

ST PETER'S COLLEGE



Study Guide

St Peter's builds outstanding men

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INTRODUCTION

This study guide is designed to focus on specific skills and techniques that students can develop which will help them improve their performance in the NCEA and CIE examinations.

Few Yr 11-13 students have been taught, or have acquired, the study and organizational skills that are required to reach their academic potential successfully and achieve excellent results in examinations.

WHERE TO START?

Careful revision and studying of content and skills are part of a lengthy process.

Study should begin weeks before the exams start

Through a System Success

Before studying you need to:

- be determined to improve your marks through study.
- allocate your time carefully to make room for study.
- arrange your physical environment for study.
- remove all other commitments to avoid distractions or interruptions.

Remember

- People create their own luck in exactly the same way they create their own future.
- If you plan and set goals you will have a better chance of success.
- Don't hope for the best – give your best.
- Go and make it happen. **Attack it now!**

STUDY ENVIRONMENT

Where you study, and the conditions under which you study, have a considerable effect on how well you learn.

Lighting

- It is obvious that light is essential for effective study. The level and intensity must be appropriate.
- Too much light produces glare which can lead to eye strain.
- The best lighting is a moderate ceiling light (75 -100 Watt) or a desk lamp.
- During the daytime study near a window, but direct sunlight on your work can create glare and make you drowsy.

Ventilation

- A flow of fresh air is necessary.
- Breathing stale air leads to lower oxygen levels which can lead to drowsiness and headaches.
- Another way of getting fresh air is to take a short break every 40 – 50 minutes.

Posture and Furniture

- It is best to study at a table or desk of a reasonable size whilst seated on a firm-backed chair.
- Lying on the floor or on a bed are **poor** studying positions.
- It is best to study in a quiet, private area e.g. in your bedroom, study, rumpus room. Stay away from the noise of TV, radios and the chatter of people. Quiet background music should not affect your concentration - talk-back radio is **not** a good idea though.
- Set up your study area for the duration of your pre-exam and exam study time.

PLANNING YOUR STUDY TIME

It is imperative that you plan your study time carefully:

1. when to study
2. what to study
3. how you will study

Delaying study only makes it all the more difficult.

Study Timetable

You will find a blank Study Timetable on Page 14. Copies are available at the academic office. You will need several.

Complete the Study Timetable indicating how you spend your time in an average week. This is for your benefit so be honest and realistic.

Don't forget to include time spent on all of the following:

- Meals, TV, sports, regular activities e.g. social, musical, church groups, friends, chores, part-time jobs etc.

Once complete, take note of how much time remains for study each day.

If you do not have much time for study you may have to make a short term sacrifice of other activities. Study should be a priority at this time of year.

- On this timetable, place the subjects you wish to study each night.
- Do not only study the subjects you like. You may need to spend more time on topics, or subjects, at which you are weakest.
- Be flexible – modify your study timetable if you are falling behind or adapt it once you get a better idea of how much you can do each day, and what works best for you.

Exam Timetable

- On a calendar copy the exam timetable from the official timetable given to you and mark in the days of each of your exams.
- Indicate whether the exam is in the morning or afternoon, as well as the venue for each exam.

HOW TO STUDY

WRITE it, READ it, RECITE it, RECALL it, *RE-WRITE it*

The key to effective learning is repetition. The more times you go over something the better you will learn and remember it.

General Study Techniques

Regular breaks

- After each 40 to 50 minutes take a 5 to 10 minute break
- Do something you enjoy. Spend time exercising, playing computer games or a musical instrument, or work on a hobby or project.
- The important thing is to have an enjoyable and refreshing break.

Snacks

- You need to reward yourself and keep your blood sugar levels up so that you can concentrate. Eat and drink regularly.

Swot Notes

This is possibly the most important task in your preparation and helps you get into the habit of sitting down to work.

Ensure your existing notes are complete and in order. If you have missed or have lost notes, speak to your teacher or photocopy someone else's notes of good quality.

Writing swot notes takes time and should be completed weeks before the examination.

Once your notes are completed spend time learning, memorising and understanding them.

How To Write Swot Notes

Identify key material that must be learnt. Ask your teacher for help in this.

- Obtain a new book.
- Take a unit of work. Clearly head the topic on the first page.
- Go through your notes carefully writing down key ideas, phrases, concepts, skills and diagrams that require learning and memorising.
- Use a highlighting pen to highlight key areas to learn.
- Set out your swot notes clearly. Avoid long sentences.
- Concentrate on developing an understanding of key concepts and themes. For example:

English

Headings

- Novel
- Plot
- Setting

Sub-headings

- Characters

Mind Maps

Content and Skills

Different subjects will have more or less of these two types of study. Divide your work into notes to summarise and examples to practise.

Studying Content

Subjects like English, Social Studies, Economics, etc. will have a lot of content and some skills. To revise content you must summarise key points.

Content refers to the facts and theories you have been taught. Revising using previous exam papers is of lesser value here.

The best method is to summarise your notes three times.

First Summary

- This is fairly broad. Write down key details using a mind map. Aim to remove descriptions.
- Try to reduce your notes by 80% of the size they are now. For example, if you have 50 pages, aim to write 10 summarised pages.

Second Summary

- Summarise your first summary.
- This should be done a week or two before an exam while the initial summary is fresh in your mind.
- Reduce your first summary by about 50%.
- Develop key words and ideas.

Third Summary

- This should be done just before an exam.
- Condense your second summary down to one page.
- Single words or phrases should become memory triggers and remind you of the bulk of content you have studied.

Studying Skills

Subjects like Maths, Science, Graphics and Design, etc. will have a lot of skills and some content.

- To study skills you must practise many examples. Do as many examples as you can per topic. Use examples from your textbook, homework book, revision book, worksheets or past exam papers. **There is no substitute for this.**
- Start with examples you can do easily and progress to harder examples.
- Study a variety of skills so that it doesn't become boring.

If you get stuck, don't give up - seek help!

Understanding Your Notes

- Read your notes and make a note of anything you don't understand.
- Put a mark next to it so you know to come back and spend time on it later.
- You might like to make a list of the things you need to come back to so you can cross them off as you complete them.

You will not learn or understand your work just by taking notes.

You must think about what you are writing.

Methods of Memorising

Summarise and write the main points down. Work through your syllabus and keep your summaries in a notebook for quick reference and as a good check for self-testing later on.

- Recite to yourself as you summarise and learn. A combination of these first two points works best.
- Over learning:
 - Forgetting is most rapid immediately after learning. You may forget as much as 50% of your studying by the next day.
 - Spend an extra 5 minutes "over learning" (firmly fixing the material in your mind).
 - A brief glance at main headings in the morning may remind you of work learned the night before.
- Constant self-testing is necessary:
 - close your eyes and see how much you can remember.
 - take a blank sheet of paper and see how much you can write down.
- Mnemonics, or aids to learning, may be useful, e.g. acid (red), alkali (blue)

USING PREVIOUS EXAM PAPERS

Previous Exam Papers

It is preferable that you read through several examination papers from previous years:

- Read all the instructions. Be aware, though, that the NCEA and IGCSE exams will have a different format from previous years. Ask your teacher for advice here.
- Get a feeling for the paper by scanning it briefly. This will give you an overview of:
 - the layout of the paper.
 - the type of questions that are asked; for example, short answer, multiple choice, essay type questions.
 - the time allocated to each type of question.

EXAM TECHNIQUE

Exams are not designed to trick or trap you. The person who sets the exam genuinely wants to know how much you have understood of what has been taught.

Before the Exam

- The day before the exam study the subject you have the next day.
- Remember to take breaks every 40-50 minutes.
- Review your notes the night before.
- Have a good night's sleep.

Equipment

- Ensure that you have all the proper equipment including pens (and spares), pencils, ruler, pencil sharpener, colouring pencils (if required), compass, calculator, graphics equipment, protractor.
- Plan to arrive at school well before the starting time; this will give you time to settle down and relax.
- Don't discuss subject material with your friends. This will only serve to increase your anxiety level.
- Wear a watch in case you are sitting too far away from the clock in the exam room.

Exam Starts

- Spend the first few minutes familiarising yourself with the paper.
- Things to do:
 - Quickly check the format of the paper.
 - Carefully read the instructions. You may have a choice of questions in some sections e.g. answer one out of three essay choices.
 - Check the last page of the exam so you know where the end is.
 - Skim through the paper; this will settle you down once you see that it is not too difficult. It will also allow you to become familiar with the paper.
 - You may identify where to spend more time based on mark allocation, difficulty and length of answer required.

- Mark easy questions or ones you like and do these first so that:
 - they are done while you are still fresh.
 - these marks are obtained quickly - they are then secure.
 - you will gain confidence from the fact that the initial questions are relatively easy.
- Set out your work clearly and write neatly. Examiners are human and neat work does make an impression. Working neatly also means that you are thinking in an orderly, clear way.
- The more slowly an examiner is forced to read, because of poor handwriting, the less chance there is that he can work out what the answer is actually saying.
- With essays it is especially important to present the piece attractively. This means paying attention to grammar, spelling and punctuation, even if you are not taking an English examination. Use short paragraphs and simple, straightforward sentences.
- Don't include irrelevant facts, for this:
 - wastes time that could be spent gaining marks elsewhere.
 - gains no marks.
 - gives the examiner the wrong impression.
- If writing a long answer keep referring back to the question to ensure that you are still on the right track. One test of a good essay is that the person reading it should be able to work out the original question.
- If you want to change a word cross it out neatly with a single line and write the correct version clearly.
- Read the questions carefully.
- Determine what is being asked.
- Underline key words.

e.g. List the functions of the Reserve Bank.
 Describe the processes of a volcanic eruption.
- Do not waffle; give a brief introduction if appropriate, and then start right into answering the question.
- Give examples and diagrams where appropriate.
- Attempt all questions you are asked to do.

Planning Your Time

- Plan your time for each section and adhere to it.
- Many students run out of time in the exams because they spend too much time on some questions.
- Look at the length of the paper and calculate the amount of time required for each question. If the exam is three hours (180 minutes) long, worth 100 marks, and a question is worth 15 marks, then the time spent on this question should be no longer than:
$$\frac{180 \text{ min}}{15 \times 100 \text{ marks}} = 27 \text{ minutes}$$
- Thus, for a question worth 15 marks you will spend only 27 minutes answering it.
- If you are short of time, answer in point form or just give a formula or method. If you finish before the allocated time is up, check your work for errors.

Analysing Questions

- What is it intended to discover?
- What content is required?
- What skills are being examined?
- What are the key words that guide you?

Essay Questions

- Before beginning a written answer plan what you intend to say. A moment spent thinking enables you to write with more confidence and at greater speed, and presumably to better effect.
- The wording of the questions is important. Words such as compare, contrast, discuss, summarise, outline each requires a different type of answer.
- Remember: quality rather than quantity.
- Where appropriate, support statements with reasons.
- Essays should have a beginning (introduction), a middle (body) and an end (conclusion). The conclusion draws together all the strands of your essay and explains its overall significance. Do not simply repeat what you have already written in the beginning. Use large, labeled diagrams in your answers only if they save words and make your answer clearer.

Problems (for example, in Mathematics)

- Make sure you write down the formulae that you need and which are not given to you in the exam, as soon as you start the exam.
- If you cannot immediately see how to do a problem, leave it and come back to it later.
- Show all working when required.
- Set out and label your working steps clearly so they can be followed easily by the marker.

Multi-choice Questions

- Mark the multiple choice sheet exactly as instructed.
- Even if the answer is obvious, look at all the alternatives before making a decision.
- If you have to guess, first eliminate as many wrong answers as possible.
- Make sure you give an answer to every question.

What is Being Asked?

Definitions of key words necessary for answering exam questions:

analyse / examine	A detailed examination of the area.
compare / contrast	Describe what places / people / events have in common and what differs between them.
define	Give the meaning, a dictionary-type definition.
describe	An explanation of events; a factual account.
explain	Reasons for an event.
discuss	Offer opinions or different viewpoints supported by facts or clear reasons.
illustrate	Show with examples.
outline	Supply the bare essentials which cover all the essential areas.
review / summarise	Give an overall statement.
trace	Follow the development or progress of an event; a stage by stage description.

At the End of the Examination

- Make sure you have attempted all questions.
- If there is time, read through your answers and check for glaring errors, spelling mistakes, grammatical errors, incorrect facts, punctuation, drawings and calculations.
- Do not leave the exam room before the time is up. Continually check through and think about how you can improve your answers.
- Check that you have numbered your questions correctly.

After the Exam

- All these points need to be constantly kept in mind while writing an examination. They all amount to a definite technique! You cannot simply write the first thing that comes into your head!

EXAMINATION STUDY TIMETABLE

<i>Time</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>Sunday</i>
<i>6.00am</i>							
<i>7.00am</i>							
<i>8.00am</i>							
<i>9.00am</i>							
<i>10.00am</i>							
<i>11.00am</i>							
<i>12 noon</i>							
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<i>9.00pm</i>							
<i>10.00pm</i>							

Extra copies are available from the Student Academic Centre

Learning Styles and Strategies

How are you smart? (Not, how smart are you?)

Your personal learning style depends on the way you use your brain and body in receiving and expressing information. Making use of all three learning styles (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) is essential in expanding the capacity to learn and the ability to retain knowledge.

Practicing and strengthening all three learning styles develops greater flexibility and productivity in learning and performance.

The Visual / Verbal Learning Style

- You learn best when information is presented visually and in written format.
- In the classroom you benefit from teachers who use the whiteboard (or overhead projector) to list the essential points of a lesson or who provide you with an outline to follow along during the lesson.
- You benefit from information obtained from textbooks and class notes.
- You tend to like to study by yourself in a quiet room.
- You often see information “in your mind’s eye” when you are trying to remember something.

Learning Strategies for the Visual / Verbal Learner:

- Make use of “colour coding” when studying new information in your textbook or notes. Highlight different kinds of information in contrasting colours.
- Write out sentences and phrases that summarise key information.
- Make flashcards or mind maps of vocabulary words and concepts that need to be memorized. Limit the amount of information per card so your mind can take a mental “picture” of the card.
- When learning information presented in diagrams or illustrations, write out explanations for the information.
- When learning mathematical or technical information, write out in sentences and key phrases your understanding of the material. When a problem involves a sequence of steps, write out in detail how to do each step.
- Before an exam, make yourself visual reminders of information that must be memorized. Make “stick it” notes containing key words and concepts and place them in highly visible places – on your mirror, notebook, cupboard etc.

The Visual / Nonverbal Learning Style

- You learn best when information is presented visually and in picture or design format.
- In the classroom you benefit from teachers who use visual aids such as film, video, maps and charts.
- You benefit from information obtained from pictures and diagrams in textbooks.
- You tend to like to work in a quiet room and may not like to work in groups.
- When trying to remember something, you can often visualise a picture of it in your mind. You may have an artistic side that enjoys activities like visual art and design.

Learning Strategies for the Visual / Nonverbal Learner:

- Make flashcards of key information using symbols and pictures that need to be memorised.
- Use highlighter pens to highlight key words and pictures on the flashcards. Limit the amount of information per card so your mind can take a mental “picture” of the card.
- In the margins of your notebook/textbook use key words, symbols, and diagrams to help you remember the text. Use highlighter pens of contrasting colours to “colour code” the information. Use mind maps.
- When learning mathematical or technical information, make charts to organize the information.
- Use large square graph paper to assist in creating charts and diagrams that illustrate key concepts.
- As much as possible, translate words and ideas into symbols, pictures, and diagrams.



The Auditory / Verbal Learning Style

- You learn best when information is presented in an oral language format.
- In the classroom, you benefit from listening to the teacher and participating in group discussions.
- When trying to remember something, you can often “hear” the way someone told you the information, or the way you previously repeated it out loud.
- You learn best when interacting with others in a listening/speaking exchange.

Learning Strategies for the Auditory /Verbal Learner:

- Work with a “study buddy” on an ongoing basis to review key information and prepare for exams.
- When studying by yourself, talk out loud to aid recall. Read your notes and textbook out loud.
- Use audio tapes such as commercial books on tape to aid recall.
- When learning mathematical or technical information, “talk your way” through the new information. State the problem in your own words. Reason through solutions to problems by talking out loud to yourself or with a study partner. To learn a sequence of steps, write them out in sequence form and read them out loud.



The Kinesthetic / Tactile Learning Style

- You learn best when physically engaged in a “hands on” activity.
- In the classroom, you benefit from a setting where you can manipulate materials to learn new information.
- You benefit from instructors who encourage in-class demonstrations, “hands on” student learning experiences, and field work outside the classroom.

Learning Strategies for the Kinesthetic / Tactile Learner:

- To help you stay focused during a lesson, sit near the front of the room and take notes throughout the class period.
- Jot down key words and draw pictures or make charts to help you remember the information you are hearing.
- When studying, use textbook, notes or flashcards and read the information out loud.
- When reviewing new information, copy key points onto a large piece of paper.
- Make use of the computer to reinforce learning through a sense of touch. Using word processing software, copy essential information from your notes and textbook. Use graphics, tables, and spreadsheets to further organize material that must be learned.

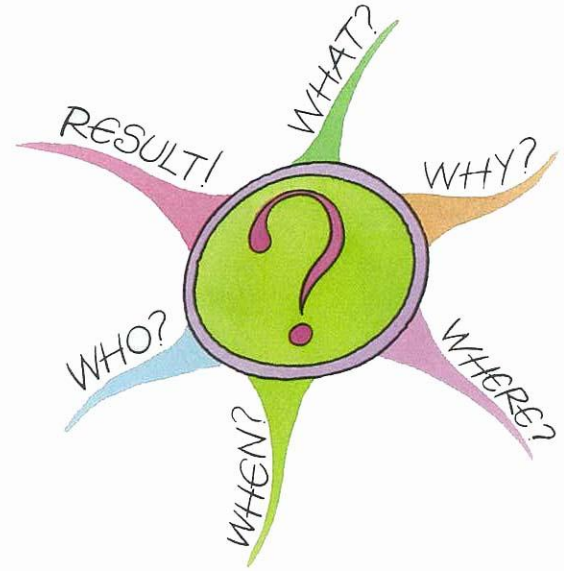


MIND MAPS

A mind map is a great way to:

- Summarise
- Revise and learn
- Plan (for an essay or a speech etc)
- Take notes from a video or speech
- Solve problems

How to Make a Mind



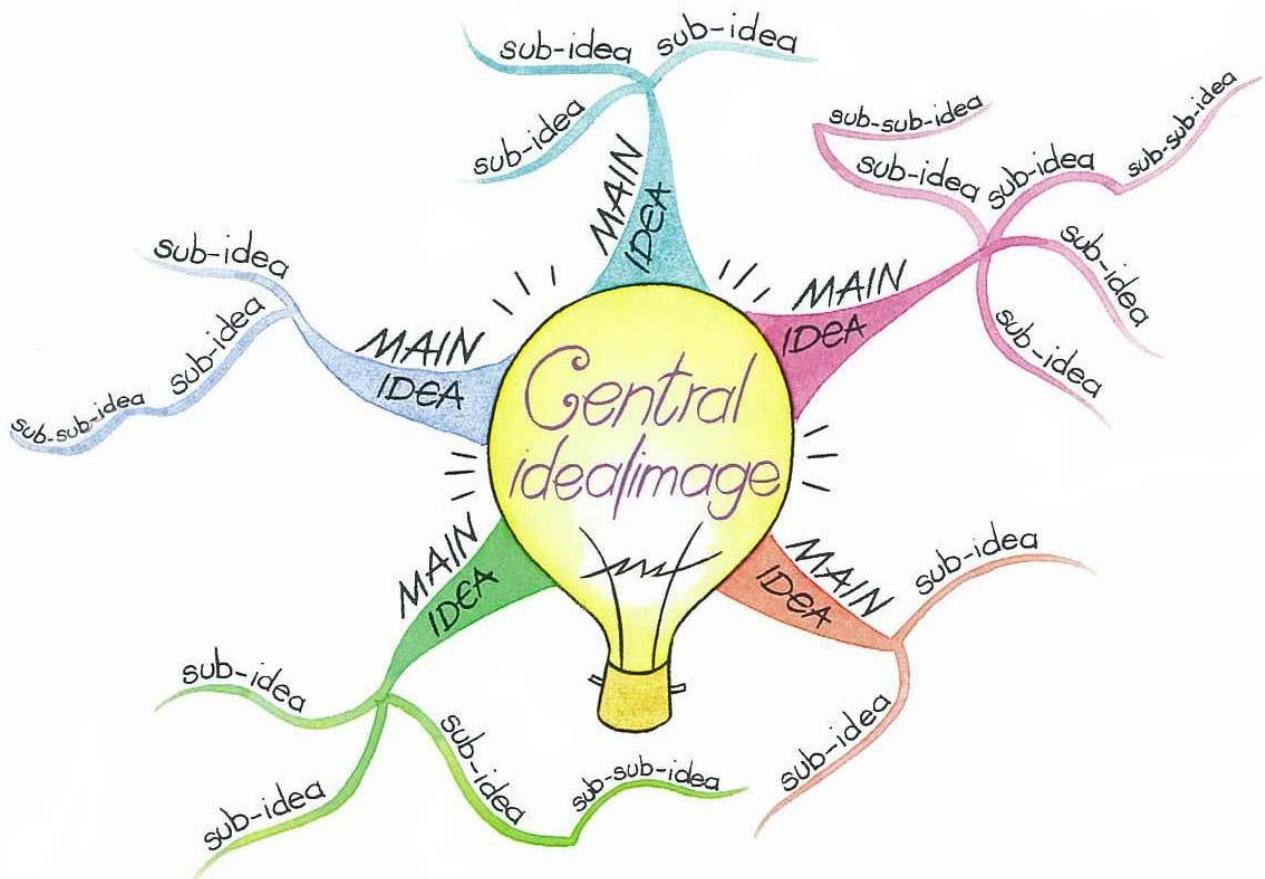
Drawing a mind map is easy. You should work quickly as the ideas come to mind.

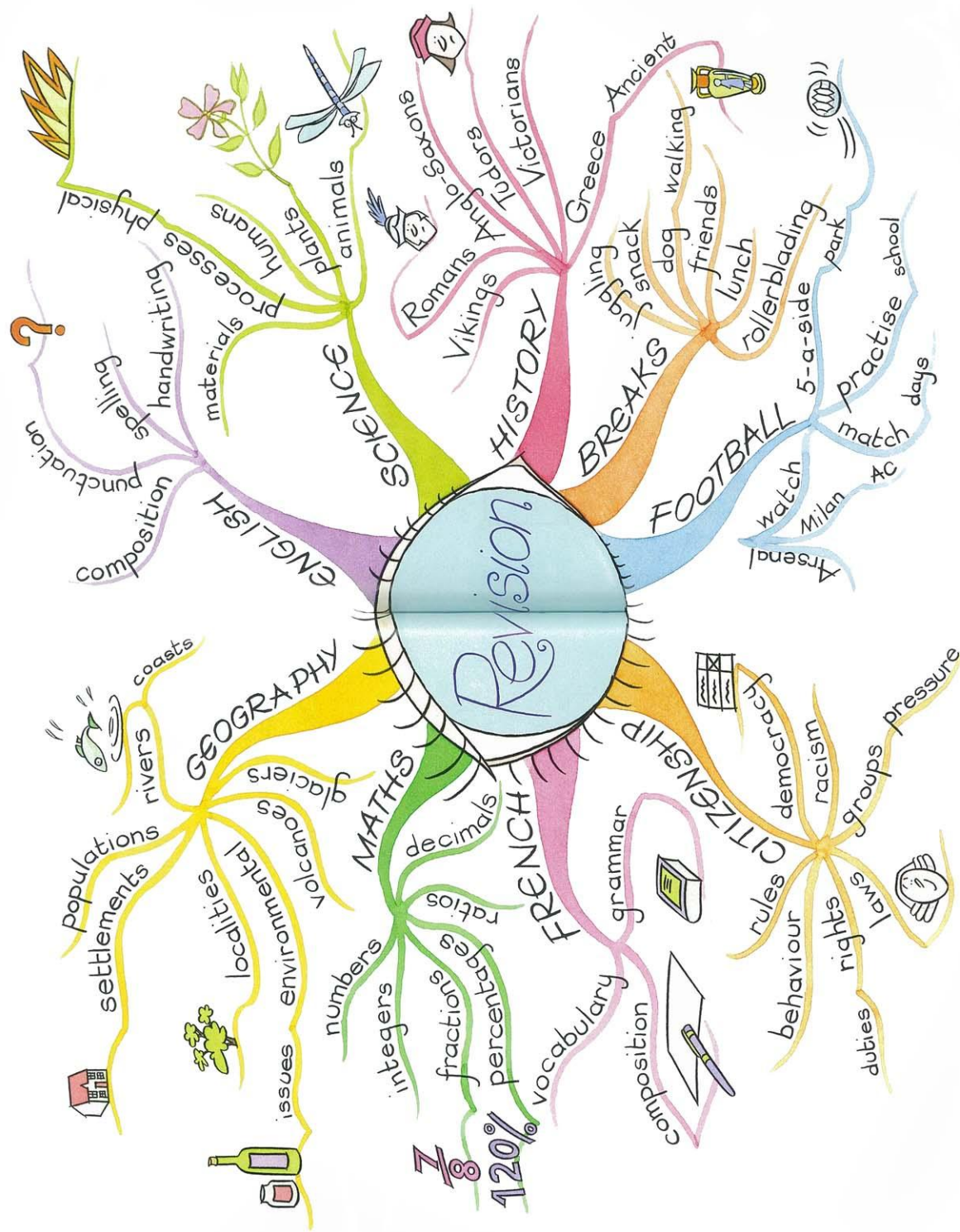
To make it memorable:

- Place the main heading in the centre of the page and enclose it.
- Use at least 3 different colours.
- Use a different colour for each branch.
- Use arrows to show how one idea connects to the other.
- Use pictures, symbols and shapes for every key idea.
- Print all words on lines using UPPER and lower case.
- Vary the size of your words according to their importance.
- Use your page in landscape format.
- Personalise it with CreActivITy and personality so that it is memorable to enhance recall.

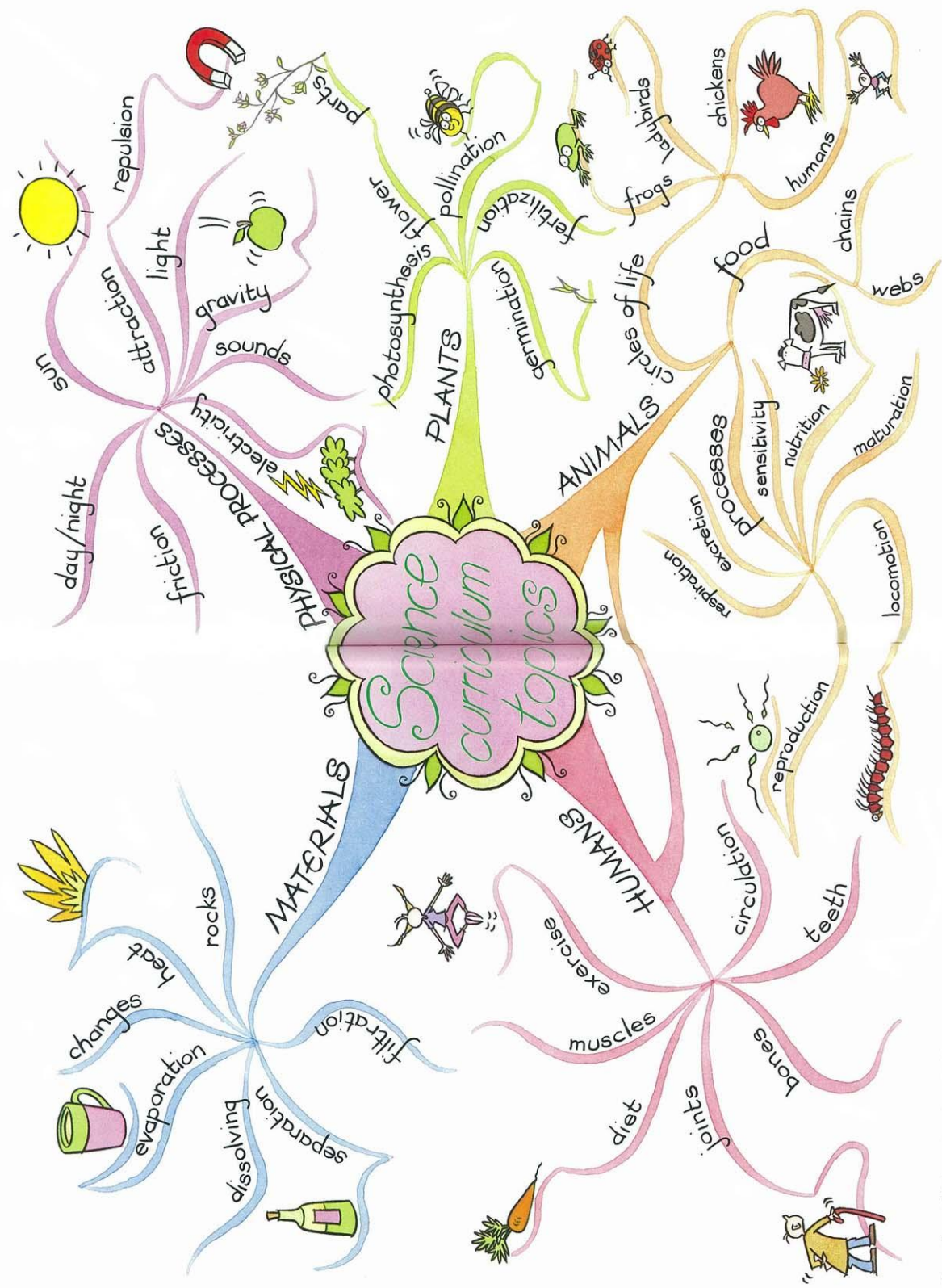
2. MASTER IT WITH MIND MAPS

- ★ **Plan before pen.** Spend a minute or two quickly Mind Mapping the answer to each question, so that you can remember the relevant things quickly and have them written down in front of you.
- ★ **Max the facts.** Remember, put the main point in the centre and your sub-topics on the main branches. All less-important topics are on the tiniest branches. Using the same colours that you used when you were revising will help your brain remember the facts you now need. Any pictures you draw should only be quick sketches.
- ★ **Essays for excellence.** If you are writing an essay-style answer, remember to plan an introduction, a middle and a conclusion.
- ★ **Share them, impress them.** Hand in your Mind Maps with your exam papers, not forgetting to put your name on them. They may count as 'extra working'.





Revision Overview Mind Map



Overview of Science Topics Mind Map

