

Glegg, P. (2016). Business resource ideas: Revising core knowledge and decision making skills. *Teaching Business & Economics*, 20(1), 20–21

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If you're going to go to the effort of making resources that can be kept and used time and time again it's worth thinking about how to get the most from those materials. Below, I'll share with you one of my favourite resources, and activities which I've used with GCSE, BTEC and A level groups to *embed key learning, support high quality business decision-making and model strategies for effective revision*.

### The resource

The Diamond 9 format will be familiar to many teachers. Typically, a template is used which is in the shape of a large diamond, constructed from 9 smaller diamonds. Below, I've sketched a typical resource that could be used to support teaching about methods of market research:

*Insert picture here: resources 1\_insert 1*

When I make a resource like this I generally make it double-sided, with a brief definition and / or explanatory text on the reverse of each key term. This helps with testing definitions and is helpful for students who need a bit of reminding or additional support during other activities. In this case, the template below would work on the reverse of the market research methods above (note the order of the definitions so that they match up correctly when printed double-sided):

*Insert picture here: resources 1\_insert 2*

And finally, to make the resource reusable I recommend printing on card and laminating each diamond.

*Top tip: if you can, print sets of resources on different coloured card so that you have a rainbow selection of sets. Then, when handing out sets, give different colours to adjacent students / groups. This makes it much more likely that students will give you back complete sets of cards at the end of the lesson without muddling their resources with their neighbours'.*

### Using the resource

The most common way that I've seen this resource used by others is as a ranking tool, where students order the small diamonds within the larger shape so that their 'most important' or 'most preferred' choice is at the top of the diamond and the least preferred at the bottom. I've seen some teachers asking students to perform this ranking activity without any context, even having their students glue the final ranking into their exercise books as if this is the definitive rank order. I don't think this is helpful (or right!), but I do believe the resource has a lot of value if used with thought and care, to reinforce and to test

understanding and recall and to develop students' ability to make thoughtful decisions about the suitability of different actions in a range of contexts. Many of the ideas below can be reproduced by students during revision to support independent study.

### *1. Testing recall and embedding basic knowledge*

- Ask students to lay out the cards on the desk in front of them, key terms showing. You (or a student) describe a method of market research and students have to select the correct method and hold it up to show you. Repeat to test all key terms. This is an easy way to collect whole-class responses so that you and students can monitor learning.
- Students can work in pairs for this activity, beginning with the cards in a pile or dealt out evenly between the students. They take it in turns to test each other using one card at a time – they can switch between being given the definition and identifying the method, and having to give a definition of the method on the card. This is an excellent way to involve all students in practising recalling definitions and articulating them, important for GCSE exam answers in particular where marks are awarded for accurate definitions.
- Ask students to lay out all of the cards on the desk in front of them, key terms showing. Give the students a criterion such as typical cost / time required / degree of technical skill needed, and ask them to rank the methods of research according to this criterion. I usually ask students to do this on a line rather than in the diamond format but either could work. This is useful because, assuming you do it for more than one criterion, it helps students to see that each method has relative strengths and weaknesses, setting them up for later activities where they have to make reasoned choices. Develop the activity by asking students to discuss and justify their rankings – either by working with a partner to make the original decision, using a think-pair-square structure for comparing answers with peers' responses or targeting students to share their reasoning with the rest of the class.
- With the cards laid out as above ask students to group the methods into primary/secondary sources of data, or into those that do / don't incur a cost, or according to other criteria that you think of.
- With students working in pairs or small groups, give them two methods from the set (they could pull two from a pile, or choose their own if you wanted to make it easier). Students have to identify at least one similarity between the methods and one difference. They could also describe a situation where each method would be particularly appropriate. Repeat with other pairs of cards. This is an excellent way to prepare students to analyse the relative merits of different methods and to make evaluative judgements about which methods suit which situations.

### *2. Developing and assessing decision-making*

- Give students a business scenario related to choosing methods of market research. Students have to choose one or more appropriate methods from the pile and justify

why it would be helpful in this situation. Encourage them to draw on the features discussed during the activities above.

- As above, but this time students construct a large diamond using all cards, with the most recommended *in this situation* at the top and the least recommended *in this situation* at the bottom. Again, students justify their choices. For this and the previous activity, justification could be verbally to a partner / the class or a written exercise which could then be marked by you / the student / a peer.
- Engage students with the dynamic nature of business decision-making by challenging them to reassess their choices in the previous two activities in the light of new information. For example, update the case study scenarios by changing some key criteria such as the speed at which a response is required, the budget available or a change in local market conditions. Encourage students to consider whether a different method is now more attractive and to explain their reasoning.

#### Other topics that this works with

I'm sure that creative teachers can adapt many of the activities above to a wide range of business topics. In my experience the most directly transferable content is sources of finance – again a topic where students are required to know details of different choices that businesses can make and how these choices are affected by a few key criteria (in this case, the amount borrowed, time period, business structure, owner's attitude to risk, for example).

#### Why this works

In a previous article (TBE summer 2015) I wrote about the importance of retrieval and repetition in embedding learning. The activities above require students to retrieve information through low-stakes testing in a way that supports long-term memory and deeper understanding.

Daniel Willingham (2008) (see link below) explains that 'memories are formed as a residue of thought'. The range of activities above encourages students to think carefully about specific aspects of each method of market research, and then to go on to explore the situations in which each might be useful. Many of the activities require students to make explicit their reasoning, either verbally in partnership with peers or through written tasks. This encourages deep thinking and discussion, helping to order thoughts and form lasting memories about the content taught.

If addressed in order, the activities above scaffold students' thinking: initially the teacher identifies criteria by which methods can be judged and later this structure is removed so that students have to recall, select and apply these criteria for themselves.

#### Links for further reading

Improving students' memory

Willingham, D. T. (2008). What Will Improve a Student's Memory?. *American Educator*, 32(4), 17- 25. Available online at [https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/willingham\\_0.pdf](https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/willingham_0.pdf)

Recall, retrieval practice

Francisco, A. & Roediger, H. *Ask the Cognitive Scientist: Retrieval Practice*, available online at <http://www.digitalpromise.org/blog/entry/ask-the-cognitive-scientist-retrieval-practice>