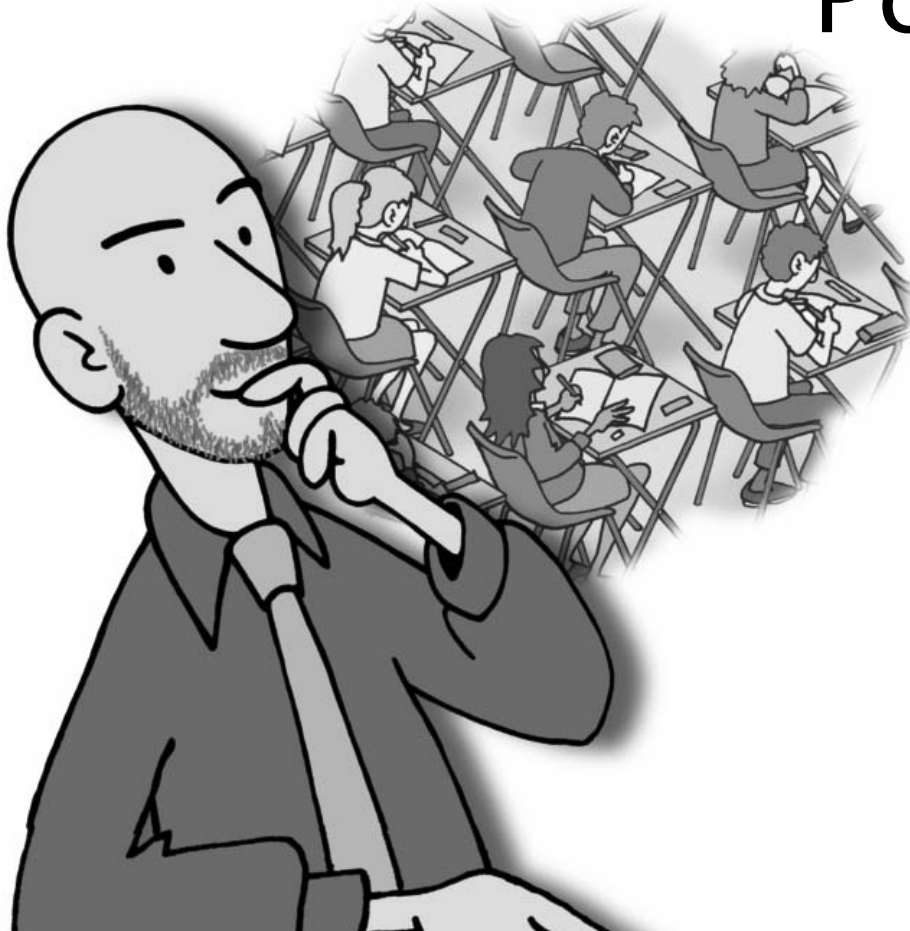


EXAMS, TESTS, REVISION

Pocketbook



By Mike Gershon

Cartoons:
Phil Hailstone

Contents

Page



Mark-Schemes, Past Papers and Examiners' Reports

Locating, defining and analysing relevant materials then making them accessible to students; working with the materials using peer-assessment; applying examiners' insights; creating model papers and mark-schemes

11



Feedback

Effective feedback and using modelling, scaffolding and explanations to help students apply it; feedback loops – putting targets into practice; feeding back on revision and exam technique

25



Tools and Strategies for Independent Revision

Promoting independence by helping students to plan, break up information, use mind-maps and other graphic organisers; teaching others; flash cards; developing questions and answers; using audio and video; transforming and visualising

41



Using Cognitive Psychology

The research, practice testing, distributed practice, elaborative interrogation, self-explanation, interleaved practice, self-audit

59



Engaging Revision Activities

Be clear about aims, 12 effective revision activities

73



Modelling

What is modelling?, modelling rehearsal, information cues, decoding questions, exam scripts, checklists, self-reporting, planning techniques

89



Teaching Exam Technique

What is it?, model answers, making the examiner's life easy, thinking and writing at speed, re-reading, checking answers, troubleshooting

103



Sustaining Motivation and Managing Stress

Why it matters, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, fear of failure, variety, working memory, SMART goals, best practice, wider goals, useful effort, perspective

115

What modelling rehearsal gives to students



Here's the kind of thinking students get access to when you rehearse sitting the exam with them:

I reached the end of the exam and still had ten minutes left. Then I remembered what Sir said and I went back over my answers. Good job too – I'd missed a question in Section B!

As I stood outside the gym waiting to do my food tech exam I remembered Miss Moore telling us that if we felt panic or anxiety, to breathe deeply and count to ten. It was comforting to know I had a way to get control of my nerves.

Just standing in the exam hall and hearing Mrs B. remind us about using the clock as we stood under it really helped me in the actual exam. The first thing I did when I turned the paper over was to look at the exam hall clock...I kept checking it regularly for the rest of the exam.

Modelling rehearsal checklist



If you're unsure what to tell students as you walk them through a rehearsal of the real thing, here's a handy checklist you can call on:

- As you line up for the exam, focus on all the hard work and effort you have put in to get to this point
- Visualise yourself sitting down, opening the paper and being successful
- If you feel anxiety or panic, breathe deeply and count to ten. Nerves are natural – it's OK to feel them
- Focus on the processes you will go through: sitting down; controlling your breathing; reading each question carefully; checking the clock; decoding questions; including keywords
- As you start, make a quick note of how long you will spend on each section
- Check the clock each time you complete a section
- When you've finished, go back through and check your answers by comparing them to the question and the number of marks available. Ask yourself if you've done enough on each occasion

Active rehearsal activities



In 'active rehearsal' students are paying explicit attention to what is involved in the rehearsal. Here is an example:

Mrs Hooper sets her students a practice exam paper to be completed in an hour – the same length of time as the lesson. As time progresses, she offers a sporadic commentary:

'OK, Year 11, let's start by glancing through the questions and seeing what's ahead of us...'

'...Now I'd probably be moving onto Question Two as we've had twenty minutes...'

'...This is a good time to check how long you have left and what you still need to do...'

'...Five minutes left. If you've finished, go back and check your answers against the questions and the number of marks available.'

This gives her students a chance to respond, in realistic conditions, to her advice.



Information cues



An information cue is something that activates a set of long-term memories. They can be formal or informal. In the second sense, I might say the words, 'childhood holidays' to you. This cues up information stored in your brain.

In a formal sense, we can show students how to train themselves to use certain words as information cues. For example, in a GCSE Psychology class, you might train students to see the following words as cues, each of which calls up information relevant to different areas of the course:

- Psychodynamic
- Social Learning Theory
- Biological Approach

This is different from just recalling the words and their meanings. The purpose is to illustrate to students how seeing or remembering these words can act as a gateway to a wide range of knowledge and understanding – just as was demonstrated by the 'childhood holidays' example above.

Decoding questions



In any exam or test, students have to decode questions. Decoding means unpicking what a question asks you to do. A student who accurately decodes a question is better placed to provide a relevant, focused answer than one who can't.

The annotated example on the next page demonstrates how you might decode a GCSE question.

Decoding questions



Outline =
give a summary of

5 (b) Outline two reasons why some communities may become divided.

[6 marks]

Lots of reasons why communities become divided. Pick out two I can definitely write enough about - and include keywords.

Six marks. That means three marks overall for each reason. One for the reason, two for the explanation.

(AQA Citizenship Studies GCSE, 2014)

Exam script modelling



John Tomsett, a UK headteacher, writes a stimulating blog at johntomsett.com.
If you google:

‘This much I know about...what REALLY WORKS when preparing students for their examinations!’

you will find a superb entry detailing how a teacher at his school annotated an entire A-Level Music paper to show his students how to think about every section of the exam. The annotated paper has been scanned and uploaded; you can access it through the blog. It offers a perfect example of how to do exam script modelling.

Annotating past papers with detailed explanations of how to think about different questions gives unparalleled access to your expertise on thinking, metacognition and self-regulation. This is invaluable for students in the run-up to exams.

About the author

Mike Gershon



Mike Gershon is a teacher, trainer and writer. He is the author of more than 30 books on teaching, learning and education, including the best-selling *Growth Mindset Pocketbook*, co-written with Barry Hymer. Mike's online teaching resources are some of the most popular in the world and have been viewed and downloaded more than three million times. He has written over 50 guides to different areas of classroom practice, along with dozens of articles.

You can train with Mike online at the TES Institute and get in touch via his website: www.mikegershon.com