

STUDY SKILLS FOR 5TH YEAR STUDENTS

October 2016

Dear Student

This module about how to study is designed to help you achieve the best results you can in your Leaving Certificate. You have just started your two year programme leading to Leaving Certificate and this is the perfect time to really learn how to study, how to read effectively, how to get a better focus and ultimately a better result.

These notes will help you to break bad study habits and to put good study habits in place. If you engage with this you will get started well, on time and avoid the panic, bad feeling and parent/teacher nagging that can happen if you get a bad start and fall behind in study.

Past leaving certificate students from CUS would say that the most important thing to do is to start TODAY – and do that by following the daily study times (class study, revision, and homework). If you feel that you are falling behind or not coping, re-read these notes and you will find a way through. If you have further problems, please come up to the Guidance Counsellor for an appointment – do not leave it too late if you need to discuss subjects, levels, etc.

So learn to concentrate and see yourself as a senior student who has a great opportunity to do well. Study, rest and play to keep healthy and balanced.

Create the scene in your mind of the day your leaving certificate results come out – remember that you are in charge of that outcome.

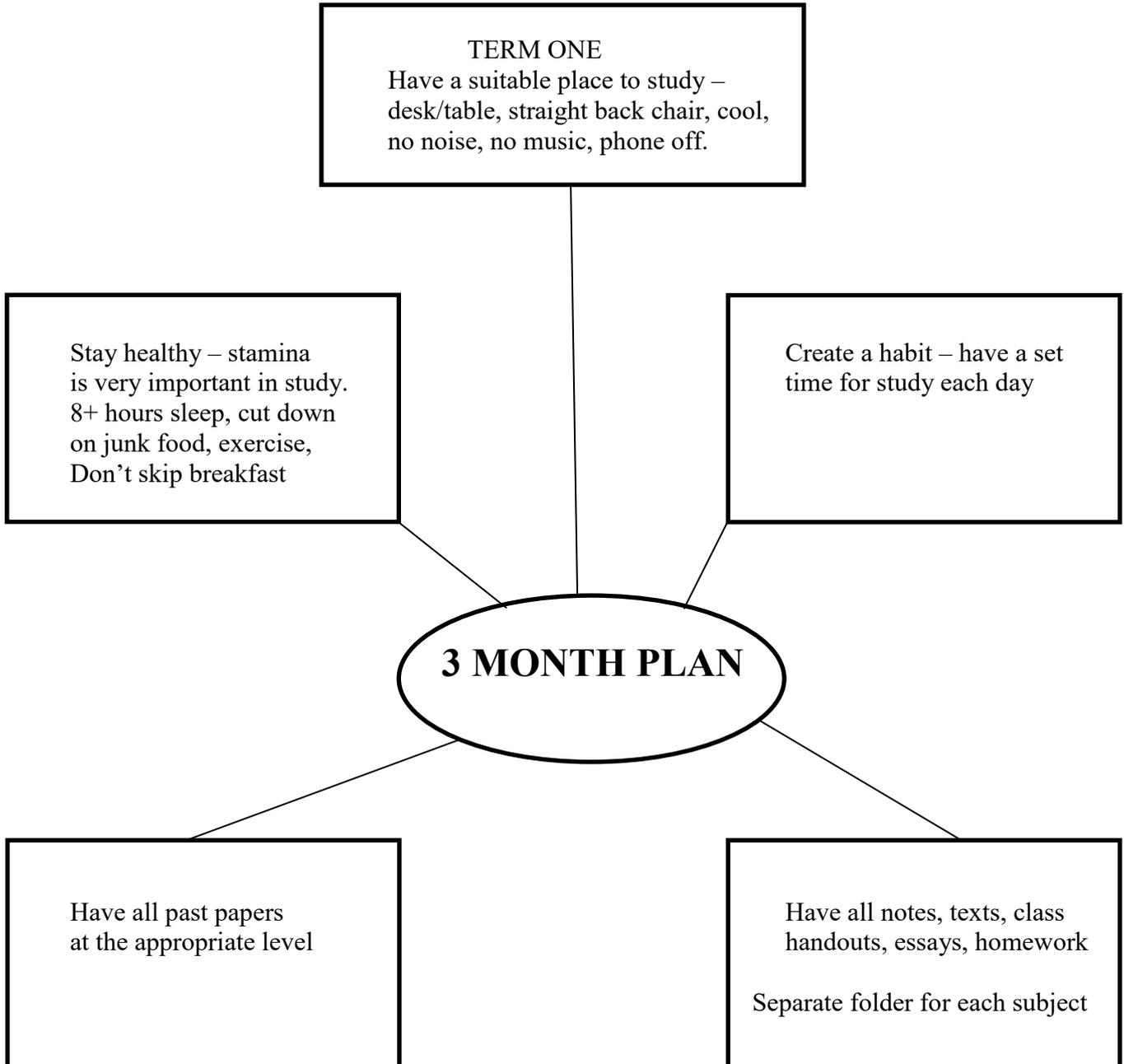
You will receive all the help, advice and support from the whole CUS staff especially from your teachers, so go for it now!

Practical Tips on how to cope with the Leaving Certificate

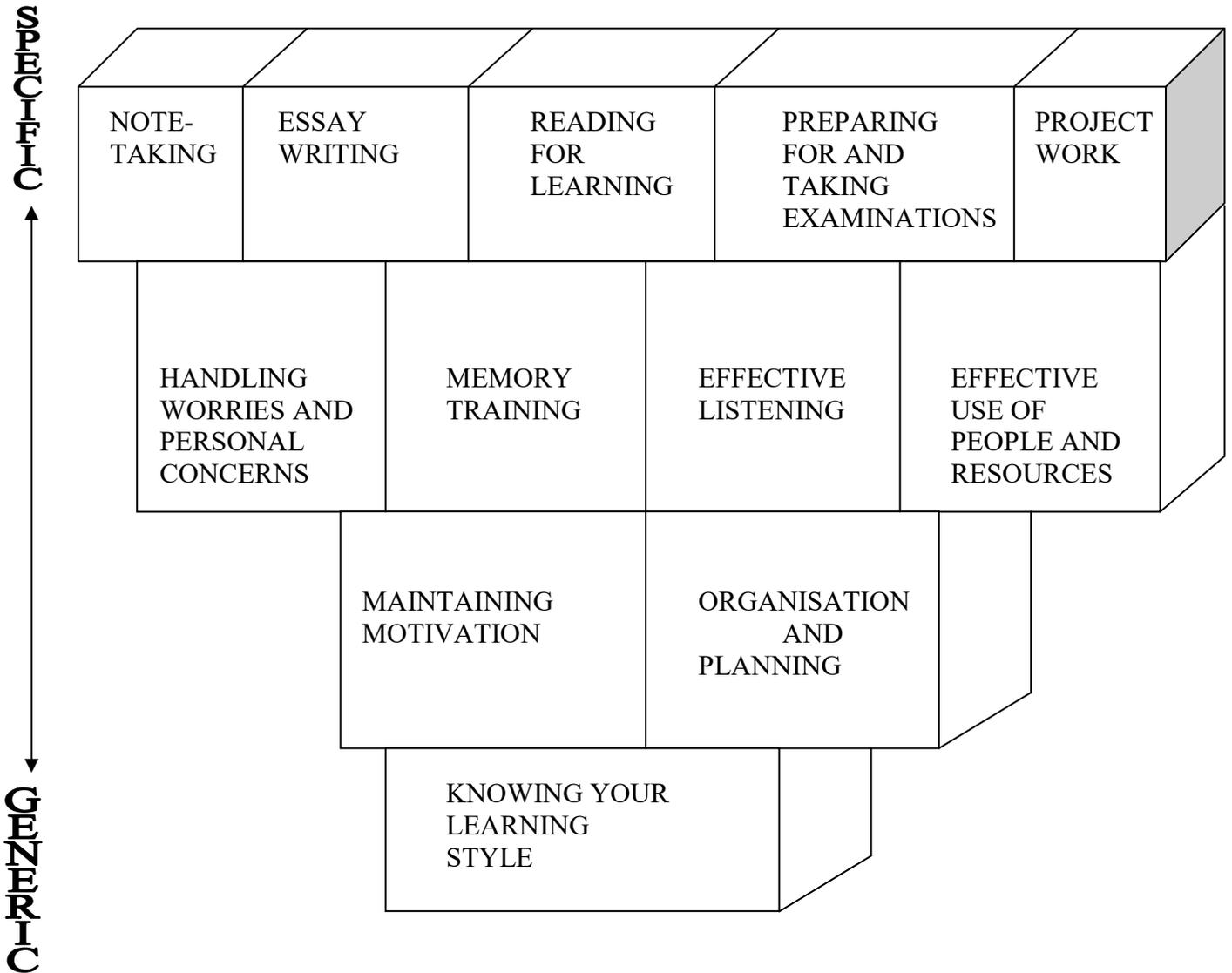
1. **Get Organised.** Have a lever-arch A4 folder for each subject. Sub-divide these folders into the various topics/sections you'll cover. These folders are essential for organising your notes. It will make revision much easier.
2. **Establish a routine.** Keep to that routine from the beginning of 5th year. While your study timetable can be adjusted to suit your needs, keep up with the amount of time you've set aside for study.
3. **Take Notes.** Reduce large volumes of information into manageable and easily accessible notes. You should start this immediately. This forms the basis of much of your study.
4. **Constantly review material covered.** There's a saying that 'practice makes perfect'. It's probably more accurate to say '**repetition makes perfect**'. You should build into your routine regular **review sessions**. Fifteen minutes is all it should take to review a specific topic.
5. **Homework.** While it's the bane of most students' lives, homework is a major support in preparing for your exams. It's all about your attitude towards it. **Approach each homework task as if you were submitting an exam.** It might not be perfect, but that's not the issue. You build on what you have achieved. When you get the work back, take note of where you've made mistakes, correct them and file the work in the appropriate subject folder.
6. **Pastimes and Hobbies.** You need some way to relax while tackling the Leaving Cert. Whether it's sport, music, reading – build recreation time into your routine.

Remember, the Leaving Certificate programme is a two year marathon. Pace yourself. Stay up to date with tasks. Be Positive.

THE NO BRAINERS



EFFECTIVE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A GOOD STUDY METHOD:



STUDY TIME

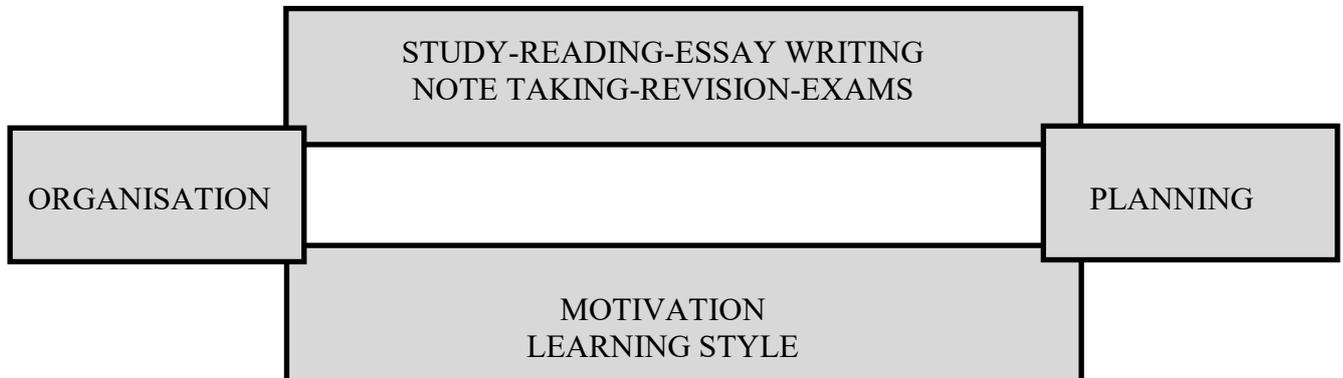
3 STEPS TO GOOD DAILY LEARNING

1. **Class study** 6 hours per day
2. **Daily Review** – within 12 hours
8-10 minutes per class of the day 1 hour approximately
3. **Good Written Homework** 2 hours approximately

Active, effective listening is a habit, as well as the foundation of effective communication.

Form a tunnel between you and your teacher.

GET THE BASICS RIGHT



Please notice that the foundation of study skills consists of **three blocks** supporting the specific actions of study.

These three are the most important parts of your study plan.

*Know your **Learning Style** and **Motivation** support the twin pillars of **Organisation** and **Planning**.*

Attention to these three will make it possible for you to do good study which should lead to exam success. (Action: do learning style questionnaire)

These are the most important questions for you to answer for yourself:

1. Do I know why I am studying? _____
2. Do I want to get the best possible points? _____
3. Is there a particular course/college I want to get into? _____
4. Do I just want to pass my Leaving Certificate? _____

MOTIVATION

Whatever you decide now may be your motivator for the next two years.

NOTE: Even negative motivation may work for you, e.g.

- I want to do as well/better than my friend/s
- I'm getting money/holiday etc if I get X points
- I'll be 'killed' if I don't pass.
- I'm smart and for the first time I will show them.
- I will prove my teachers wrong!

ORGANISATION AND PLANNING

- Get Started – don't set a future date, start today, achieve something today. Start with something you find difficult, something you don't like and the achievement will encourage you and increase your confidence.
- Have a positive attitude to class, study and revision. Keep reminding yourself of the benefits you will get when you achieve your goal. Give yourself a treat AFTER completing a study task.
- If overwhelmed, always seek help with your planning from a teacher or parent.
- Have a routine for study, set realistic goals and stick to them.
- Have a study plan, a timetable for study and revision.
- Definitions, rules, formulae must be over-learned.
- Keep a balance with work, rest and play, but do all three.
- Plan all answers before writing them.
- Understand and apply the SQ3R technique.

The SQ3R method:

Survey: The whole book/topic to get a general view of the material.

Question: Have a series of questions you can ask about the chapter/book using who? what? when? where? why? and how?

Read: Read once quickly to get the main ideas, read again once or twice to formulate your questions and to make notes, diagrams or underline key points.

Recall: Try to answer your questions without looking at the book. This helps concentration (we forget at least half of what we read in two hours unless we attempt to recall it).

Review: Check your book or notes to see that your answers (recalled) are right. Go over things that you could not answer or were incorrect.

KNOW YOUR LEARNING STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is my best time for study – morning, evening, late evenings, weekends?
2. What is my best place / surroundings for study – desk, chair, couch, bed?
3. Am I am able to concentrate for long periods – one hour, or do I prefer shorter 20 minute sessions?
4. Do I like frequent breaks in my study time?
5. Do I know why I am studying?
6. What is in it for me?
7. Do I really want this?
8. Do I learning by reading or do I prefer to write notes/essays?
9. Can I work well alone and keep motivated?
10. Do I prefer to enlist support from friends/family in order to stay motivated?
11. Do I ask teachers for help?
12. Am I a good listener in class?
13. Does my mind and concentration wander in class?
14. Have I a clear overview of the course content of each of my subjects?
15. Do I put pressure before pain or do I study first and build in rewards/treats later?

Now, write out here what you feel your own learning style is:

THE WRITING PROCESS

THINKING

1. Clarify the Aim

- What does the title require?

2. Collect Ideas

- Jot down key words

3. Gather Information

- Sources?

4. Group Information

- Group like ideas
- How many main ideas?
- Decide paragraph themes
- Plan the introduction and conclusion
- Check against the aim

5. Decide the order and edit

WRITING

6. Write the Essay

- Follow the Plan

7. Read and Check

- Check against the Aim
- Check spelling, punctuation and grammar

HOW TO LISTEN EFFECTIVELY

- After class, review your notes and **think** about what was covered in class.
- Some people like to **rewrite** their notes.
- Some people like to **underline** or **highlight** important ideas and vocabulary.
- If you have a choice, try to sit near the front of the class – you can usually listen better if you are in the front.

More details on listening skills:

- Good listening means you are paying attention.
- Try to hear what is said, not what you want to hear.
- Think ‘around’ the topic and ‘between the lines’.
- Relate it to what you already know.
- What is the main point?
- What is likely to be on the test?
- Listen carefully to what your teacher says about an assignment and write it down in your assignment notebook right away.

METHOD WORDS – EXAM QUESTIONS

Here are some ‘Method’ words that continually appear in examinations questions. Which of the alternatives ‘a’ to ‘e’ is correct?

1. COMPARE

- a. Give a graphic account.
- b. Look for similarities
- c. Investigate
- d. Look for difference
- e. Look for similarities and differences

2. DESCRIBE

- a. Make an appraisal of ...
- b. Examine by argument
- c. Make a diagram of ...
- d. Give a detailed or graphic account of ...
- e. Give reasons for

3. JUSTIFY

- a. Give personal reasons for ...
- b. Saying in your own words
- c. Investigate
- d. Say why you think
- e. Show adequate reasons for conclusions

4. TRACE

- a. Follow the development of ...
- b. Write essay on
- c. Say where it originates
- d. Give detailed account of ...
- e. Give reasons why

5. CONTRACT

- a. Give a graphic account ...
- b. Compare
- c. Give your own judgement
- d. Treat on aspect only
- e. Set in opposition to bring out differences

6. STATE

- a. Define meaning of ...
- b. Give your views on ...
- c. Present in brief clear form
- d. Examine by argument.
- e. Give detailed account of ...

7. ILLUSTRATE

- a. Give a concise account of ...
- b. Give a detailed account of ...
- c. Make clear diagrams or examples
- d. Make an appraisal of ...
- e. Give your reasons for ...

8. DEFINE

- a. Say in your own words ...
- b. Trace history of ...
- c. Set out the precise meaning of ...
- d. Say why you think ...
- e. Make an appraisal of ...

9. OUTLINE

- a. Trace history of ...
- b. Give a detailed or graphic account of
- c. Give main features only
- d. Tell in your own words
- e. Make an appraisal of ...

10. EXPLAIN

- a. Say where it originates
- b. Give your reasons for ...
- c. Examine by argument
- d. Interpret or account for ...
- e. Trace history of ...

NOTES:

Use these tools to refine your study habits

MEMORY PRINCIPLES

Below is a list of memory or learning principles with a brief definition of each.

Making an Effort to Remember

- **Interest** – the brain prioritizes by meaning, value and relevance. To have meaning, you must understand what you are learning. In order to remember something thoroughly, you must be interested in it and think that it has value and relevance in your life.
- **Intent to remember** – your attitude has much to do with whether you remember something or not. A key factor to remembering is having a positive attitude that you get it right the first time. Attention is not the same as learning, but little learning takes place without attention.
- **Basic Background** – your understanding of new materials depends on what you already know that you can connect it to. The more you increase your basic knowledge, the easier it is to build new knowledge on this background.

Controlling the Amount and Form

- **Selectivity** – you must determine what is most important and select those parts to begin the process of studying and learning.
- **Meaningful Organisation** – you can learn and remember better if you can group ideas into some sort of meaningful categories or groups.

Strengthening Neural Connections

- **Recitation** - Saying ideas aloud in your own words strengthens synaptic connections and gives you immediate feedback. The more feedback you get, the faster and more accurate your learning.
- **Visualisation** – the brain's quickest and probably the longest-lasting response is to images. By making a mental picture, you use an entirely different part of the brain than you did by reading or listening.
- **Association** – memory is increased when facts to be learned are consciously associated with something familiar to you. Memory is essentially formed by making neural connections. Begin by asking 'what is this like that I already know and understand?'
- **Consolidation - Allowing Time to Solidify Pathways** – Your brain must have time for new information to establish and solidify a neuronal pathway. When you make a list or review your notes right after class, you are using the principle of consolidation.

IDEA MAPPING

Idea Mapping is the use of a diagram that is drawn to represent facts, words or other ideas linked to a central concept, around which they are arranged in a circular pattern. It is not only simple to understand, but also extremely effective for use in your studies. In an Idea Map, information on a topic or subject is represented visually on the page; this helps you to retain more of the information and it is more interesting for you to study as well. Furthermore, each concept is placed in the right location (regardless of the order in which it is thought of).

Studies have shown that students who study while using idea maps and other graphical representations of information recall more information than those who study only the teacher's notes or their own written summaries of material.

But what can we use idea maps for? This method of arranging and presenting information is very useful for studying and preparing the general structure of essays and answers before answering. It presents, visually, the theme of disorder in *Macbeth*. Studying this map can help you to simplify something as complex as a Shakespearean play, and is a great additional study tool to your teacher's typed notes.

It can also be used with great success in the following areas:

- Note taking
- Brainstorming either individually or in groups
- Studying and memorisation
- Researching projects
- Problem-solving
- Increasing creativity

How to Draw an Idea Map

Drawing an idea map is as easy as following these six simple steps:

1. Begin at the centre of an A4 page in landscape orientation. Write down your central concept on the page and circle it, box it in or mark it in some way.
- 2 Surrounding this central concept, write down any main ideas which relate to it. These can then be attached to the centre using branches. Any of these ideas can then be expanded out using sub-branches.
- 3 It is a good idea to colour code your branches, i.e. one colour for the central concept, a different colour for the surrounding ideas, and so on.

- 4 The branches should not be uniform and straight, but rather curved and overlap each other. This presents the information in a natural and intuitive way, which makes it easier for you to recall later.

- 5 Feel free to use small notes and images at various points to clarify points of information.

- 6 Try to refrain from too many layers of branches and sub-branches. The goal of idea mapping is to simplify the information delivery process rather than to complicate it.

Try to use as many different colours, drawings and symbols as possible when creating your idea map. You don't have to worry about creating a work of art, just a memorable representation of the topic which you will remember easily come examination time.

Also, keep the sentences and idea labels as short as possible. If you can, try keeping them to one phrase or even a single word. Your idea map will be more effective if you keep it that way. Finally, try not extend your diagram too far, as this can get complicated and lead to confusion. It is preferable, instead, to take an existing idea from your diagram and use this as the central concept of a new Idea Map layout.

So, why not try to create your own idea map. Follow the few guidelines and don't worry about doing it 'correctly' – all that matters is that you engage your brain a little more while making notes and make it a little more enjoyable for yourself to be studying.

ATTITUDE

If you think you are beaten, you are.

If you think you dare not, you don't.

If you'd like to win, but think you can't

It's almost certain you won't

Life's battles don't go to the stronger or faster man

*But sooner or later, the man who wins is the man who thinks he
can.*

We are responsible for our attitudes