MIX IT UP

INTERLEAVED PRACTICE

THE HOPEFULL INSTITUTE



Don't do ten of the same question in a row. Mix different types together, just like the exam does.

WHY IT WORKS

Imagine your maths homework is ten questions on the area of a circle. By question three you are on autopilot. You already know every answer uses the circle formula, so you never have to think about which formula to choose.

In the exam, the questions are mixed. Question 4 might ask for the area of a circle, question 5 the area of a triangle, and question 6 the volume of a cylinder. Nobody tells you which formula each one needs. Working that out is the hardest part, and mixed practice trains exactly that skill.

In one study, students who practised mixed maths problems scored about three times higher on a test a week later than students who practised one type at a time.

HOW TO DO IT TONIGHT

1. Pick three topics you are studying. In maths, that could be the area of a circle, the area of a triangle and the volume of a cylinder.
2. Take three questions from each topic, so you have nine questions.
3. Shuffle them so the same topic never comes up twice in a row.
4. Before each one, ask yourself: "What kind of question is this, and which method do I need?"

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN EACH SUBJECT

Maths
Mix fractions, percentages and algebra in one set, not three separate sets.

Science
Mix questions on forces, energy and waves, instead of finishing one chapter at a time.

English
Switch between a short answer, a paragraph of analysis and an essay plan in one session.

History
Mix source questions, short answers and essay questions from different units.

Flashcards
Shuffle cards from three topics into one deck, so you can't guess what is coming next.

Past papers
Do question 1 from one paper, question 5 from another and question 9 from a third.

TRY THIS

Tonight, choose **nine questions from three different topics** in one subject. Shuffle them, and before each one say out loud what kind of question it is.

The research: Rohrer, D. and Taylor, K. (2007). The shuffling of mathematics problems improves learning. *Instructional Science*, volume 35, pages 481 to 498.