

How to write a précis – using a MindMap - Dr Peter Jepson (June 2012)

We generally lose, after reading, 80% of what we have read after 24 hours. Logically, this must be bad for revision, because as time goes on, you will lose even more of what you have read. Hence, it is vitally important - for revision purposes – that we find ways of recalling what we read.

What you need to do is follow the ‘Buzan Method of note-taking’. This will enable you to analyse what you read and focus upon it by writing down and memorising the important parts of what you read.

Our brain is most effective for between 20 and 30 minutes. After that we start to drift off from concentration and therefore we may be working when we are least effective. Logically, in preparing for a Social Sciences lesson, we should read for a 15-20 minute session and then produce a MindMap note of the key bits of what we have read (see below for an example of a MindMap).

The logic being that you are glancing back over what you have read and picking out and writing down the KEY bits that you consider are important. In a sense you are analysing what you have read and determining what is important for you to remember. You are in effect, selecting the key bits and revising those key bits.

Once that you have produced this MindMap note on the key bits – have a short 5-10 minute break. This short break is absolutely vital – since it gives your brain an opportunity to relax.

After your short break – go back to the MindMap you have created and glance at the key bits and limbs of your drawing. Put those thoughts back into your head and then go back to reading (for 15-20 minutes) the chapter/textbook. After that 15-20 minutes of reading, go back to your MindMap and add related limbs (from your further reading) to it. Expand the drawing – using one word (at most a few words) for each limb. After completing that session of the Mindmap – go for another break. Repeating the process (if necessary) until you have completed the reading.

Then update/glance over, and then store the Mindmap for future reference. Ideally, you should glance over the Mindmap after one day, seven days, one month, and six months (or when you revise) to store the key elements into your long-term memory.

