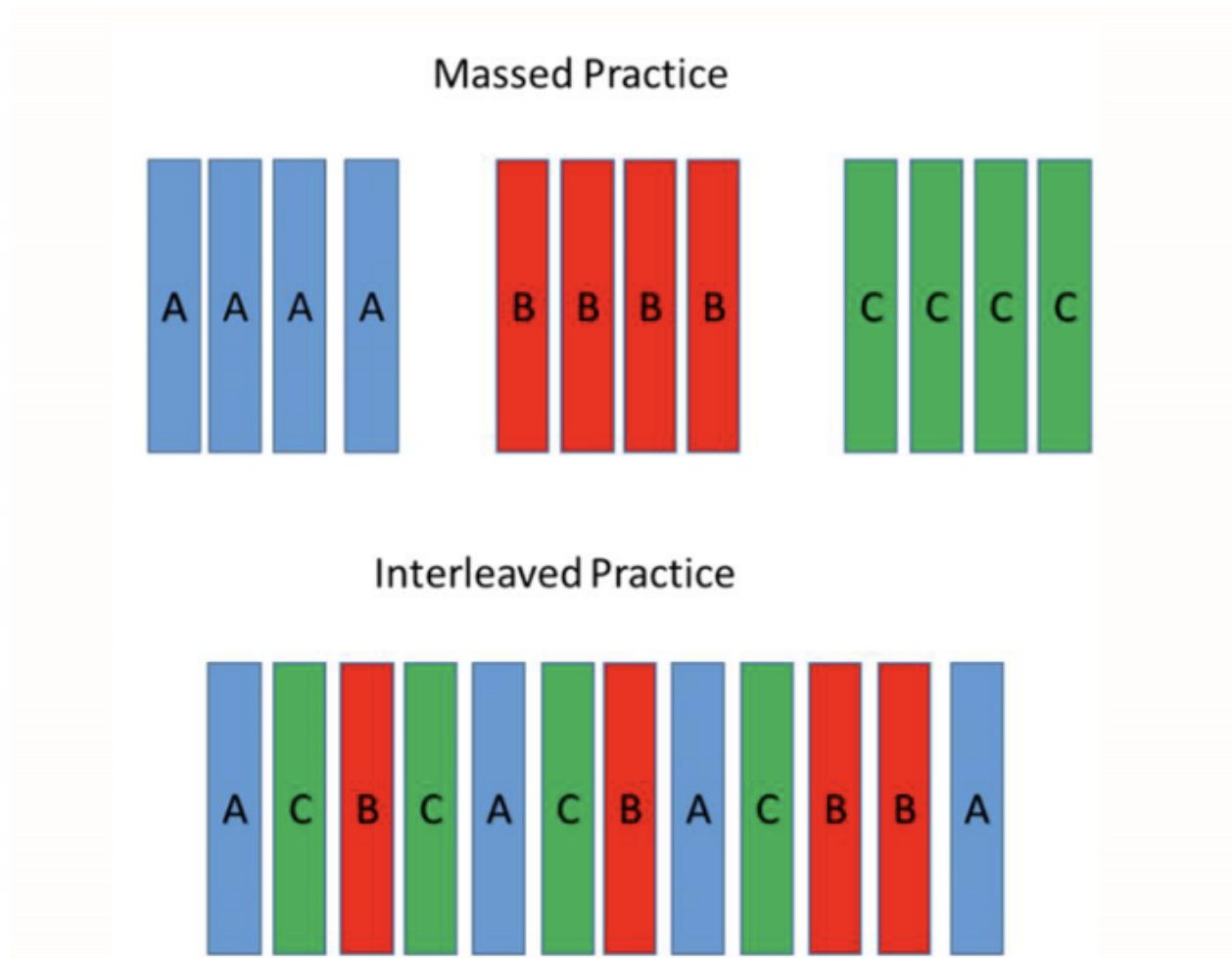


This strategy works because the brain needs time to consolidate new information. When we revisit topics after a break, our brain is forced to work harder to recall what we've learned, which strengthens memory.

To apply spaced practice, plan study sessions by using the calendar link in this study guide. Track when and which material you will revisit over a period of weeks. Focus on your weaker areas. Keep sessions short but frequent.

Interleaving

Interleaving involves mixing up different types of problems or subjects in a single study session instead of focussing on one at a time. For example, instead of doing 20 geometry problems, a student might alternate between word problems, geometry and algebra. This approach helps students transfer knowledge across different contexts.



This strategy works because switching between topics makes learning more effortful, which strengthens understanding and recall. Even though it may feel harder, it encourages you to recognise patterns and connections between different ideas and topics.

To apply interleaving effectively, you need to mix subjects OR problem types within each study session. For example, when studying science, alternate between physics, chemistry and biology rather than focusing on just one subject.

Retrieval practice

Retrieval practice is the process of actively recalling information from memory rather than simply rereading or reviewing notes. This means testing yourself on what you've learned. Try some of the activities under the **Active beats passive** heading.

This strategy works because it forces the brain to strengthen connections between ideas, making knowledge stick in your brain over time. Each time you retrieve information, you reinforce its storage in long-term memory.

To apply, use tools like past exam questions, flashcards or quizzes. Retrieval should feel challenging. Resist the urge to check your notes too soon - struggle a little first!

Metacognition

Thinking skills that a student needs for life:

- Reflection
- Evaluation-judgements of learning
- Goal setting
- Planning - what/when/how/why?

Metacognition is the process of thinking about your own thinking. It means being aware of how you learn, checking your understanding, and making decisions about the strategies you use when studying.

This strategy works because it helps you take control of your learning. Instead of going through the motions, metacognition encourages you to plan how you'll study, monitor how it's going, and reflect on what worked (or didn't). That way, you can study smarter, not harder.

To apply, ask yourself questions such as: *What do I already know about this? What's confusing me? How well did I understand that?* Use tools like learning journals, checklists, or "traffic light" self-assessments. Be honest with yourself and adjust your approach when needed – it's a skill that improves with practice.

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Part D - The study resources

Mind-Maps

This idea of making notes was developed by Tony Buzan in the early 1970s. You construct a mind map, stretching ideas outwards from a main point or key word.

This is best done based on notes made during your class lessons. Software is available to make drawing and revising a Mind Map easy – go to:

www.mindmapper.com

Serial Notes

This is a simple note making style. You do not write everything, just select out the most important points. Concentrate only on those points that will help you recall the lesson content. Use lots of sub-headings, numbered points, bullet points etc rather than writing in paragraphs.

Cornell Method of revising notes

Using the Cornell Note-Taking Method. Use the link to understand how to use this method: [Learning essentials](#).

Clue Cards

Use small 'clue cards' (similar to speech notes) on which you write key points of information. Use these keywords to trigger your mind to recall the information, which you speak out loud as if giving a speech. Repeat this until you do not even need to refer to the key word, repeat the next day and next week. Can even make some online own on quizlet.com

Visual note taking

Drawing pictures and diagrams is an essential part of memory. Use your own pictures, colour and keywords across one side of a page to summarise and illustrate information about a topic or unit of work.

Letterbox walk

This memory exercise is used to help remember information that builds on each other to create an overall picture.

Pick a topic from one of your classes that you need to understand.

- Imagine being at your letterbox.
- Open the letterbox and imagine finding some information that you need to learn.
- As you walk down the path (or whatever your home looks like) imagine adding little bits to this information from the things that surround you. Look left and right. Imagine touching the information or seeing the formula (or something you chose) on either side of you - it could be written on a leaf, a wall, by counting the number of bushes, it could be written in a cloud. Imagine grabbing and holding on to that information.
- By the time you reach the front door, you should have a complete picture of the information you need for the topic you chose.

Draw your walk to the letterbox and include the information you need to learn.

As you come home each day, practice the walk and recalling the information that you need to remember.

Good website to check out for all things study, resources and advice all in one place!

<https://studytime.co.nz/start-here>

Part E - Checklists

Night before the exam

- ☐ Eat a healthy meal
- ☐ Organise transport so you arrive at least 25 minutes early – it takes time to organise students into the hall
- ☐ Keep calm (and remember that it's normal to be nervous)
- ☐ Deep breathing helps keep you calm
- ☐ Remember that last-minute study is a waste of your time
- ☐ Bring the correct equipment – check what it is for each subject.
- ☐ Always have a spare pen
- ☐ You may have water if you wish, but no other drinks or food
- ☐ You may not have any electronic equipment other than what is authorised for that exam

In school exams and NCEA, you will have allocated seats.

Day of the exam

- ☐ Use the breathing exercises your teachers have taught you
- ☐ Get up in plenty of time
- ☐ Eat a healthy breakfast
- ☐ Check you have everything you need for the exam
- ☐ Arrive a bit early

Remember, if you've planned your study programme well, there should be no surprises.

Tips for during the exam

- Listen carefully to instructions
- Read over the entire exam first then plan your time carefully
- Attempt all questions – return to difficult ones at the end if you have time left over
- Highlight keywords in the questions
- Plan your answers
- Never leave before the end – check and recheck your answer!
- Stay positive!
- Read the paper carefully
- Make sure you know what you have to do for each question
- Write question numbers clearly (but not the actual question)
- Plan your long answers – a couple of minutes spent on a plan will help you keep to the point
- Organise the papers in the order in which you wish to do them
- If you finish early, use the time to check for small errors, and that you have provided enough examples
- Use the full time allowed for each question