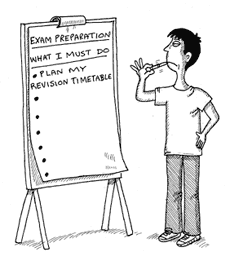
A2 Level Politics

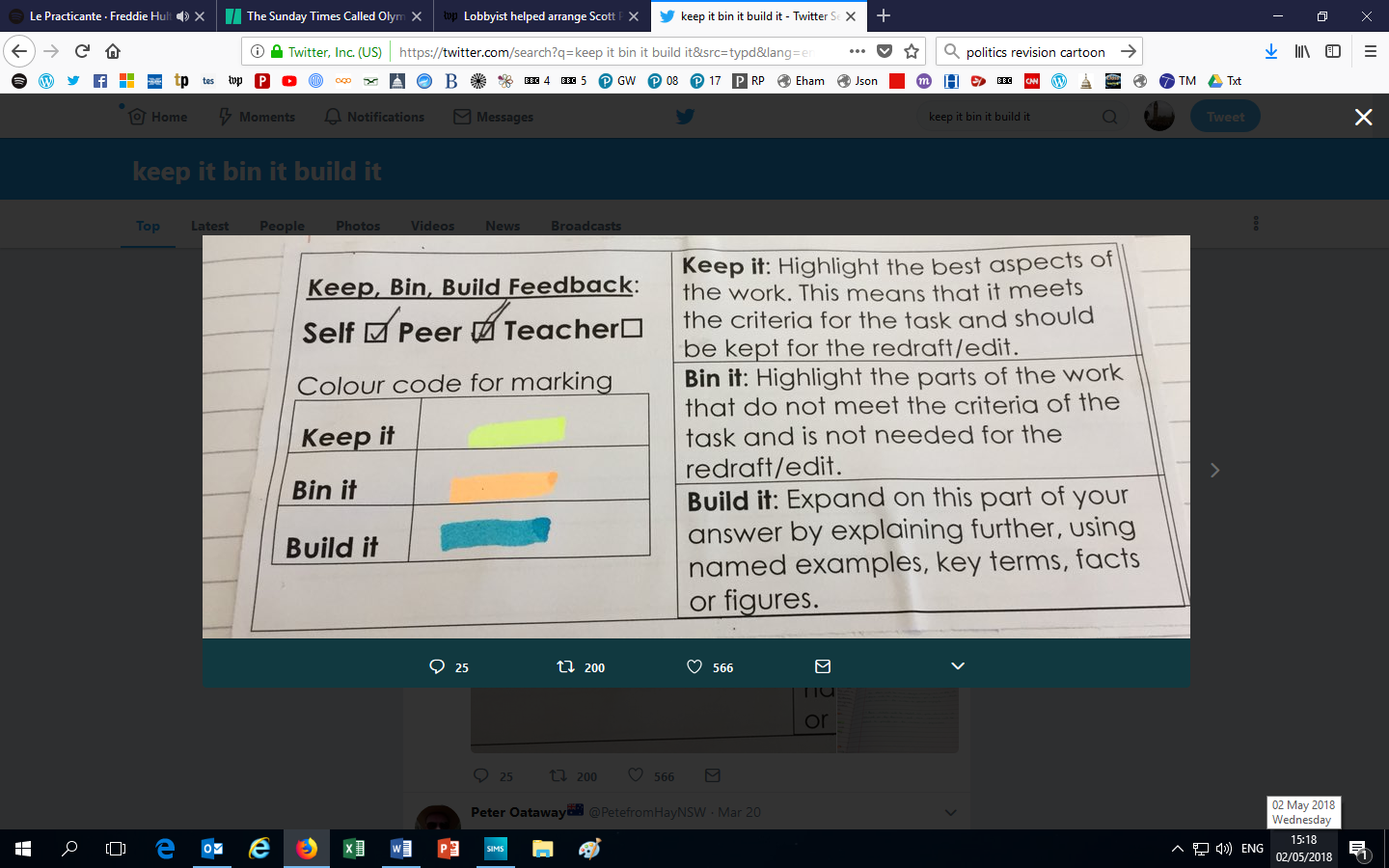


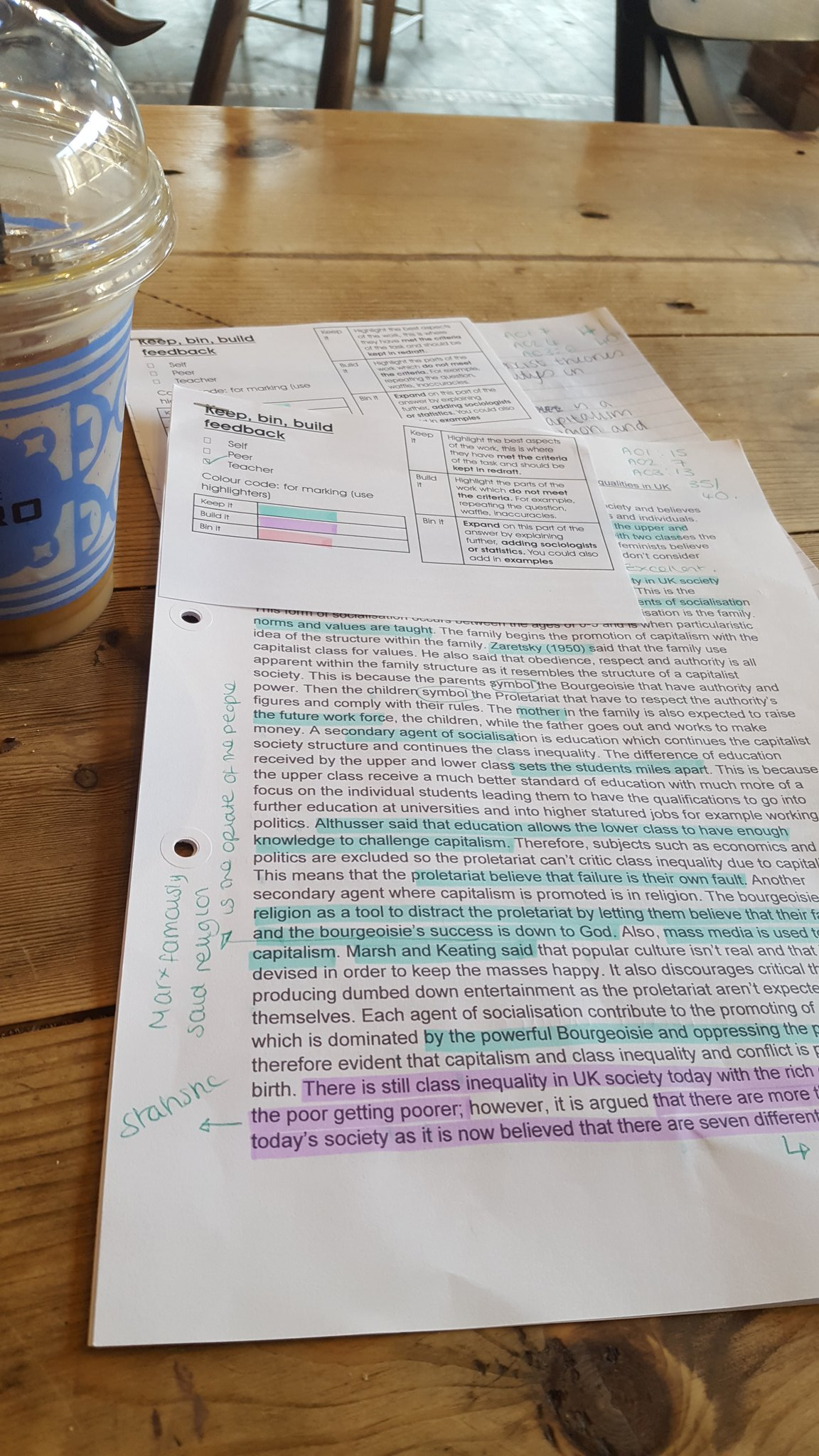
Revision

Hints and Tips

**Keep it, Bin it, Build it**

Take an old essay and three coloured highlighters. Go through your essay colour coding what text you should **keep**, what you should **bin**, and what you should **build** upon. Then have a go at making your essay better!

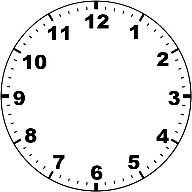




**Revision clocks**

Get a blank copy (or make your own) of the revision clock. Pick twelve topics/sub-topics and labels each segment with one topic. Start a timer and spend one minute on each segment trying to recall everything you know about that topic. Where there are huge gaps, your knowledge is not good enough!

Appointment Process



Current Court

Key cases

Weaknesses of

Constitution

Nominations

Imperial judiciary

Conservative

Liberal

Judicial Review

Judicial Restraint

Judicial Activism

Supreme Court

**Write your own essay questions**

You have a huge list of past paper questions in the back of your student handbook. However, a great way of revising is to write your own questions. The exam board can only include political language in a question if it appears in the specification. So, grab the specification from Edexcel’s website and try writing your own questions!

**Using the examiner’s reports**

After every season of exams, there is a report issued about each Politics exam. All of these can be found on the Edexcel website under ‘Exam materials’. These outline the common errors and best answers on each question in an exam paper, with hints and tips for what the examiner would have expected. They are invaluable for understanding what you are **expected** to do.

**Online**

* Blog – [www.lgspolitics.wordpress.com](http://www.lgspolitics.wordpress.com)
* Twitter - @LGS\_Politics
* Memrise (links on Firefly…or make your own!)
* Firefly pages
* HipHughes and Crash Course videos on Youtube (but watching them alone is not enough – you’ve got to DO something with them!)
* Lowi & Ginsburg study space - <http://wwnorton.com/college/polisci/american-government12/full/> - There are chapter notes here which are great, quizzes, flashcards and so on

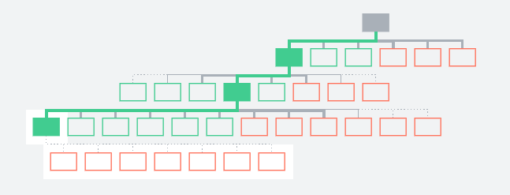
**Kialo -** [www.kialo.com](http://www.kialo.com)

Kialo is an online debating tool. If you use it correctly, you would essentially be able to group plan an essay! Sign up (and get some mates to too!). Pick a past paper question (or one you’ve written yourself) and use it as the title of a ‘new debate’. It is best to keep the debates private, rather than allowing the public to comment, as you want to keep your focus on A Level politics, not ranting people!

From here, you can add statements that agree or disagree with the title. Under each of these statements, you can either add further supporting statement, or statements that directly contradict your statement. Then you can add supporting or contradictory points under these…and on, and on! You are creating your own ‘argument tree’. You are aiming for your debate to become ‘long’ rather than ‘wide’. The ‘wider’ your debate appears on the screen, the more you are relying on AO1 knowledge. The ‘longer’ your debate appears on the screen – the more support/counterpoints that each statement has – the more you are relying on AO2 analysis and evaluation.

The best part about this is that you can do it as a group – one of the best ways to revise – but from the comfort of your own home. **I highly recommend it**.

A Kialo argument tree:



**C-F-L the Questions!**

One of the easiest ways to lose marks is not to answer the question set. What you ‘know’ and want to tell the examiner is irrelevant. Exams are about SKILLS not just knowledge – 33/45 marks in the long essay are awarded for AO2 and AO3, which are skills! So, you must know how to answer the question.

Most questions consist of three parts:

C – command word – ‘assess’, ‘explain’, ‘describe’, ‘to what extent’, etc

F – focus – topic and sub-topic of the question.

L – limitations – are there any parameters that the question sets? This might be a time period, or a specific individual, and so on. If so, referencing anything else will not get you marks!

*Example: To what extent is the Robert’s Court more powerful than its predecessors?*

C – ‘To what extent’. This means you MUST come to a judge about this extent. ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ is not an appropriate answer!

F – The focus here appears to be the Supreme Court. But if the Court is growing in power, it might be that you have to compare its power to the other branches of government. Therefore, this question might also include the Presidency and Supreme Court. This is AO2S – synopticity!

L – The key limitation is the Roberts Court. While you are comparing it to ‘its predecessors’, you must keep coming back to the Roberts Court…if you start comparing the Rehnquist Court to the Burger Court you are not going to get many marks. The other limitation here however is power. The examiner is not interested in your discussions about whether it has become more or less conservative, for example; they are only interested in POWER.

For each past paper question, you can undertake the same exercise. Identify the C-F-L of each question and then explain it as shown in the example above – identifying them alone is not a good enough use of your revision time. You could even create your own ‘command word dictionary’!

**A3-A4-A5**

An effective way to start your revision is one topic at a time and having an A3 piece of paper handy. Put the topic either at the top of the page, or in the centre (depending on whether you prefer linear notes or spider diagrams) and then write down everything you can remember about that topic.

Grab another coloured pen and your textbook and fill in any important details or examples that you forgot – it does not matter if it gets messy! Once you are happy that you have summarised the topic, grab an A4 piece of paper

Now, do the same task of summarising a topic, but this time you have only half the space. This means that examples may become just names, explanations of political terms must become briefer. Again, grab a different colour and fill in any gaps.

Finally, repeat this with an A5 sheet. There should be no sentences by this time, just words.

**Case Studies**

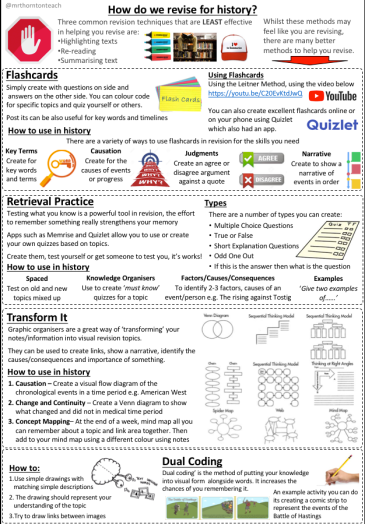
Pick a really well-known and big political example – the election of Trump, or the appointment of Gorsuch, or the Travel Ban for example. Put this in the centre of a page surrounded by the eight topics that make up the politics exam. Under each topic, explain how you would link that example to the topic.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Supreme Court   * Conservative for conservative * Sided with liberals in Sessions v. Dimaya | President   * Ideological coherence * Lack of power of Obama/lame duck | Congress   * Senate control over appointment process * Role of ideology |
| Constitution   * Conservative justice more likely to be strict constructionist | **Appointment of Gorsuch to the Supreme Court**  *Include some information here about the case study* | Elections   * Fixed election timings meant Obama unable to approve Garland |
| Parties   * Coherence of party ideology * Importance of parties in Congress | Pressure Groups   * Role of the ABA in appointing a justice | Civil Rights   * Activism v restraint and likely camp Gorsuch will fit in |

**Flashcards**

You could invest in some index cards from your local supermarket or stationary store that you can use to make your own flashcards.

* Have a political term on one side and the definition on the other
* Have a named example on one side and an explanation and links to topics on the other
* Have a factual question on one side and the possible answers on the other
* Have an essay debate on one side and the possible paragraph headings on the other



**Introductions**

Practise writing conclusions on their own for 45 mark essays!

An introduction must cover the following things if it is to be of any use:

* Definition of key political terms in the questions
* An idea of the factors you plan to discuss in your essay, that cover both sides
* A hint at the direction you will be arguing

This is also known as the 3D’s – Define, Discuss, Direction. Roughly, the definition should only be a sentence, the discussion should be two or three sentences and the direction should be a sentence. As you develop your own style, you’ll move away from this simple formula into something a bit more flowing!

You can also include the name of some examples you will be referencing; these should be nothing more than names, you’ll explain them in the text. Equally, a really good introduction will begin to explore the **context** – why is this questions relevant today?

***Example:*** Is the UK still a representative democracy?

A representative democracy, drawn from the Burkean model, requires citizens to vote for someone to represent them in government. Crucially, those elected can use their conscience to decide on matters, and are not delegates. The UK maintains key aspects of this, with local MPs being elected to represent their constituents. More recently, representative democracy has been advanced further through devolution. Nonetheless, a still unelected House of Lords and an increasing use of referendums are actually more in line with elitist and direct democracy, especially when such landmark decisions as Brexit are undertaken in this manner. Despite this, the challenges to representative democracy are largely the same as they have always been, and the day-to-day governing of the UK is largely undertaken by representative. (123 words)

**Conclusions**

Practise writing conclusions on their own for 45 mark essays!

Conclusions must draw on all factors in your essay, pull them together to show common themes and **make a judgment**, explaining how you reached that judgment.

***Example***

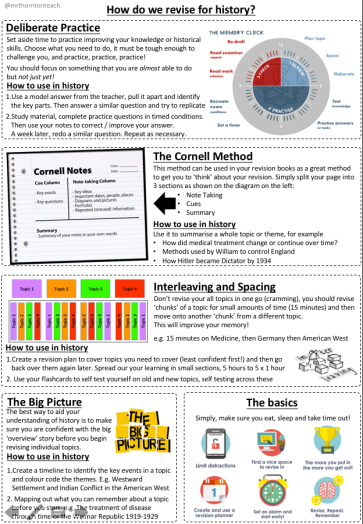
There are clearly a number of developing challenges to representative democracy in the UK with Brexit often cited as one of the most significant. However, this aside, most challenges remain the same as they have always been and therefore UK representative democracy is in no greater peril than it ever was. Indeed, the development of devolution has given the people a greater number of representatives that they are able to call upon, and both houses of Parliament are clearly becoming more functionally representative. With a continually growing population, not only does representative democracy seem to be secure it the UK, it remains an absolute necessity with other forms of democracy simply not being workable with a population of 60 million people. (121 words)

**Structure Strips**

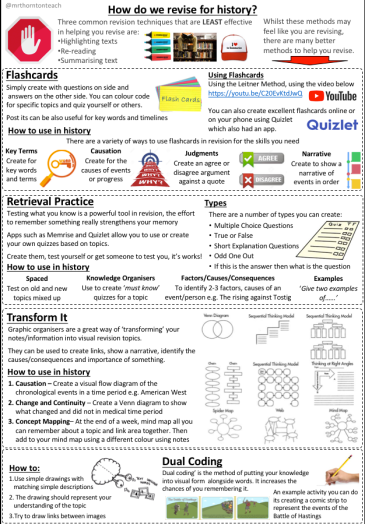
Use a structure strip to help you write an essay under timed conditions. Print it off/cut it out and have it handy as you write an essay. Make sure you pick the right level, and do not be afraid to challenge yourself!

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **45 Mark Structure Strip**  **Mid-L2 (20-24 marks)** | **45 Mark Structure Strip**  **Top-L2 (25-29 marks)** | **45 Mark Structure Strip**  **L3 (30 marks upwards)** |
| **Intro:**  🞏 Define: any key terms in the Q that help to frame your argument  🞏 Discuss: identify one or two arguments you consider to be most important  🞏 Direction: hint at the line of argument you will be following | **Intro:**  🞏 Define: any key terms in the Q that help to frame your argument  🞏 Discuss: identify one or two arguments you consider to be most important  🞏 If you have time: identify some of the recent examples  🞏 Direction: hint at the line of argument you will be following | **Intro:**  🞏 Define: any key terms in the Q that help to frame your argument  🞏 Discuss: identify one or two arguments you consider to be most important  🞏 If you have time: identify some of the recent examples  🞏 Direction: hint at the line of argument you will be following  🞏 If you have time: include context of the question…why is it an important question? |
| **Paragraph 1:**  🞏 Identify the argument  🞏 Explain it, using specific detail and examples – what is this argument  🞏 Using analytical phrases, refer back to the question.   * “This limits…because…” * “This is an example of…because…”   🞏 Using judgment phrases, explain how strong/weak this argument is | **Paragraph 1:**  🞏 Identify the argument  🞏 Explain it, using specific detail and examples – what is this argument  🞏 Using analytical phrases, refer back to the question.   * “This limits…because…” * “This is an example of…because…”   🞏 Does the analysis of this point change depending on the reality/context of the political situation?  🞏 Using judgment phrases, explain how strong/weak this argument is | **Paragraph 1:**  🞏 Identify the argument  🞏 Explain it, using specific detail and examples – what is this argument  🞏 Using analytical phrases, refer back to the question.   * “This limits…because…” * “This is an example of…because…”   🞏 Can this point be analysed a different way? Explain and analyse the other side of the argument. (This might include incorporating a second argument into your paragraph)  🞏 Does the analysis of this point change depending on the reality/context of the political situation?  🞏 Using judgment phrases, explain which side of the argument this point best supports. |
| **Following paragraphs:**  🞏 Repeat paragraph 1  🞏 A new paragraph for each point  🞏 Ensure you have a mix of factors, or a balance of positive/negative | **Following paragraphs:**  🞏 Repeat paragraph 1 with an argument that is **linked** to paragraph 1 but has the opposite view  🞏 A new paragraph for each point | **Following paragraphs:**  🞏 Repeat paragraph 1  🞏 A new paragraph for each argument (these may be long paragraphs!)  🞏 Maintain a clear line of argument throughout the essay |
| **Paragraphs:**  🞏 Aim for 4-6 paragraphs | **Paragraphs:**  🞏 Aim for 2-3 ‘couples’ of paragraphs | **Paragraphs:**  🞏 Aim for 3 well-balanced and clearly argued paragraphs |
| **Conclusion:**  🞏 Clear statement of which side of the argument you agree with  🞏 Explanation of why you believe this side to be stronger | **Conclusion:**  🞏 Clear statement of which side of the argument you agree with  🞏 Understanding of the strengths of all/both sides of the arguments  🞏 Explanation of why you believe one side to be stronger | **Conclusion:**  🞏 Clear statement of which side of the argument you agree with  🞏 Understanding of the strengths of all/both sides of the arguments  🞏 Explanation of why you believe one side to be stronger with reference to circumstances and political context, and what might change this argument. |

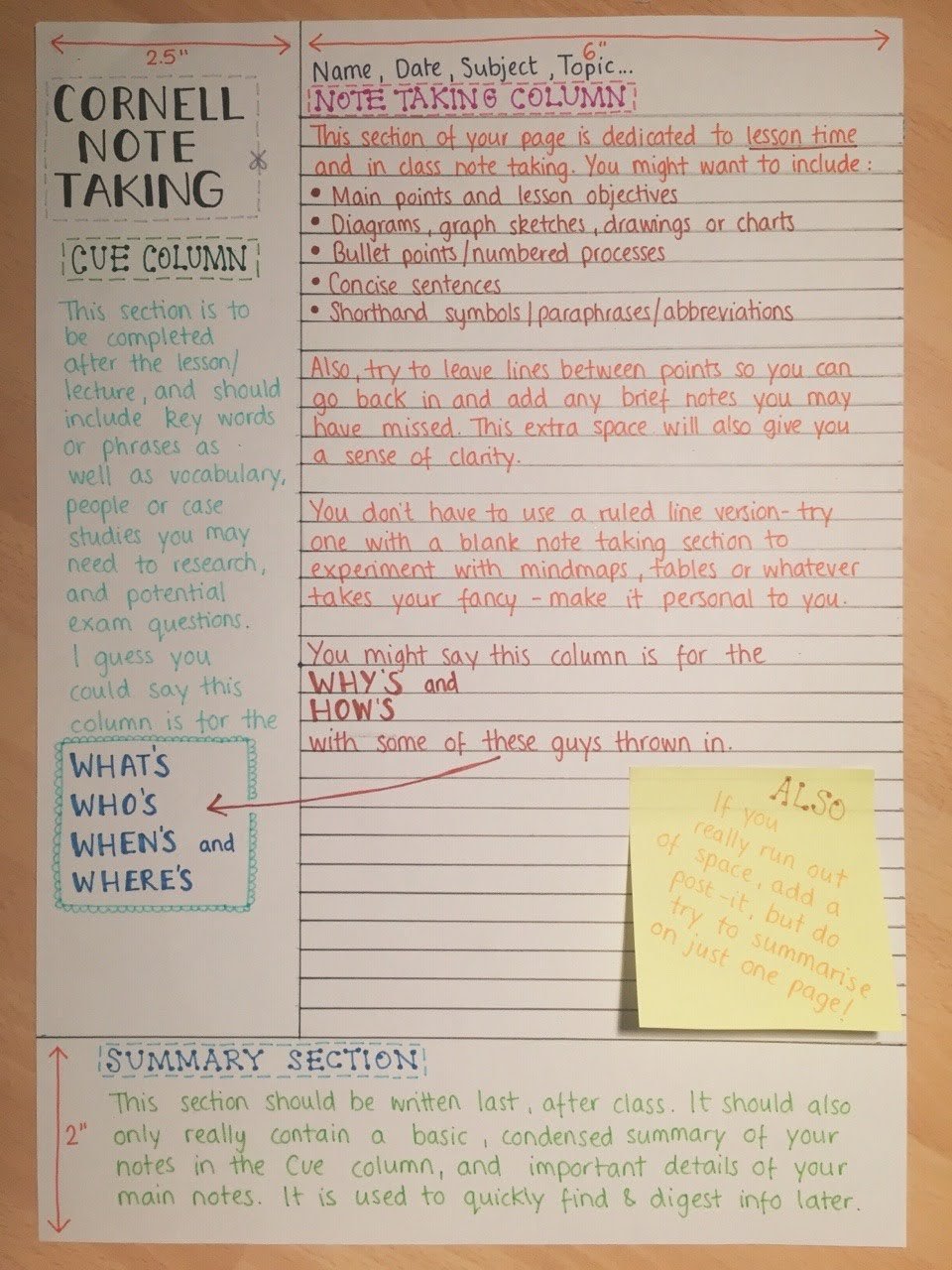
**Interleaving**



**Retrieval Practice**

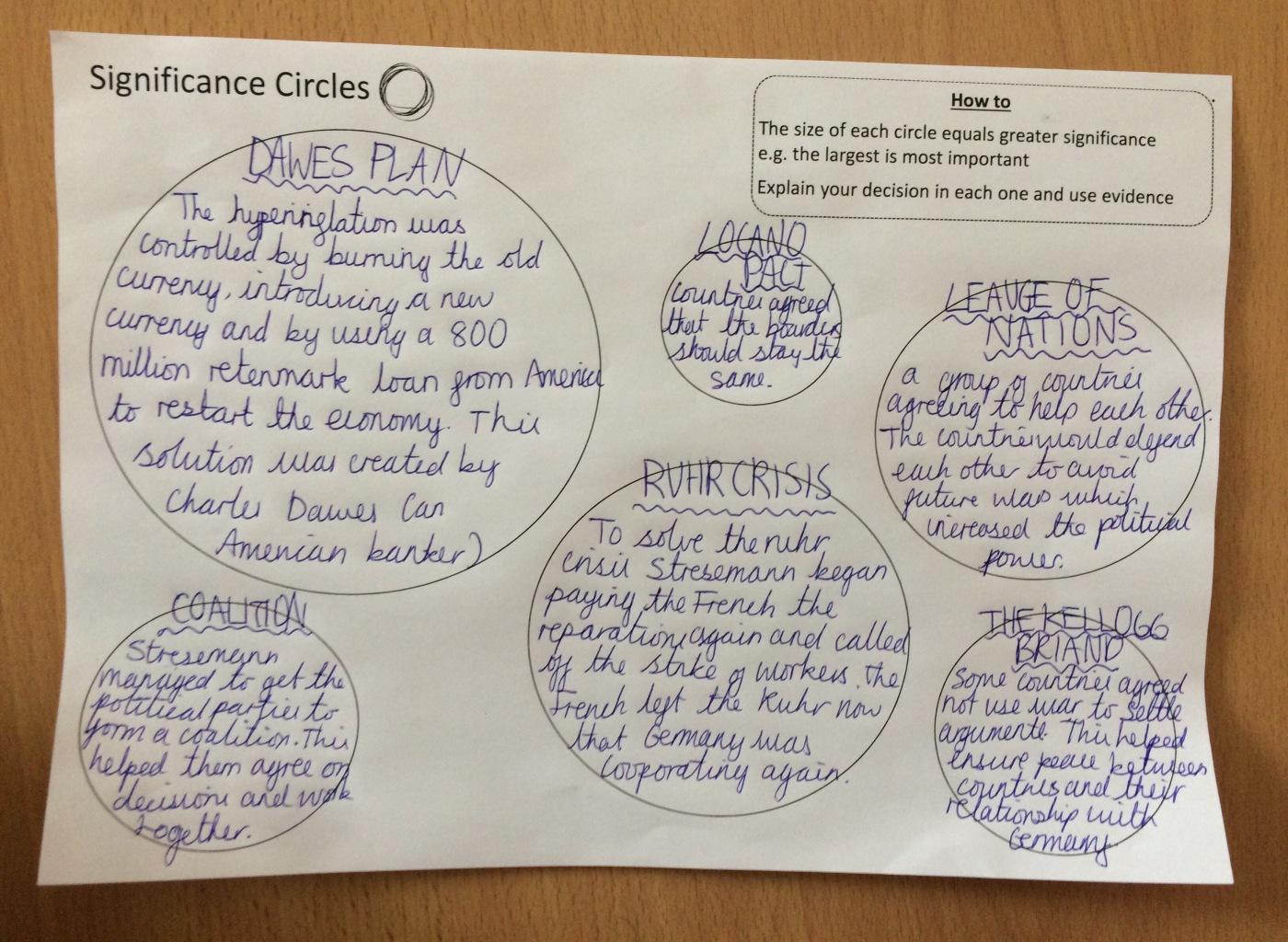


**Making revision notes – The Cornell Method**



**Significance Circles**

Plan an essay or debate by creating your own ‘significance circles’. Create a blank worksheet like this one – the bigger the circle, the more important the issue within a debate. Revise a debate and then try to complete the worksheet without looking at your notes – go back afterwards and fill in any gaps! The content of each circle should be AO1 knowledge (what is it?) and AO2 analysis (why is it relevant to this debate?) but the choice of circle is AO2 evaluation and AO3 line of argument.



**Connectives**

Use, learn and add your own connectives, and then use them in your essay plans/practice.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **‘UNIMPORTANT’**   * **Irrelevant** * **Pointless** * **Negligible** * **Trivial** * **Cosmetic** * **Insignificant** * **Marginal** | **‘LESS IMPORTANT’**   * **Minor** * **Allegedly** * **Superficial** * **Indirect** * **Theory** * **Inadvertent** * **Ostensibly** | **‘MORE IMPORTANT’**   * **Major** * **Substantial** * **Fundamental** * **Direct** * **Practice** * **Deliberate** * **Central** | **‘MOST IMPORTANT’**   * **Crucial** * **Imperative** * **Created** * **Decisive** * **Essential** * **Pivotal** * **Vital** |
| **‘CATALYSTS’**   * **Accelerated** * **Hindered** * **Sparked** * **Triggered** * **Exacerbated** * **Aggravated** * **Facilitated** | **‘REVEALERS’**   * **Consolidated** * **Showed** * **Indicated** * **Highlighted** * **Demonstrated** * **Revealed** * **Reflected** | **‘EMPHASISERS’**   * **Moreover** * **Furthermore** * **Indisputably** * **Definitely** * **Clearly** * **Obviously** * **Demonstrably** | **‘CONTRADICTORS’**   * **Nevertheless** * **Despite** * **Conversely** * **Notwithstanding** * **However** * **Nonetheless** * **Although** |

**Practicing your judgment**

