



Parents supporting learning

Helping your child achieve success

Shenley Brook End School

Success through learning

As we all know studying is very important. The better a person's qualifications are, the more opportunities that are available in future life. It is always preferable to be able to choose what route you can take, rather than be told that some options are closed because the level of your qualification is not good enough.

There is a link between a person's qualifications and average earnings. People gaining 5 or more GCSEs at A*-C will earn on average £120,000 more during their working life than those who did not get those grades. Those with A level qualifications will earn a further £150,000 on average, and those with a degree will earn a further £120,000. This means that on average degree holders earn more than £ $\frac{1}{3}$ million more during their working life than those with no GCSEs. (Within degrees there is a difference in earning between those who attend established universities and the newer ones.)

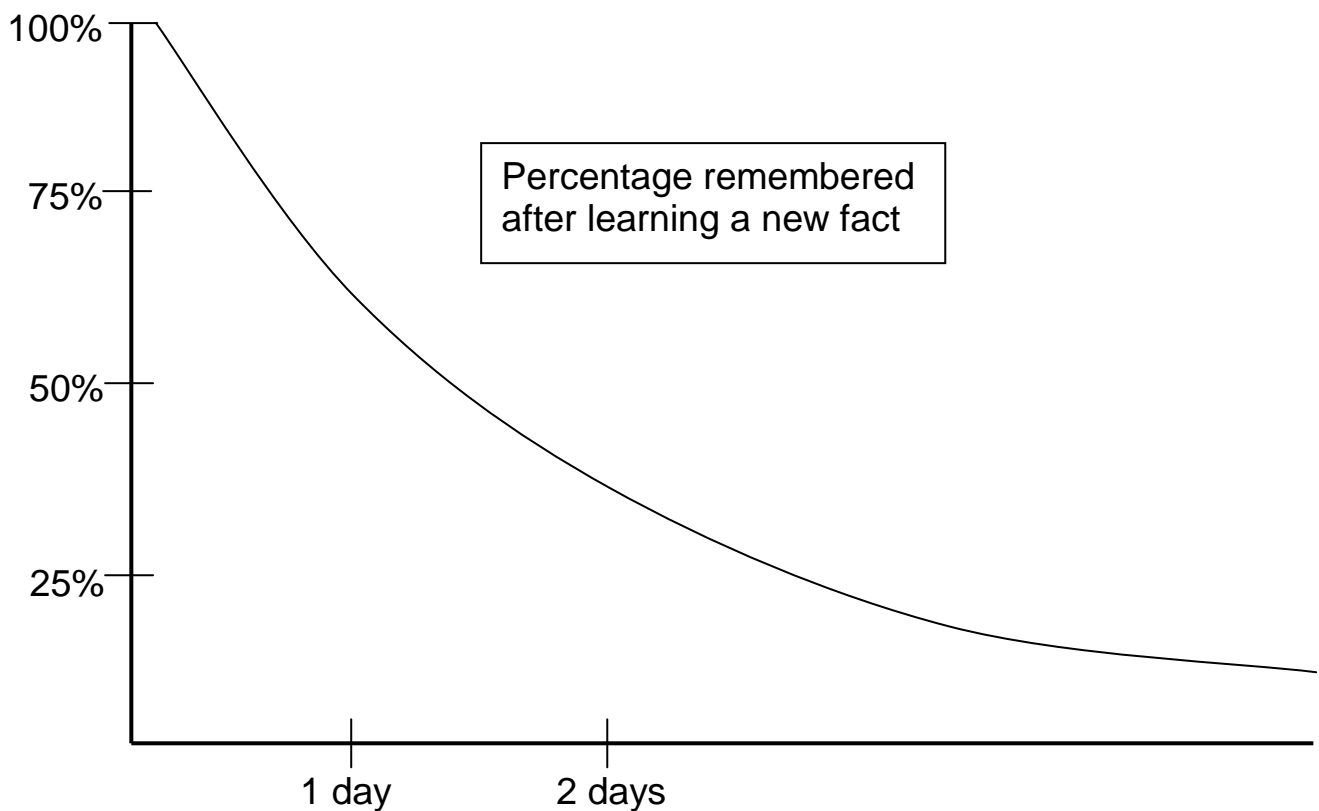
Obviously these are only averages, and there are high earners with no qualifications and low earners with degrees from the best universities. However, with the changes in the job market and more students gaining degrees, many careers are now looking for higher minimum qualifications than in the past. The advantage of good qualifications is that they help get through the first hurdle when applying for a job on the application form. After that more personable skills are required at interview.

Gaining good qualifications does not start near to the final exams. It is an on-going process that has already started. As is the appreciation of wider skills beyond the classroom.

The best preparation for achieving the best possible results is based on day-to-day working practices and making them a regular feature of daily routine. This could be by a daily timetable, setting aside slots when work will be done, eg as your child gets in from school re-reading notes with a drink before watching television; or straight after eating in the evening etc.

Memory is selective. It tries to remember the most important things and screens out irrelevant items. We are bombarded each day with thousands of different facts, sounds and images through meeting people, watching television, playing games, being in lessons etc. We cannot remember them all, because tomorrow we will get even more information.

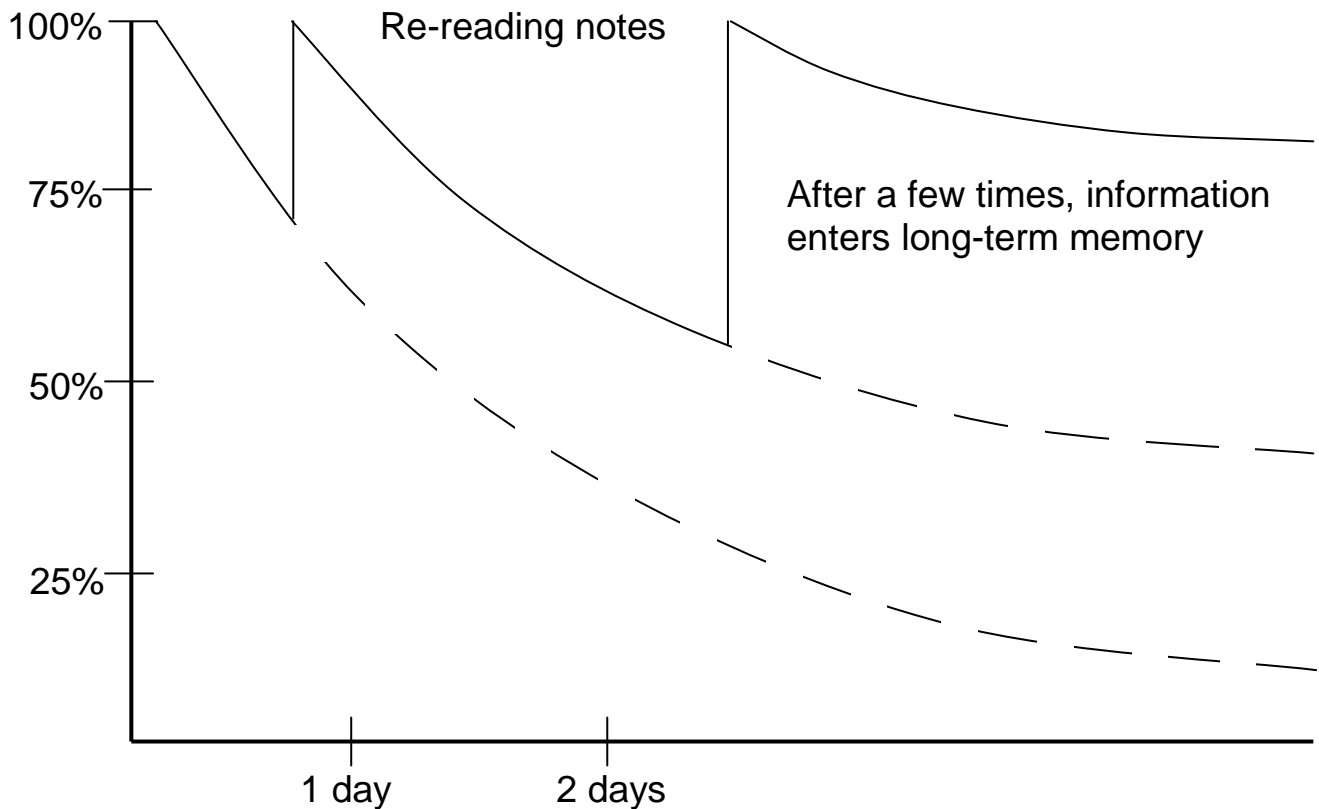
Research has shown that a fact, even one we're interested in will be forgotten very quickly. Having been told something, the average time of remembering it is shown on this graph.



This means that if a student learns something in a lesson first thing on Monday, by the middle of the week only about 25% can be recalled, and by the start of next week, it will be as if that lesson hadn't existed!

It is often easy to be in a lesson, fully involved and interested and understanding everything and feeling that it has gone into long-term memory. It hasn't. After a relatively short period of time, that information has gone. (Just think how soon it would be if a student wasn't as involved in the lesson in the first place!)

The only way to get information into long-term memory is to review it. If notes are re-read, the rate of re-forgetting it is slower, and this is true for each subsequent reminder.



This means that if a student re-reads the notes made during the day that evening, it will start the process of preparing for future tests or exams.

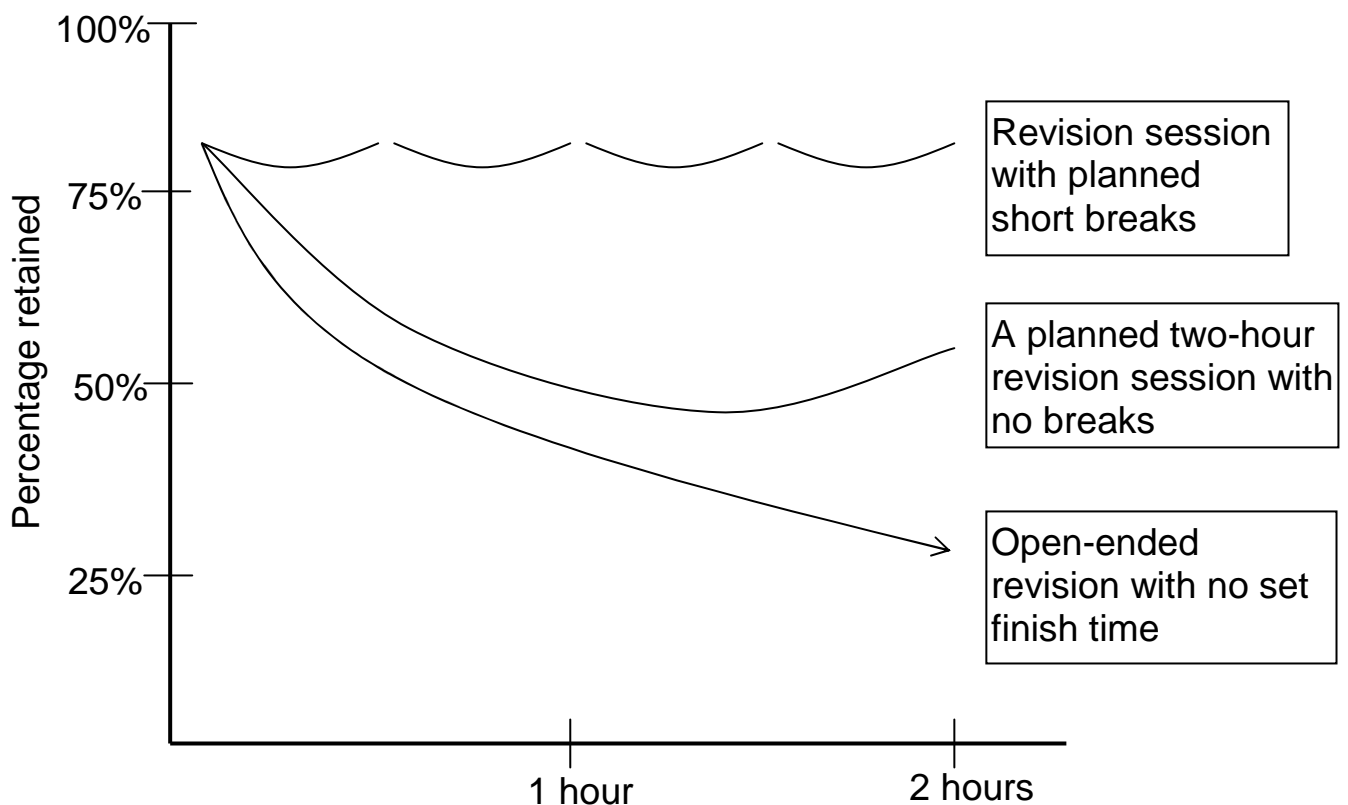
The complete scheme would be:

- notes are made during lessons
- re-read all notes once that evening at home (this shouldn't take too long) put a ✓ at the top of each page re-read
- once that day's notes have been re-read, spend some time re-reading earlier notes again from a few weeks' ago, put a second ✓ on those pages
- once this habit is really established and there are two ticks on pages, re-read a third time
- when there are three ✓✓✓ on each page, lots of the information should be in long-term memory

This is the ideal situation, but it is very difficult to do with all the other distractions on offer. However, any attempt to try and do this will improve recall of knowledge in an exam.

Whenever students revise for tests and exams, one factor to take into account is as we get bored or tired our concentration worsens and so less information is understood. Research has shown that the longer we work without a break, the less we retain. It also shows that as we know we're coming to the end of a work period, our concentration improves. The length of time that individuals can concentrate fully varies dramatically. Some people start losing interest after 15 minutes (or less!), others can work solidly for hours. Therefore the following times are a general average, and should be altered to suit individuals.

Do not start revision without a planned end time. Concentration drifts, and there's no final improvement since the end time is not known. Do not plan very long time slots, understanding reduces quickly. Plan regular, short breaks. Just of a few minutes, either to get a drink, or just quickly relax, eg stretch your legs. Then continue with the same subject, or change.



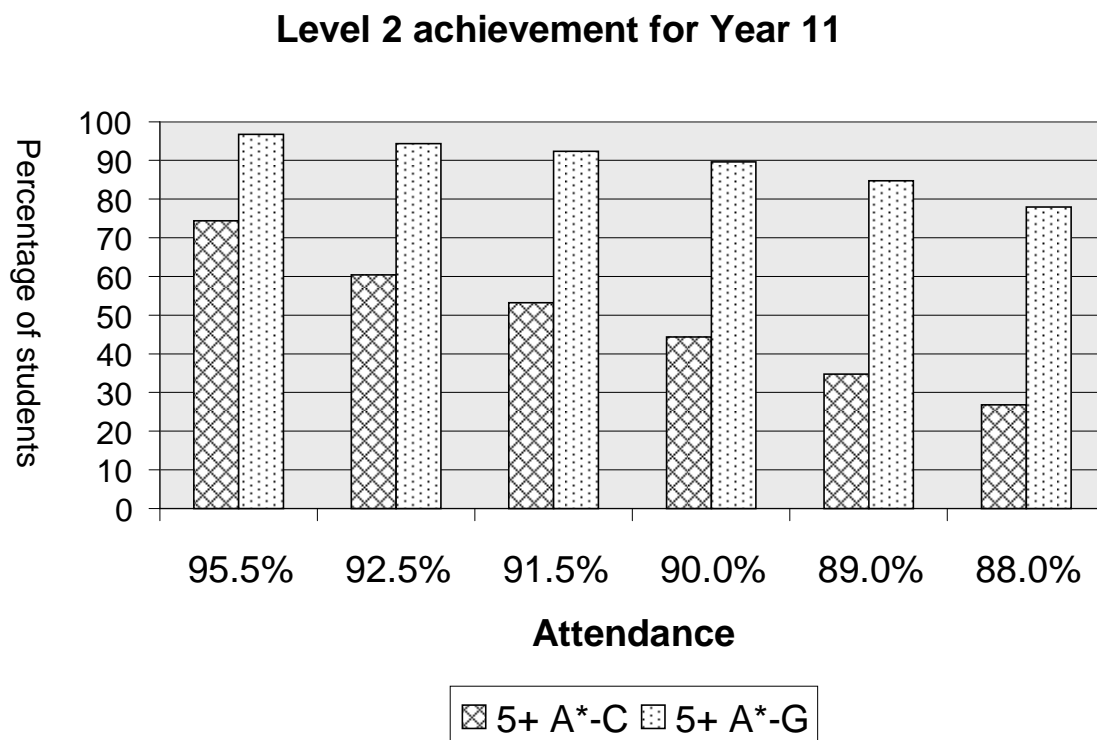
Working with music?

Some people work better with background music, others do not. It can be distracting if some music interests the listener more than the studying in question! Some research has shown that music improves short-term memory, but is not good for the long-term.

Attendance matters

There may be times when a child is too ill to come to school. However, for every day someone is off school, six lessons of learning are lost. That is a lot of work to catch up on. If your child has to be absent, make sure that s/he does find out what was missed, and copy any notes and do any work that was set.

There is a direct link between absence and lower attainment. The chart below shows the national average of the percentage of students level 2 (GCSE) grades in different groups of students based on their attendance.



We all know that for young people to achieve in their studies they have to take responsibility themselves and work hard. However, if they feel supported and encouraged they will find it easier to work hard and therefore achieve better results.

The following is part of President Obama's recent speech to all American school students.

Now I've given a lot of speeches about education. And I've talked a lot about responsibility. I've talked about your teachers' responsibility for inspiring you, and pushing you to learn. I've talked about your parents' responsibility for making sure you stay on track, and get your homework done, and don't spend every waking hour in front of the TV or with that Xbox. I've talked a lot about your government's responsibility for setting high standards, supporting teachers and principals, and turning around schools that aren't working where students aren't getting the opportunities they deserve.

But at the end of the day, we can have the most dedicated teachers, the most supportive parents, and the best schools in the world and none of it will matter unless all of you fulfil your responsibilities. Unless you show up to those schools; pay attention to those teachers; listen to your parents, grandparents and other adults; and put in the hard work it takes to succeed. And that's what I want to focus on today: the responsibility each of you has for your education. I want to start with the responsibility you have to yourself. Every single one of you has something you're good at. Every single one of you has something to offer. And you have a responsibility to yourself to discover what that is. That's the opportunity an education can provide.

Maybe you could be a good writer – maybe even good enough to write a book or articles in a newspaper – but you might not know it until you write a paper for your English class. Maybe you could be an innovator or an inventor – maybe even good enough to come up with the next iPhone or a new medicine or vaccine – but you might not know it until you do a project for your science class. Maybe you could be a mayor or a senator or a Supreme Court justice, but you might not know that until you join student government or the debate team.

And no matter what you want to do with your life – I guarantee that you'll need an education to do it. You want to be a doctor, or a teacher, or a police officer? You want to be a nurse or an architect, a lawyer or a member of our military? You're going to need a good education for every single one of those careers. You can't drop out of school and just drop into a good job. You've got to work for it and train for it and learn for it.

Summary

- Support your child in getting into a daily routine, working at set times.
- Make sure your child has a good place to work.
- Talk about work, ask specific questions – not “what did you do today”.
- Get involved with the work, ask to see notes or the textbook when a homework is finished, or after a re-read. Get your child to explain parts to you (it doesn't matter if you don't understand the details).
- Find out if there are any issues or problems with a subject.
- Have your own copy of the scheme of work/syllabus and use some of the language from it.
- Ensure attendance is as high as possible.
- Show you are interested in education. Your child will take the lead from you – if you don't show interest s/he will assume it's not important.
- Encourage your child/children to do the following:
 - Read and act on feedback from teachers
 - Balance work and relaxation
 - Develop their own opinions
 - Write deadlines in their planner
 - Know where and when they work best
 - Do reading without being told to
 - Work with other students
 - Prioritise tasks