Supporting Your Child with Revision: The Power of Flash Cards

Flash cards are a simple yet highly effective tool for helping students retain and recall information — and parents can play a big role in supporting their use at home.

Why Flash Cards Work

Flash cards are small cards with a question on one side and the answer on the other. They help students:

- **Break down complex topics** into bite-sized facts or questions.
- **Actively recall** information, which strengthens memory.
- **Self-test** regularly, identifying gaps in knowledge.
- Use **spaced repetition**, revisiting cards over time to boost long-term retention.

This method is backed by research and is especially useful for subjects that require factual recall, such as science, history, and languages.

Why Are They Effective?

Flash cards encourage **active learning** — students test themselves rather than just re-reading notes. This helps them remember more and feel more confident when it comes to assessments.

They also support **spaced repetition**, which means reviewing information over time rather than cramming. This technique is backed by research and helps knowledge stick.

How Parents Can Help

You don't need to be an expert in the subject to support your child's revision. Here are some easy ways to get involved:

- **Quiz your child** using their flash cards — even just 10 minutes a day can make a difference.
- Encourage them to **sort cards** into "confident" and "needs more practice" piles.
- Help them set up a **revision routine**, using flash cards regularly rather than cramming.
- Ask them to **teach you** a topic using their cards — explaining concepts aloud helps deepen understanding.
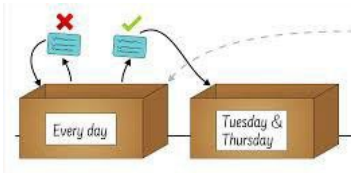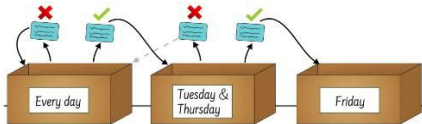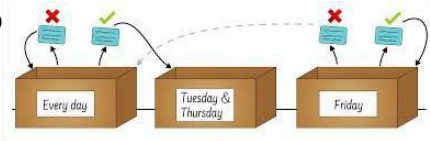- Praise their effort and consistency, not just correct answers.

Top Tip

If your child prefers digital tools, apps like **Anki**, **Quizlet**, or **Brainscape** allow them to create and review flash cards on their phone or computer — perfect for revision on the go.

Resources for Further Exploration

The Leitner Method – what it is and how it helps

The Leitner Method is a way of quizzing with flashcards where students move the cards to different compartments depending on whether or not they recalled the information correctly. This strategy makes use of retrieval and spacing.
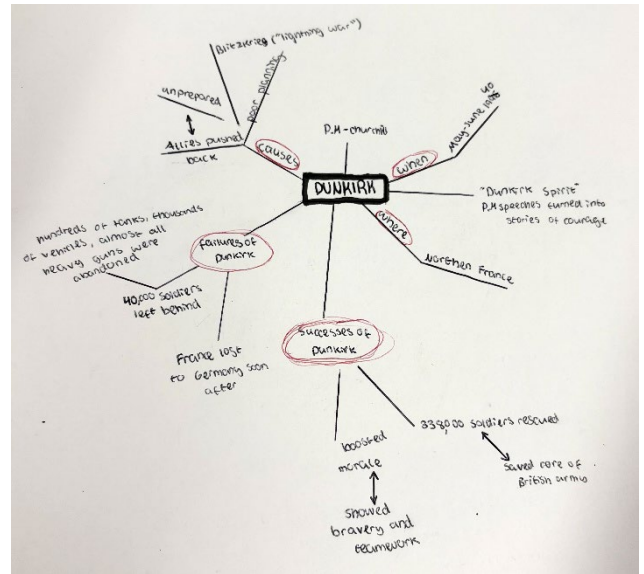
1. Split a box into 3 compartments and number them or have three separate numbered boxes. *Every day* *Tuesday & Thursday* *Friday*	2. Place all your flashcards in compartment/box 1. Flashcards *Every day* *Tuesday & Thursday* *Friday*
3. Test yourself on the flashcards in box 1. If you recall the information, move the flashcard to compartment/box 2. If not, place the card back in compartment/box 1. *Every day* *Tuesday & Thursday*	4. On Tuesday and Thursday (or every other day), test yourself on the flashcards in boxes 1 and 2. If you answer correctly, move the flashcard one box on. If incorrect, place the flashcard back in compartment/box 1. *Every day* *Tuesday & Thursday* *Friday*
5. On Fridays, or once a week, test yourself on the cards in box 3. If you are correct, keep the cards there. If incorrect, move the card back to b[...] *Every day* *Tuesday & Thursday* *Friday*	

Useful links

- **Birmingham City University – How to Use Flashcards for Revision**
 Covers active recall, spaced repetition, Leitner system, visuals, and app options like Quizlet and Anki (Birmingham City University).
- **SchoolPlanner – Revision Flashcards Blog**
 Emphasizes peer feedback, visual memory, concise content, and hands-on repetition (schoolplanner.co.uk).
- **Learning Scientists – "Be Your Own Teacher: How to Study with Flashcards"**
 Offers dual-stack method (concept + instruction cards) to deepen understanding (The Learning Scientists).
- **InnerDrive – Flashcards Retrieval Practice Overview**
 Highlights how flashcards support self-testing and focus on weak areas (InnerDrive).
- **Wikipedia – Spaced Repetition, Testing Effect, Leitner System**
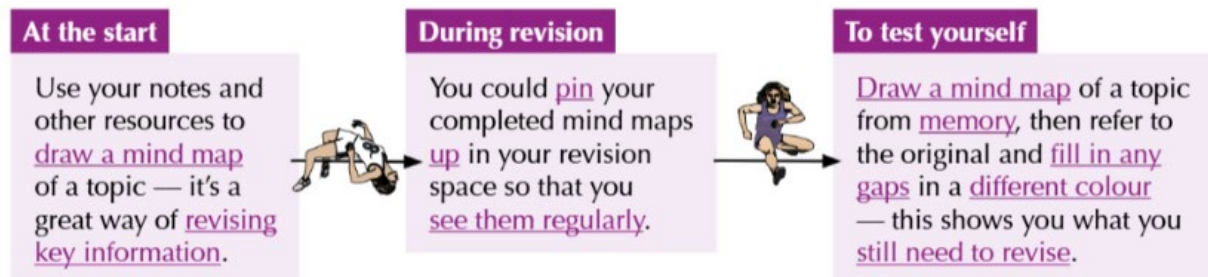 In-depth background on flashcards' cognitive science foundations (Wikipedia).

Supporting your child with revision: Mind maps

Why Mind maps Are great for revision

Mind maps are a simple but powerful way for students to organise information visually. Instead of writing long notes, a mind map uses keywords, colours, and branches to show how ideas connect. This helps students:

- See the bigger picture – They can understand how topics link together.
- Boost memory – Using colours and images makes information easier to recall.
- Stay engaged – It feels more creative and less overwhelming than pages of text.
- Focus on key points – Mind maps encourage summarising, which is essential for exams.

You Can Use Them Throughout Your Revision

Mind maps are really useful for subjects where there are lots of links between ideas (e.g. History or English) but less useful for learning a list of formulae or a vocab list.

At the start

Use your notes and other resources to draw a mind map of a topic — it's a great way of revising key information.

During revision

You could pin your completed mind maps up in your revision space so that you see them regularly.

To test yourself

Draw a mind map of a topic from memory, then refer to the original and fill in any gaps in a different colour — this shows you what you still need to revise.

How parents can support

You don't need to know the subject in detail! Here's what you can do:

1. Provide materials – Paper, coloured pens.
2. Ask guiding questions – "What's the main topic?" or "What ideas link to this?"
3. Check for clarity – Encourage your child to use short keywords, not full sentences.
4. Celebrate effort – Praise the creativity and organisation, not just the neatness.
5. Use it for discussion – Ask them to explain their mind map to you. Teaching someone else reinforces learning.

Draw, discuss, review, review, review ….

Drawing out the mind map is just the first stage. Discuss your mind map with someone. Then review it. Cover up your original mind map, and re-draw it on a new piece of paper. See what you can remember. If you are struggling, take a sneaky peak to remind you. Do this again a week later, a month later. Every time you review a mind map, leave a roman numeral, (I,II, III, IV). That way you have a general idea of how many times you've revisited the information.

Useful links

Revision techniques from BBC Bitesize

 Save My Exams – Revision Mind Maps: Your Key to Exam Success

Explains what mind maps are, why they work, and step-by-step tips for creating effective ones.

Read the guide here [savemyexams.com]

Mind Map Online – 3 Ways to Use Mind Mapping for Better Revision

Practical strategies for using mind maps to improve memory and organisation.

Explore the tips [mind-map.com]

Student Beans – Using Mind Maps for Revision: The Ultimate Guide

Covers benefits, examples, and how to create mind maps effectively.

Read the full guide [studentbeans.com]