

## Flashcards

We can supply some flashcards in school, but they can also be purchased cheaply at Home Bargains or Poundland. Alternatively, card sheets cut to size in different colours are also good to use. Flashcards are a very familiar tool used by students. Crucially, however, too many students fail to use them for effective self-testing – (only 30% in recent research). At school, we will train students to design, or find, effective revision flashcards, before then training them in their use. Students should also beware dropping flashcards they think they know. Flashcards also work well with the Leitner Box Method (see overleaf).



### How To Use Revision Flashcards

**Images:** Draw a picture on the blank side of each card. The human brain is excellent at recalling pictures, but can struggle with recalling words; pairing the two helps.

**Colour:** Make clever use of colour: Studies have found that you're more likely to remember notes that are written in blue, rather than black ink.

*Underline important topics in bright colours. Highlight key phrases. Split different subjects or topics between the different colours of revision card.*

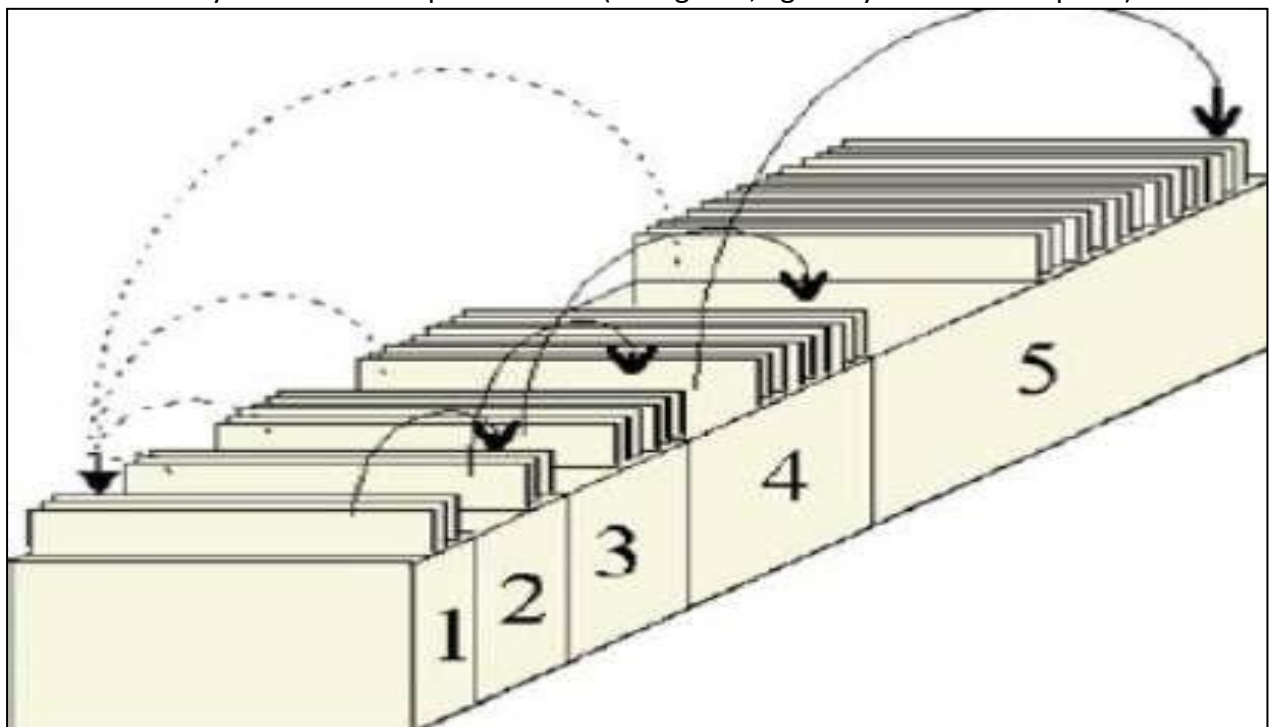
**Double up:** Create multiple, different flashcards for difficult-to-remember topics. You will be far more likely to remember things if you create two types of card for each topic: Cards with a single word and no context, e.g. "Dog". This will test your recall. Cards that describe the subject or object, e.g. "What wags its tail and chases cats?". This will test your comprehension.

## Spaced Repetition: The Leitner Method.

The Leitner system is a widely used method of efficiently using flashcards that was proposed by the German science journalist Sebastian Leitner in the 1970s. It is a simple implementation of the principle of spaced repetition, where cards are reviewed at increasing intervals. This technique stops that tendency that most students have to stay in their comfort zones and just look at the flashcards they're already confident about, whilst neglecting their weaknesses.

### How To Use the Leitner box technique.

You need an index card box and you either need to create dividers for the four sections of the box or you need four separate boxes (failing that, I guess you could use 'piles').



### Section 1

In the first section, you put things for frequent practice. This is the stuff you're not remembering well. About 40% of your time should be spent on this stuff.

### Section 2

In the second section you put the cards you've just moved out of section 1. This is things you're gaining confidence with but still occasionally trips you up or confuses you in some way. Spend about 30% of your time in this section.

### Section 3

In the third section, keep the things that you nearly always recall correctly. Spend 20% of your time here. Just remember, if you get anything wrong here you need to move it back to section 2.

## Section 4

Finally, in section 4 you have material that you think is easy and you always get right. Only spend 10% of your time on this stuff. The key thing is that nothing ever leaves this box because you know it so well. No matter how confident you are, check back on it every now and then to test your memory and build your confidence in what you know.

### Making Notes

Students often 'make notes' but this can often end up as a meaningless column of jargon. The Cornell strategy utilises the 'generation effect'. Named after the US university, this strategy gets students thinking metacognitively, asking questions, noting key terms, and summarising the content being revised.

