

Dual Coding

Years 7–12 | Effective Study Strategy

WHAT IS DUAL CODING?

Dual coding means combining written information with visual representations — diagrams, timelines, concept maps, sketches, or flowcharts. The idea is that processing the same material through two different cognitive channels (verbal and visual) creates stronger, more interconnected memories.

WHY DOES IT WORK? THE PSYCHOLOGY

- Paivio's Dual Coding Theory (1971) proposes that verbal and visual information are processed by separate but connected systems.
- When both systems are activated simultaneously, memory encoding is significantly strengthened.
- Turning text into visuals forces you to understand and reorganise the information — it is an active process.
- Particularly powerful for visual learners, science subjects, and content with relationships or sequences.

"Words + visuals = stronger memory. Don't just write your notes — draw them."

EXAMPLES OF DUAL CODING IN PRACTICE

Subject	Dual Coding Approach
Biology	Diagram of a cell with labelled parts, annotated with functions.
History	Timeline with key events, causes marked with arrows.
Chemistry	Flowchart for reaction types with conditions noted.
English	Character relationship map with quotes linking characters.
Maths	Annotated formula with a visual example of each variable.

DUAL CODING WORKSHEET

Topic I am encoding:

STEP 1 — Write a text-based summary of the concept (3–5 sentences):

STEP 2 — Now draw a diagram, flowchart, or visual representation of the SAME content:

[Draw your diagram here]

What connections did drawing the visual reveal that the text didn't?