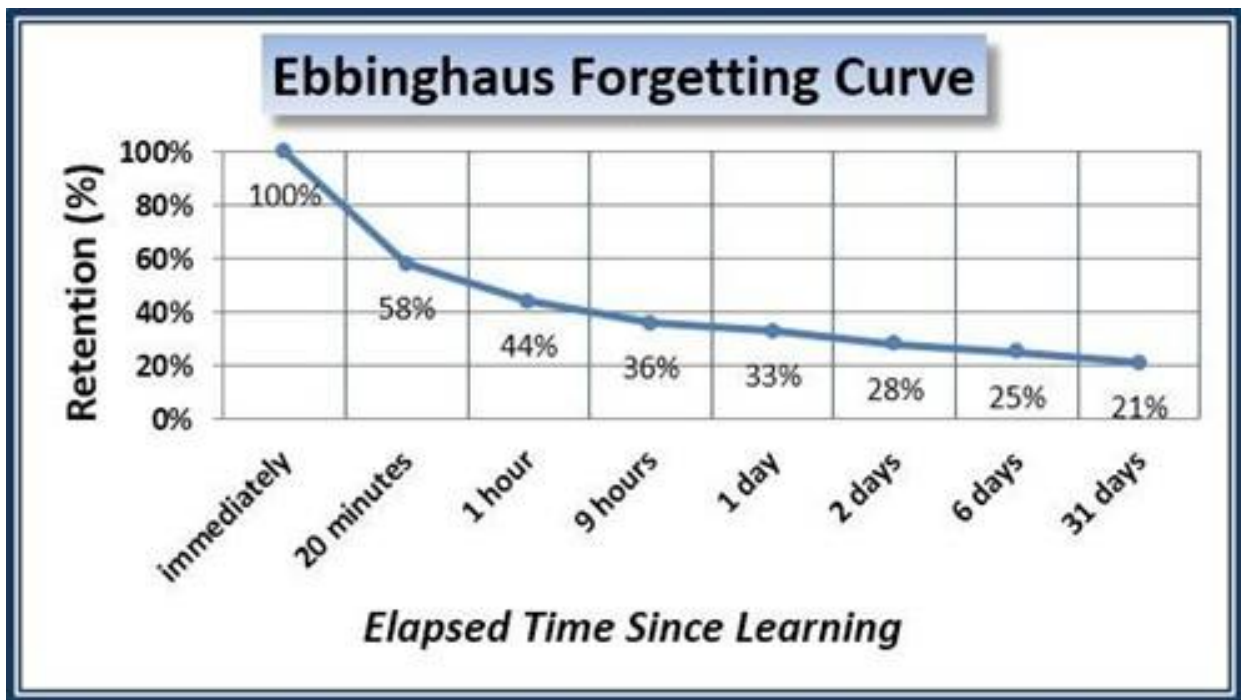# Independent Learning at Home

The Perins Approach

Perins very much believes in the notion of "blended learning". By this, we mean that any work undertaken independently at home should support work that is done in class by encouraging students to revisit prior learning in order to embed and deepen knowledge.

Much training has been given to teaching staff in the school surrounding the principles of the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve, which is the notion that, the longer the duration after learning something for the first time, the more likely it is that it will be forgotten. It is for this reason that we have given a great deal of time to ensuring that resources, including videos (otherwise known as screencasts), are saved on the school SharePoint site in order that students are able to access them at all times. We very much believe that teachers' resources should always be available to students in order that they are able to effectively revise.


Predominantly, the main form of independent learning set through the ClassCharts system is to spend time using a combination of a student's work they have done in class, alongside the materials we provide for them on SharePoint, in order to continually revise what has been learned in class. This should be a mixture of recently learned material and aspects that have been taught and learned in the medium- to long-term. Students who put in this level of groundwork and effort are almost always those who are the likeliest to succeed in terms of progress and attainment.

The school also believes that we have a responsibility to demonstrate what at-home independent learning looks like, and for this reason we give opportunities in the curriculum to allow students to undertake the type of independent learning that has been described in class in order that teachers are able to model what this looks like. We can't expect students to know how to undertake independent study at home if this is not modelled in school. This approach also helps to "close the

attainment gap" between the rich and the poor given the those less fortunate are likely to have less access to the types of resource outside of school their more fortunate peers have access to.

In addition to this type of independent learning setting on ClassCharts, teachers may also, when they feel it appropriate using their professional judgement, set additional tasks that support learning or set links to a range of materials that may support specific revision for an assessment. However, we reiterate that the most effective revision should always take place overtime in the way that has been described above, rather than cramming just before a test. This is proven to be less effective.

In order to ensure that students are using opportunities to reflect upon in-class learning at home, teachers are encouraged to plan lessons in such a way to assess prior learning from the short to long term (rather than only planning lessons sequentially), and to plan tasks that encourage "retrieval practice", which is the practice of including activities end questions in lessons that force students to try to remember as much as they can. The memory acts like a muscle, and like all muscles it needs to be exercised regularly in order to maintain peak levels. As you will see from the diagram below, the more we practise, the more we remember.
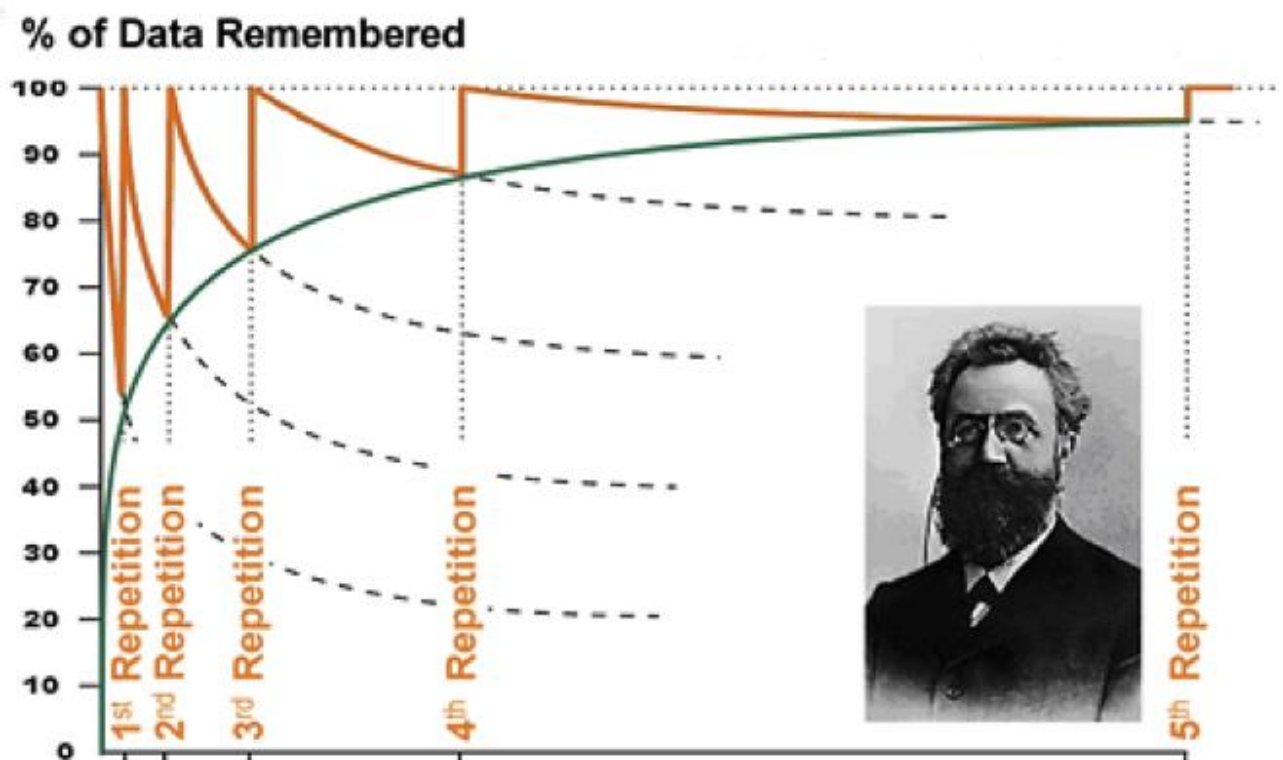
Why don't we just set traditional types of homework?

Parents and carers often ask while the school doesn't just set homework like we used to. Firstly, there is no statutory obligation to do so. This was removed in 2012. However, the reason for its removal as a statutory obligation wasn't because of teacher workload issues, it was because it has been proven to be less effective than the type of independent learning that has been described above. We would imagine also that it has been removed as a requirement given that students now have access to systems that will enable them to "cheat", namely services like Google or Wikipedia.

Whilst it is important that students are given opportunities to use such resources, this needs to be done under the guidance of teachers and for a specific purpose, rather than for the completion of homework.

Furthermore, those students who lack resources or space at home to undertake homework, have less parental support or access to private tutors are also seriously disadvantaged by the more traditional types of homework. The resource is that we provide, and the approach we encourage, we feel circumnavigates some of these issues.

This article from the TES explains the differences quite succinctly (it does require a username and password, but this is free).

Supporting the school

In order to support your child(ren), the simplest thing to do is to ask them to describe to you what they have learned any given day. further to this, it would also be helpful to encourage your child(ren) to reflect back on what they have learned, both during that day and, where necessary, over a longer period of time. As we have described above, this should be using a combination of their work and the resources that are available on SharePoint.

A very simple approach would be for each student to spend no more than around 10 minutes reflecting and making notes (such as lists or spider diagrams) about each lesson that they have attended on that day. Done consistently, students will soon see that this builds up an enormous amount of material that can be used for further revision, and their labour will undoubtably bear fruit, not only in subsequent lessons (which is important, as it develops confidence), but also in assessment later down the line. Ultimately, this approach helps to create the ability to be successful in life-long learning.

How much time should my child(ren) spend undertaking independent learning at home?

As a school, we are very keen for students to use every opportunity to relax, socialise, spend time with friends and family, and otherwise undertake activities they enjoy doing. We don't believe that children should spend all of their time working on schoolwork. This is counterproductive, both to their mental wellbeing and to their academic and social progress.

We recommend that students spend no longer than 1 – 1 ½ hours per day undertaking independent learning tasks at home. Furthermore, they don't need to be completing this amount every day; it is important that we maintain a work-life balance. Should students wish to complete more, then the means are available on SharePoint, but we strongly advise that children do not spend too long carrying out these tasks. As mentioned, there are opportunities during the school day where teaching staff build in opportunities to revise in lessons. Any work done at home should, therefore, just back this up.

Should my child be undertaking independent learning during the holidays?

The school policy is that teaching staff will not set work over any school holiday, and our expectation is that this is also a time for children to take a break from work. Resources remain available on SharePoint at all times, so should any students wish to spend any time revising over school holidays, then the capacity is there, but this will never be formally set on ClassCharts.

Questions about independent learning

Should you have any subject-specific questions about independent learning, then the best person to ask is always the subject teacher.

Should questions pertain to the school's approach to independent learning (indeed, any aspect of teaching and learning), then please contact Mr Western, the senior member of staff who oversees teaching and learning in the school.