

A STUDY PLAYBOOK • FOR STUDENTS WHO STUDIED AND STILL BLANKED

The Blank-Page Playbook

How to study so it's still there on the day.

Nine study headaches, the research behind each one, and exactly what to do about it, starting tonight.

IT'S THE METHOD

Start free: 5 hours every month →

YSRSTUDIES.COM

Everything here works with a pen and paper. We'll also show you where an app can do the boring parts for you.

EDITION 1 • 2026

You studied for hours. You knew it at home. Then question one went **blank**.

If that's you, here's the most important sentence in this playbook: **it's not you. It's the method.**

Most of us were never taught *how* to study. We reread, we highlight, we copy the slides out neatly, we cram the night before. It feels like work. It feels like learning. And for decades, memory research has been quietly showing that much of it doesn't stick.

The fix isn't more hours. It's better ones.

Each chapter starts with a headache you'll recognise, in the words students actually use. Then it explains what's really going on, with the study behind it. Then comes a method you can use tonight with nothing but paper. At the end of each chapter there's a panel showing how **YSR Studies** does that part for you. We built it because we were tired of doing all of this by hand.

Want the shortcut while you read?

Open YSR Studies in another tab and try each chapter as you go. 5 free hours every month.

Open YSR Studies →

01	"I knew it at home."	Answer first
02	"I crammed. A week later it was gone."	Space it out
03	"I don't know what I don't know."	Map the course
04	"I keep making the same mistake."	Find the line
05	"I get it until I have to explain it."	Teach it out loud
06	"I'm drowning in lectures, slides and videos."	Capture less, process more
07	"Can I trust what the AI tells me? Is it cheating?"	Use AI that teaches
08	"My mind goes blank from nerves."	Write the worry down. Sleep.
09	The 7-day exam plan	Put it all together
10	The cheat sheet	Every headache and its fix on one page

01 “I knew it at home.”

THE HEADACHE

“I reread my notes three times and it all felt familiar, and I still couldn't do question one.”

WHAT'S HAPPENING · FAMILIAR ISN'T REMEMBERED

When you reread, the page gets easier to read. Your brain mistakes that ease for knowing it. Researchers call it fluency, and it's a trap: the exam doesn't hand you the page. It asks you to pull the answer out of your own head, and that is a different skill, one rereading never practises.

In a large review of ten popular study techniques, **practice testing** (quizzing yourself) and **spaced practice** came out top, rated **high utility**. **Rereading** and **highlighting**, the two things students do most, were rated **low**. Dunlosky et al., 2013, Psychological Science in the Public Interest.

In a classic experiment, students who restudied a passage did better on a test five minutes later. But on the delayed tests, two days and a week later, the students who had **tested themselves** remembered substantially more. The restudiers also felt *more* confident. Roediger & Karpicke, 2006, Psychological Science.

THE METHOD · ANSWER FIRST, THEN LOOK

- 1 **Close the book.** Write the question at the top of a blank page: "What are the three cases of end behaviour?"
- 2 **Answer from memory**, badly if you have to. Struggling to recall is the workout, not a sign you're failing.
- 3 **Check** against your notes or the answer key. Mark what you missed in a different colour.
- 4 **Redo only the misses**, tomorrow, from a blank page again.

Rule of thumb: for every minute you spend reading, spend at least one minute answering with the book shut.

How YSR Studies does this for you

CHECKED ANSWERS · WORKED STEPS · TUTOR

CHECKED ANSWERS

You answer first, and **every answer is checked**. Write it however you'd write it on paper: the checker compares the mathematics, not the spelling. So you never mark yourself right by mistake.

WORKED STEPS

Missed it? **Show the working**: the verified steps from your course's own answer key, not a guess from the internet.

THE TUTOR

Stuck halfway? The tutor **guides you to the answer rather than giving it**, and after a miss you can ask "Where did I go wrong?". You still do the retrieving, which is the part that makes it stick.

The hard part of chapter 1 is honesty: it's easy to peek, or to tell yourself "close enough". A checker that compares the actual answer takes that temptation away.

Stop marking yourself right by mistake.

Answer your first checked question → ysrstudies.com

02 “I crammed. A week later it was gone.”

THE HEADACHE

“I pulled it together the night before and passed the quiz. Then the final asked about the same chapter and I had nothing.”

WHAT'S HAPPENING · FORGETTING IS ON A SCHEDULE

Memories fade fast at first, then slower. Cramming loads everything in at once, so it all fades together. **Spacing** the same total study time across several days means each review catches a memory just as it's slipping, and each catch makes it last longer.

A review of hundreds of experiments on distributed practice found that spreading study sessions out beats massing them into one, consistently, for remembering later. Cepeda et al., 2006, Psychological Bulletin. And learners routinely *feel* that cramming worked better, even when their own results say the opposite. Kornell & Bjork, 2008, Psychological Science. That is why the habit is so hard to break.

THE METHOD · THE 1-3-7 RHYTHM

- 1 **Day 0:** learn it, then answer-first (chapter 1) the same evening.
- 2 **Day 1, day 3, day 7:** answer-first again, from a blank page. Ten to fifteen minutes is enough.
- 3 **Rate each one honestly:** *hard* brings it back sooner, *easy* pushes it further out.
- 4 **Start early:** a 20-minute session on four different days beats an 80-minute session the night before.

The paper version works, but it needs a calendar, a tracker for every card, and the discipline to keep both. That bookkeeping is where most people quit.

How YSR Studies does this for you

SPACED REVIEW · YOUR WEEK · WHAT NEXT

SPACED REVIEW

After each card, say how it felt: **Hard / Good / Easy**. The card comes back **right around when you'd forget it**. The schedule is built on a modern memory model (FSRS) aiming for 90% recall, so you don't have to keep a calendar.

WHAT NEXT

Open the app and Home tells you **what to study next**. No more twenty minutes deciding where to start.

YOUR WEEK

A fresh plan every Monday, **built from your own records** of what you actually did.

Let it keep the calendar for you.

Start your spaced review → ysrstudies.com

03 “I don't know what I don't know.”

THE HEADACHE

“I don't find out what I'm missing until the test tells me, and by then it's too late.”

WHAT'S HAPPENING · NO MAP, NO GAPS

A course is a list of ideas in an order: each one builds on the last. If you study "the chapter", you can't see which three ideas you've got, which two are shaky, and which one you've never actually been tested on. Those last ones are where marks disappear.

The second hidden gap is **choosing the method**. Homework comes in blocks: twenty of the same problem type in a row. The exam mixes them, and the hard part becomes recognising which method a question wants. In one study, students who practised with **shuffled** problem types did worse during practice, but a week later their performance was **vastly better** than the students who practised in blocks. Rohrer & Taylor, 2007, Instructional Science.

THE METHOD · MAP IT, MARK IT, MIX IT

- 1 **Map:** list every idea in the course, in order, from the syllabus or the textbook contents.
- 2 **Mark** each one by testing yourself, not by gut feeling: *learned*, *shaky* or *not tested yet*.
- 3 **Study the shaky ones first.** Then test the untested.
- 4 **Mix:** once you know two or three methods, practise from a shuffled pile. Before solving, say out loud which method it needs, and why.

How YSR Studies does this for you

COURSE MAP · CHECKPOINTS · MY MAP

COURSE MAP

Every idea in your course, **in the course's order**, each marked **Learned / Shaky / Not shown yet**, estimated from your actual answers, not from how you feel. Tap one concept to study just its cards.

CHECKPOINTS

A checkpoint is a **short diagnostic game, never a mark**. Asking for help is recorded, never penalised, and finishing one adds study time as a reward.

MY MAP

Your own notes and the replies you pin sit **on the same map as the course ideas**, joined by lines, so what you wrote lives next to what it's about.

Why it matters: the map turns "I have a test on chapter 4" into "I have two shaky ideas and one I've never been tested on". That's a twenty-minute job, not a five-hour one.

Find your shaky ideas in minutes.

See your course map → ysrstudies.com

04 “I keep making the same mistake.”

THE HEADACHE

“I check the answer at the back, see I'm wrong, and have no idea where it went wrong. So I just do the next one.”

WHAT'S HAPPENING · A WRONG ANSWER IS THE BEST DATA YOU HAVE

A wrong answer, followed by the correction, is one of the strongest learning moments there is. Trying to answer a question you can't yet answer, then seeing the answer, beats just studying the answer. Kornell, Hays & Bjork, 2009, JEP: Learning, Memory, and Cognition. And mistakes you were **confident** about are corrected best of all once you're shown the right answer: the surprise makes it stick. Butterfield & Metcalfe, 2001, JEP: Learning, Memory, and Cognition.

The waste happens when "wrong" is all you learn. Without finding *which line* broke, you repeat the same slip on the next question and the test after.

THE METHOD · FIND THE LINE

- 1 **Before checking**, rate your confidence: sure, unsure, guessing.
- 2 **When it's wrong**, don't look at the full solution yet. Compare line by line and circle the **first line** where your working stops matching.
- 3 **Name the slip** in five words or fewer: "the 3 didn't multiply the -2 ".
- 4 **Keep a mistake log**. Every "sure but wrong" goes in it, and it's the first thing you redo before the test.

How YSR Studies does this for you

CHECK MY WORK · TUTOR

CHECK MY WORK

Write out your working and press **Check this**. It finds the **exact line where your working changed**, by computation, then **asks a question instead of fixing it**. That way you're the one who spots the slip, which is the part you'll remember.

THE TUTOR

After a miss, ask **"Where did I go wrong?"**. The tutor coaches you toward the verified answer, cites its sources, and remembers what you've told it.

It's the mistake log, the answer key and a patient tutor in one place: it points, you fix.

Graded work, or no AI rule given: the check points and asks, and does not write for you.

Your last line does not agree with the course's verified answer yet.

CHECKED BY COMPUTATION

Your working changes on line 2

CHECKED BY COMPUTATION

$3x - 2 = 2x + 5$

Expanding the bracket

$"3x - 2 = 2x + 5"$

The 3 in front of the bracket multiplies everything inside it.

Ask yourself

When you multiply out $3(x - 2)$, what does the 3 do to the -2 ?

The real app: "Your working changes on line 2 · checked by computation", then a question, not a fix.

Point at the slip, not the whole answer.

Check your working, line by line → ysrstudies.com

05 “I get it until I have to explain it.”

THE HEADACHE

“When the teacher explains it, it makes total sense. When I try to explain it to my friend, I fall apart halfway.”

WHAT'S HAPPENING · FOLLOWING ISN'T THE SAME AS KNOWING

Understanding someone else's explanation is recognition. Explaining it yourself is retrieval plus organisation: you have to choose the order, the words and the example. The place where you stall is the exact edge of what you know.

In one study, students who prepared to teach a lesson and then actually **taught it out loud** learned more than students who only prepared to teach. Fiorella & Mayer, 2013, Contemporary Educational Psychology.

THE METHOD · THE TWO-MINUTE LESSON

- 1 **Pick one idea** from your map. Set a two-minute timer.
- 2 **Teach it out loud** to a sibling, a friend, a pet, or an empty chair. No notes.
- 3 **Mark where you stalled**, said "um, basically", or skipped a step. That's your study list.
- 4 **Re-teach tomorrow** using one example you made up yourself.

How YSR Studies does this for you

TALK · HOLD TO TALK

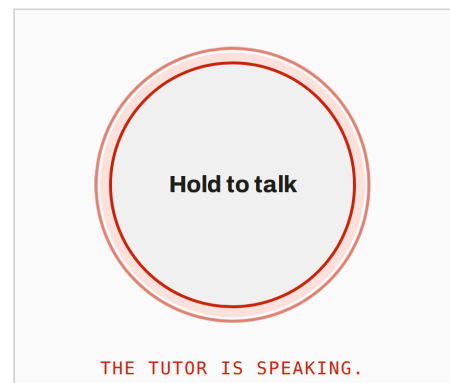
TALK

Speak with the tutor instead of typing: **it listens and answers out loud**, and it can explain any of your lecture notes. Explain the idea to it, and let it ask you the follow-up question your friend wouldn't.

HOLD TO TALK

Hold the orb, say your question, let go, and the tutor answers out loud. Press it while the tutor is speaking to cut in, like a real conversation.

Good for the bus, the walk to class, or any time typing math on a phone is the last thing you want to do.



The real app: Talk, while the tutor is speaking.

Explain it out loud, get asked back.

Hold to talk with the tutor → ysrstudies.com

06 “I’m drowning in lectures, slides and videos.”

THE HEADACHE

“I spend so long copying the slides out and pausing lecture videos that I never actually get to studying them.”

WHAT'S HAPPENING · CAPTURING FEELS LIKE LEARNING

Writing every word down keeps your hand busy and your brain on autopilot. A large replication of the famous "handwriting beats laptops" study found no difference between pen and keyboard for understanding. What tended to go with weaker results was copying **word for word**. Urry et al., 2021, Psychological Science. The minutes that count come *after* the lecture, when you turn notes into questions and answer them.

THE METHOD · CAPTURE LESS, PROCESS MORE

- 1 **In the lecture:** write headings and the questions the lecturer answers, not their sentences.
- 2 **Same day, ten minutes:** turn each heading into one question on a card. Answer the cards without looking.
- 3 **For videos:** note the timestamp of each new idea so you can jump back instead of rewatching all 50 minutes.

How YSR Studies does this for you

LECTURE NOTES · YOUTUBE NOTES · PHOTO/PDF NOTES

RECORD A LECTURE

Press **Record** when class starts and **Stop** when it ends. It becomes **beautiful, organised study notes** saved in Notes, yours to open, simplify and talk through with the tutor. (The recording is kept 24 hours; the notes stay.)

PASTE A YOUTUBE LINK

A lecture on YouTube becomes the same kind of notes: **headings, timestamps you can play from, flashcards to keep.**

PHOTO OR PDF

A photo of the board, a handout, your handwritten page or a PDF: it reads the text and makes **the same notes and flashcards.**

MAKE FLASHCARDS FROM ANYTHING

A screenshot, pasted text, an audio file: pick what you have, and it becomes notes and cards you keep, in one place with everything else.

✓ YOUR NOTES ARE READY

End behaviour of polynomial functions

These notes were made from the captions of "End behaviour of polynomial functions" by Ms. Rivera · Grade 12 Math. The words in the video are theirs, not ours, and we have not checked them against a textbook — treat this as a summary of that video, not as a verified source.

4

CHAPTERS

12

KEY POINTS

9

KEY TERMS

4

FLASHCARDS

✓ Saved in your Notes

The real app: notes made from a lecture video, with chapters, key points, key terms and flashcards. It even says the words are the video's, not a verified source.

Your next lecture, already in notes.

Turn a lecture into notes → ysrstudies.com

06 ...and when your notes are a mess

The best note format is the one that makes you **answer questions**. Cornell notes put the questions in a column next to the answers so you can cover one side and quiz yourself. A one-page summary forces you to choose what matters. A concept map shows how ideas connect. Different courses suit different shapes, and the shape should be easy to change.

THE METHOD · ONE PAGE, THEN QUESTIONS

- At the end of each week, squeeze each topic onto **one page**. If it doesn't fit, you haven't decided what matters yet.
- Rewrite each heading as a **question** ("What decides the end behaviour?") and keep the answer out of sight.
- Keep everything in **one place**. Notes scattered across three apps and a backpack are notes you won't review.

How YSR Studies does this for you

NOTE LOOKS · NOTES · EXPORT

MAKE IT YOURS

The same notes in **seven templates**: Study notes, **Cornell**, Idea cards, Concept map, Key terms, **Question first**, One page. There are six colours too. Switch any time, and nothing is lost.

ALL YOUR NOTES, ONE PLACE

Lecture notes, study sheets and what the tutor keeps for you, **open from every section**.

YOUR WORK IS YOURS

Export everything as plain files (.zip), or a course as Markdown or a flashcard deck. No lock-in.

End behaviour and the leading term

0:00

a polynomial's end behaviour is decided by its leading term alone.

- **End behaviour** is what the graph does as $x \rightarrow \infty$ and $x \rightarrow -\infty$.
- For a polynomial, only the **leading term** decides it; the other terms stop mattering when x is huge.
- In $f(x) = 2x^3 - 5x + 1$ the leading term is $2x^3$: **degree 3, leading coefficient 2**.

Even or odd degree: same or opposite

2:30

the degree tells you whether the two ends point the same way or opposite ways.

- **Even degree**: both ends go the same way, like a parabola.
- **Odd degree**: the ends go opposite ways, like a line.

The sign of the leading coefficient

5:00

the sign of the leading coefficient decides which

The real app: the same lecture notes in the Cornell look, with timestamps you can play from.

Same notes, the shape that fits.

Try the seven note looks → ysrstudies.com

07 “Can I trust what the AI tells me? Is it cheating?”

THE HEADACHE

“The chatbot gave me an answer, confidently, and it was wrong. And my teacher says AI isn't allowed on this assignment anyway.”

WHAT'S HAPPENING · ANSWERS AREN'T LEARNING, AND NOT ALL ANSWERS ARE TRUE

A tool that hands you the finished answer skips the exact part that builds memory: you trying first (chapters 1 and 4). And a general chatbot can sound certain while being wrong, with no way to tell which sentences came from a real source. Rules vary too: one teacher allows AI help on homework, another bans it on graded work.

THE METHOD · FOUR QUESTIONS FOR ANY AI STUDY TOOL

- 1 Does it make me answer first, or does it just answer?
- 2 Can I see where each sentence came from? My notes, my textbook, or made up?
- 3 Does it admit when it doesn't have a source?
- 4 Can I set it to my teacher's rules?

How YSR Studies does this for you

ASK YOUR SOURCES · TEACHER'S AI RULE · YOUR FOLDER

ASK YOUR SOURCES

Ask a question and the answer is written **from your own notes and files**. **Every sentence is labelled** with where it came from: your sources, or added by the AI and shaded, never passed off as yours.

AN HONEST TUTOR

The tutor coaches toward the answer instead of handing it over. When it has no course text for something, **it says so** and tells you to check your course materials.

TEACHER'S AI RULE

Set what your teacher allows. With **No AI help**, "Write ideas" is refused and the check only **points and asks questions**.

YOUR FOLDER · THE LIBRARY

Upload your slides, syllabus and homework. The tutor reads them, and **nothing leaves your account**. The Library holds your course's open textbooks and guides, **licensed, cited, free**.

Studio

You're in Learn · Advanced Functions (MHF4U)

ASK YOUR SOURCES

What decides the end behaviour of a polynomial?

- ☐ Also the course's texts
- ☐ Everything I have, every course

Ask

3 from your sources · 1 added by the AI

For a polynomial, the leading term alone decides the end behaviour. With an even degree, both ends point the same way, like a parabola. A positive leading coefficient makes the right end rise. So for $f(x) = 2x^4 - x$, both ends rise as x moves away from zero.

S1 · End behaviour of polynomial functions

S2 · My class notes: end behaviour

Plain text comes from your sources; shaded text was added by the AI and is not in them.

Keep as a note

The real app: "3 from your sources · 1 added by the AI". The shaded sentence is the AI's, and the S1/S2 chips are your sources.

Every sentence shows its source.

Ask your own sources → ysrstudies.com

08 “My mind goes blank from nerves.”

THE HEADACHE

“I know it. Then I sit down, see the clock, and my brain just... leaves.”

WRITE THE WORRY DOWN

Worry takes up the same short-term memory you need to solve problems. In classroom experiments, students who spent about **ten minutes writing about their worries** right before a high-stakes exam did better, and the benefit was concentrated in the most anxious students. Ramirez & Beilock, 2011, Science.

- 1 Ten minutes before the test, write exactly what you're worried about. Be specific.
- 2 Fold the page. Put it away. Start with the question you're surest of.

If your nerves get well beyond exam jitters, talk to someone: a counsellor, a doctor, someone you trust. No study method replaces that.

SLEEP IS PART OF STUDYING

Sleep isn't the opposite of studying. Your brain needs it to form new memories. In one experiment, a single night without sleep produced a significant deficit in the ability to form new memories the next day. Yoo et al., 2007, Nature Neuroscience.

- 1 No all-nighter before the exam. Do your spaced reviews earlier in the week instead (chapter 2).
- 2 The night before: a short answer-first pass on your mistake log, then bed.

Where YSR Studies helps (and where it doesn't)

CHECKPOINTS · SPACED REVIEW

No app will sleep for you or calm a racing heart, and we won't pretend otherwise. What helps is **fewer surprises**. **Checkpoints** are a short diagnostic game, **never a mark**, and asking for help is recorded, never penalised, so practice stops feeling like a test. **Spaced review** spreads the work across the week, so the night before can be a short review and a full night's sleep.

Practice that never counts against you.

Try a checkpoint → ysrstudies.com

09 The 7-day exam plan

Exam in a week? Here's the whole playbook in one rhythm: about 45–75 minutes a day, no all-nighter. The middle column works with paper; the right column is the same step in YSR Studies.

DAY	DO THIS	IN YSR STUDIES
Day 7	Map it. List every topic. Test yourself on a few questions from each and mark learned / shaky / not tested.	COURSE MAP shows Learned / Shaky / Not shown yet, from your answers. A CHECKPOINT fills it in, never a mark.
Day 6	Gather. Turn lectures, slides and videos into one set of notes, then questions.	LECTURE NOTES , YOUTUBE NOTES and PHOTO/PDF NOTES produce notes and flashcards, all in Notes.
Day 5	Shaky first. Answer-first on the shaky topics. Check every answer properly.	CHECKED ANSWERS and WORKED STEPS for the misses.
Day 4	Find the lines. Redo every miss. Circle the first wrong line. Start the mistake log.	CHECK MY WORK finds the line and asks you a question.
Day 3	Mix and teach. A shuffled set of past questions. Teach your two weakest ideas out loud.	TALK : explain it to the tutor out loud. SPACED REVIEW : today's cards.
Day 2	Full rehearsal under time, book closed. Mark it and update the mistake log.	Another CHECKPOINT . Watch shaky ideas turn to learned on the COURSE MAP .
Day 1	Light. Mistake log only, answer-first. Then stop. Sleep.	SPACED REVIEW : only what's due. WHAT NEXT tells you when you're done.
Exam	Ten minutes writing down your worries. Start with your surest question.	Phone away. You've done the work.

Longer runway? Run days 7–4 as one cycle every week of term. Spaced review takes care of the rest, so exam week becomes the light week.

Run this exact plan in YSR Studies tonight.

Pick your course (or add your own from your syllabus and slides), and the map, the checks and the reviews are set up for you.

Start day 7 free →

10 The cheat sheet

THE HEADACHE	WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON	DO THIS	YSR STUDIES DOES
"I knew it at home."	Familiar isn't remembered	Answer first, then check	CHECKED ANSWERS · worked steps
"It was gone a week later."	Cramming fades together	Review on day 1, 3 and 7	SPACED REVIEW brings each card back right around when you'd forget
"I don't know what I don't know."	No map, no gaps	List, test, mark, mix	COURSE MAP : Learned / Shaky / Not shown yet
"Same mistake, every time."	"Wrong" isn't a diagnosis	Circle the first wrong line	CHECK MY WORK : the exact line, then a question
"I get it until I explain it."	Following isn't knowing	A two-minute lesson out loud	TALK : hold to talk; the tutor answers out loud
"Drowning in lectures."	Capturing isn't processing	Headings and questions; process the same day	LECTURE · YOUTUBE · PHOTO/PDF NOTES , with flashcards
"My notes are a mess."	The wrong shape for the job	One page, then questions	SEVEN NOTE LOOKS , incl. Cornell and Question first
"Can I trust the AI?"	Answers without sources	Answer first; demand sources	ASK YOUR SOURCES : every sentence labelled · teacher's AI rule
"Nerves wipe my mind."	Worry takes up working memory; no sleep blocks memory	Write the worry down; sleep	CHECKPOINTS : never a mark · spread-out reviews

You don't need more hours. You need better ones.

Get better hours →

THE RESEARCH IN THIS PLAYBOOK

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THE SHORT VERSION

You already know how to study now.

Stop doing the paperwork.

Answer first. Space it out. Map the gaps. Find the wrong line. Say it out loud. Process, don't copy. Trust sources, not confidence. Sleep.

All of it works on paper. YSR Studies does the bookkeeping: the checking, the scheduling, the mapping, the notes. That leaves your hours for the part that only you can do.

START TONIGHT

5 free hours every month.

Study time is only spent while the tutor is working on something of yours: a tutor reply, a Talk session, a check of your work, the help buttons while you learn. **Cards, reading, your notes, the Library and your progress never spend it.** Works in English, French, Arabic and Simplified Chinese.

Claim your 5 free hours →

YSRSTUDIES.COM · TAP THE BUTTON OR TYPE IT IN

You're really SO REAL.

YSR Studies

ysrstudies.com →