

## Revision Advice for Students

**How can you prepare for your mock examinations? How should you prepare for your final GCSE examinations?**

**What is the best advice that you can follow regarding revision?**

### 1. Create a Revision Timetable

Building a revision timetable can add structure to your revision and help you identify which GCSE subjects you need to prioritise to get better marks. Creating a revision timetable is a great way to organise your study time, plus it also helps boost your motivation to revise for your exams. Recognising a need for a revision timetable means that you have already made a great start to combat exam stress. When it comes to revision, slow and steady wins the race. Look at when each exam is due to take place and then create a revision timetable that prioritises the subjects you'll be tested on first. You should also include your exam dates, times and locations. By making a plan in advance of the exam period (and sticking to it!), you'll feel more in control of your work - and you can avoid being gripped by last minute panic. To create a revision timetable for your mock exams you will need to sit down with your mock exam timetable and carefully plan when you will revise for each subject. Speak to your form tutor and subject teachers about this if you are unsure.

### 2. Completing Past Papers

Ask your teachers for former exam questions and make sure that you understand how the exam paper is set out. Practising past papers will help you get familiar with the: the exam format; question style; the number of marks and time available for questions. Past exam papers will be available from your teachers and online from whichever exam boards your school uses. You can use them to test yourself both in timed and un-timed conditions, and to help focus your revision. Simply planning your answers to questions that require longer responses - such as in English and History - will help you to consolidate your understanding, without the need to produce whole essays. Refreshing your subject knowledge is obviously the primary purpose of revision - but be sure to remind yourself of how to approach exam questions while you're working towards your GCSE exams. Don't neglect vital skills such as properly reading the question and ensuring you answer it in full. Failing to respond to a question in just the right way could cost you marks - even if you really know your stuff.

When it comes to subjects where you'll be doing lots of writing, make sure you plan your answers to essay questions. If you don't, it's all too easy to drift off the point and write a response that, even if it's good, doesn't directly address what you've been asked - and which therefore won't bring you any closer to a top grade.

### **3. Plan Carefully, Be Honest and Take Regular Study Breaks**

When you create your revision timetable, be honest with yourself about which subjects you are, and aren't, looking forward to spending time on. By placing less enjoyable topics next to ones you find more interesting, you'll find it easier to keep going. For example, an hour of maths revision might be more bearable if you know you have history to look forward to after lunch. Avoid spending more than an hour on each subject, and make sure you build in time for regular breaks, too. There is no point forcing yourself to study for hours upon hours as this will not result in a positive outcome. Taking regular study breaks and exercising is proven to engage your brain in studying and improve your exam performance in the long-run. Exercise is a powerful enabler which boosts your brain's ability. Think very carefully about how much time you spend revising individual topics and subjects. Revise for 30 minutes at a time and then take a break.

### **4. Understand What Works For You**

Think about where you're going to be revising and make sure it's a space you can truly work in. You'll need plenty of light, plus room to spread out your notes, text books and other resources. You'll need to avoid revising anywhere noisy or where there are distractions that will affect your concentration - so if you can, try to stay out of areas where other family members will keep coming and going. Have a drink of water handy as staying hydrated will help you to focus. Also, consider opening a nearby window if you're in a warm place; a breath of fresh air will help keep you alert. Above all, be honest with yourself about whether or not 'background noise' truly helps you to concentrate. While relaxing music, played softly, is an aid to some people when they're revising, almost nobody can work effectively with the TV or radio on. Everyone thinks that there is a best way to study but the reality is that each person is different. Practice will also tell you if you work better studying during the night or in the morning/daytime. However, it does generally help to revise in a quiet room and to have your books and folders well organised.

### **5. Vary Your Revision and Continue To Do Other Things**

Quality is more important than quantity when you're revising. In other words, it's better to revise effectively for a few hours each day than to be buried in your books for 5 or 6 hours at a time. Nobody's attention span is infinite, and it's impossible to concentrate for much more than an hour without a break. In fact, a subject you're

struggling to get your head around might make more sense once you've spent a few minutes away from your desk, stretched your legs or had a cup of tea. It's important to stay sociable when you're revising, too - spend time with friends and family in the evenings and, if you take part in a sport, try to keep it up during exam time. These activities will help you relax, preparing your body and your mind for more revision tomorrow.

Mix up your study habits and methods. Prioritise answering past papers and extracting the key information from your notes, but also listen to podcasts, watching videos or documentaries, moving to a new study area or even something as simple as using different colours for your study notes. This is different to the other GCSE revision tips mentioned here as it encourages you to try a few different things to see what fits for you. Your brain will recall where you were or how you revised for a topic which will help you remember more information.

## **6. Don't Just Write Notes - Use Mind Maps and other methods to Connect Ideas**

If you find it difficult to remember a large amount of new study notes, Mind Maps may be the key to improving your memory. The theory behind mind mapping explains that making associations by connecting ideas helps you to memorise information easier and quicker. There are many more benefits to using Mind Maps for learning including being able to map out your curriculum, develop GCSE concepts in-depth and create sample exam answers. Scribbling on sheets of lined A4 paper day in, day out might not help your motivation to revise - particularly if you're artistically inclined. But there's no rule that says revision always has to mean writing! Creating colourful A3 posters and drawing bright mind maps can be just as helpful as producing reams of text. Using bright stationery and colour-coding notes according to topic can also help to tackle the boredom you might feel with working in only black and white. Creating flash cards is also a great way to condense your notes and revise key topics - and they can also be handy to use with family and friends. Lined, rectangular note cards are available from most stationers, and can be filled with key word lists, important questions and answers and bullet-point explanations of concepts. They can then be passed to willing testers who can check how much you remember. Flash cards are easily portable, too - helpful if you're heading out for a revision date with a friend. Using post-it notes can be a fun and powerful way to work on remembering important ideas, facts and definitions.

## **7. Adapt for Different GCSE Subjects**

It may seem obvious but many students try to study for different subjects using the same study methods. Your GCSE revision should take account of the difference between your subjects and the challenges they represent. For example, Flashcards are a good study aid to help you prepare for a language exam where you need to remember key terms.

## **8. On The Day**

The day of your exam can be the most stressful of the entire examination experience but there are ways which you can minimise your anxiety such as avoiding panicking friends and giving yourself plenty of time to get to the test centre on time. Also don't underestimate the power of eating a healthy breakfast the day of your exams.

### **GCSE revision: dos and don'ts**

#### ***Do... Reward yourself***

Allow yourself a treat after working hard or achieving an important goal. Whether it's a relaxing night in with your favourite film, a simple bar of chocolate or an afternoon out with your friends, enjoy yourself for a while before you get back to the books.

#### ***Don't... Compare yourself to your friends***

You might have heard that someone in your English class has read *Romeo & Juliet* 10 times - but do you really think it's true? Don't get hung up on what other people are doing to prepare for the GCSE exams... Especially as you can't ever completely believe what they say!

Stick to your own timetable, stay calm and revise in the way that works best for you.

#### ***Do... Use the web wisely***

Online forums are full of revision tips in the run up to GCSEs, and the internet boasts a wealth of quizzes that can help test your learning in a variety of subjects - but use the web wisely when you're revising. If you start clicking around at random, it could be a long while before you look at your watch and realise how much time you've wasted. Be honest with yourself: if you can't stay on task when you're online, stay off your laptop.

#### ***Don't... - Leave everything until the last minute***

Trying to stuff your brain full of information immediately before an exam is the worst way to revise.

Not only is it unlikely to help you remember anything meaningful, it is almost guaranteed to stress you out right before your big day, when what you really need is a calm mind and a good night's sleep.

### ***Do... Know how to spot stress - and stop it***

All of us feel stressed from time to time, but the run up to GCSEs can be especially intense. Stress can cause headaches, lead to difficulty sleeping, cause constant tiredness and result in increased feelings of anxiety - all of which are counterproductive when you're trying to concentrate on important work.

If you're experiencing any of these symptoms it's really important to talk to someone about your stress levels - whether you choose a friend, a parent or a trusted teacher.

If stress is a problem for you, relaxing more will help you to revise more effectively - however contrary this might seem. Getting extra sleep, taking regular breaks and letting off steam by doing some exercise will all help.

### ***Don't... Conduct a 'post-mortem' after every exam***

'What did you put for question 3b...?' Don't answer that, because it doesn't matter now. Go into every GCSE exam and do the best you can, but don't go back over everything you wrote once the test is over. Worrying yourself silly over things you have done (or not done) won't help you to concentrate on the revision and exams that are to come - and they should be your priority.

### ***Do... What's best for your body***

It's always sensible to eat a healthy, balanced diet and get plenty of sleep, but this advice is really worth following in the run up to GCSEs. Avoid junk food, opting instead for wholesome meals that will give you plenty of energy for studying. Try to wind down fully before you go to bed, and aim for a full eight hours of sleep every night.

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