



GCSE revision

2020-21

How parents can help

Tips and ideas for supporting your child through their exams

Using this booklet

The intention of this booklet is not to provide a foolproof master plan but to provide tips, suggestions and ideas for you to consider. *Do not attempt to put all of these suggestions into practice; that would be unrealistic. Select a few that you think would be suitable for both you and your child.*

Do

- ✓ Read through the booklet
- ✓ Try out and adapt ideas that appeal to you
- ✓ Keep this booklet handy throughout the revision period
- ✓ Keep pens and highlighters ready to highlight ideas you like

Don't

- ✗ Use ideas that you feel are unsuitable for your situation
- ✗ Continue with ideas that aren't working for you
- ✗ Stop using your own ideas and approaches if they work for you and your child

Success in exams is a team effort which involves you, the school and your child working together and so you will play a variety of roles.

As a parent/carer you will:

- Support the work of the academy as, like you, we want the best for your child. Positive home-academy relationships are vital in helping your child achieve success.
- At home you will be parent, counsellor, coach, project manager, supplies co-ordinator and motivator.
- Exams are stressful for both you and your child so providing a calm and supportive environment is key.

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*How can I
motivate my child?*

Motivation

Key points:

- Students are motivated by a variety of reasons
- Students with strong reasons for wanting to do well find it easier to revise
- Your interest, support and encouragement will help establish and maintain a high level of motivation in your child

Take an interest

The most important thing you can do is take an interest in what they are doing.

- Ask about revision plans
- Look for opportunities to praise their efforts
- Encourage them to believe in themselves (highlight past examples of success)

Target grades

Keep your expectations realistic.

- Check your child knows where they are currently and where they need to be
- Ask them which subjects they want to do particularly well in
- Discuss which subjects they find most challenging

Incentives and rewards

For most students, wanting to get good grades, a place in Sixth Form/College or the route to a future career is sufficient motivation. Some students respond well to other incentives.

- Before offering incentives think about whether they really will increase the effort your child makes
- If you do embark on this method, discuss with your child which incentives/rewards will motivate them; make the targets you set challenging but realistic
- You could offer incentives based on improvements at smaller intervals or as a post exam treat regardless of how well they do.

Encourage your child to take mock exams seriously

Revision planning

Key points:

- GCSE exams require many hours of personal study
- Final grades will not only depend on how many hours they spend revising but also how well they use this time
- Revision plans are individual and vary enormously; they all require routine

It's never too soon to make a plan and start revising!

Our first set of Pre-Public Exams (PPEs) are in November. This will give you and your child a sense of where they are currently and what they need to do to make progress. The main reason to begin revision early is to ensure they have fully revised work covered over the past 2 years, especially in subjects that are assessed by exams only.

- ✓ Ask your child's teachers what guidance they have given about when to start revising
- ✓ Ensure that your child has a copy of their exam timetable
- ✓ Write key dates on a calendar at home
- ✓ Encourage them to treat mock exams seriously and revise for them.

What to revise?

- Make sure your child has a complete set of notes for each subject (Show My Homework will provide lesson notes if your child has been absent)
- Topics don't always need to be revised in the exact same order they were taught
- Starting revision with topics they find easier will help boost confidence
- Students must not spend too much time on subjects they like/are good at and neglect those they find more challenging.

Planning

Routine is key in getting into good study habits. Routines will look different during term time and during the school holidays; therefore, it may be appropriate to have a separate revision plan for these situations.

When helping your child plan their revision:

- ✓ Discuss and agree with your child an appropriate balance between revision and social
- ✓ Encourage them to continue interacting with their friends
- ✓ Be flexible if something special comes along such as family celebrations
- ✓ Don't impose a revision plan on your child as it is unlikely to work
- ✓ When they return home from school encourage them to make a list of the subjects they are going to revise that evening.

If you are going to support your child to create a revision timetable, try using these steps:

Step 1	Use the timetable template your child was given in school, or create your own template to suit your own needs.
Step 2	Ask your child to make a list of all their subjects.
Step 3	Get them to write in all regular non-school commitments for the week such as leisure activities, going out, seeing friends, time to relax, etc.
Step 4	Get them to enter when to revise each subject for the week, keeping in mind the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - balance of revision time between subjects - space out the revision for each subject - vary the subjects revised on each day.
Step 5	Pin up the timetable in a prominent place at home so that everyone knows what is going on.

Try to make sure they have a quiet place to study at home

Revision sessions

Key points:

- A successful revision session is when a solid amount of work gets done
- Sessions need to be structured to keep concentration levels high
- Having a suitable place to study at home is important during the revision period

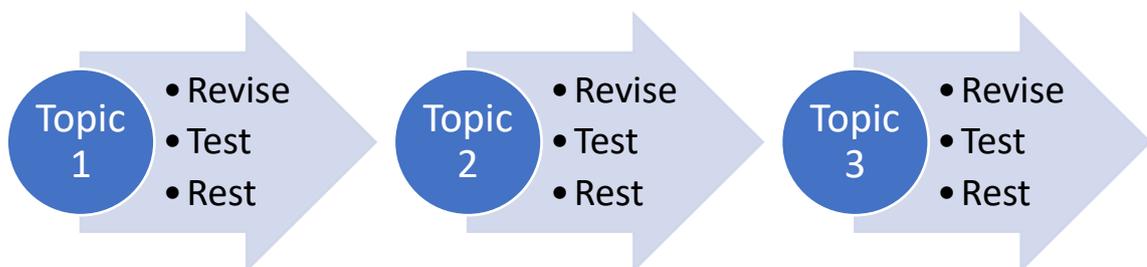
Revision resources

Your child will need a variety of books, stationery and equipment before they start.

- ✓ Make sure they have all basic equipment such as pens, pencils, highlighters, a calculator, a compass, a protractor, etc.
- ✓ Sticky notes, revision cards, etc are also useful
- ✓ Ask them if they need any specific revision guides.

Ideally your child will need a permanent, quiet, well lit place to study with few distractions or interruptions. This isn't always easy but any quiet space you can create to support your child will work if it's suitable for your family environment. The best set up is a flat surface such as a desk or table in their bedroom, however some students do like to work in 'busier' places such as a kitchen or living room. When studying they should ensure their space is free from all clutter and only necessary revision materials are to hand. They should clear and tidy their space after each session to stay organised.

Revise, test, rest



An effective revision session should be a reasonable length of time with regular short breaks. A suggested session could be timed as follows:

40 minutes revising, 10 minutes testing, 10 or 20 minutes resting, 20 minutes revising, 5 minutes testing, 5 minutes resting.

- ✓ Offer to help them structure their revision sessions
- ✓ Ask if they would like help with testing
- ✓ Buy a cheap digital timer (or use a phone) so they can keep track of time during revision sessions and breaks.

Boredom

The best way to keep concentration levels high is to take regular breaks. A general guide is for every hour of revision they should take a 10 minute break. They will need to build stamina for those exams that are 2 hours long. Mornings tend to work best for revision (though not of everyone).

- ✓ Help them find which subjects they prefer to revise when they get home
- ✓ Encourage them to have regular, short breaks
- ✓ Get them to recognise when they are 'zoning out' and acknowledge that it's time to change subjects.

Difficult situations

Key points:

- You can expect some difficult issues to crop up during revision
- These issues can be a source of disagreement and friction
- Try to avoid arguments at these times

Difficulty 1: TV or no TV?

- ✓ Insist they do not revise in front of the TV

Difficulty 2: Phones or no phones?

- ✓ Remove phones especially during the test phase of revision
- ✓ If they need their phone to revise (use websites etc.) discuss ways they can avoid other distractions such as social media

Difficulty 3: Silence

Some students find it beneficial to listen to music or other sound as it aids concentration. If sounds is desired it should be low volume.

- ✓ Encourage them to be selective with what they listen to
- ✓ Memorising and testing phases need to be undertaken in silence
- ✓ Don't make a battle out of whether they listen to music or not

Difficulty 4: Screening out

Self-discipline is needed if they use tablets or laptops for revision. Removal of social media apps is a good starting place as is muting notification settings.

- ✓ Suggest they don't leave social media apps open and watch revision videos on full screen to avoid clicking other links.

Difficulty 5: Bed time

A good night's sleep is vital when studying hard, so a regular time to switch off and sleep is important.

- ✓ Discuss a regular time for lights out
- ✓ Suggest they leave time after studying to unwind
- ✓ Be flexible with lights out at weekends and for special events.

Difficulty 6: Don't compare

Do not make comparisons between your child and another child or sibling. Every child is different. Routines and revision methods are different for everyone

Difficulty 7: Reluctant revisors

- ✓ Maintain an active interest in what they are doing
- ✓ Encourage them to go to revision classes and interventions run by the school
- ✓ Make revision at home active by offering to test them
- ✓ Help them decide what to revise each day

Managing stress

Key points:

- All students feel a degree of stress during exam periods
- There are many simple ways to reduce stress
- You have a vital role in supporting your child to reduce stress

It is perfectly normal if your child is anxious about exams. Some may want to talk about their feelings while others choose not to. All students need to feel supported and reassured.

- ✓ Make sure you are available to listen to your child, although they may not want to talk directly about exams
- ✓ Expect to encounter uncharacteristic outbursts leading up to exams
- ✓ If things aren't going too well in a subject contact the teacher
- ✓ Look out for signs of unhealthy levels of stress and contact your GP or the school for support

Healthy body, healthy mind

- ✓ Provide your child with a variety of healthy meals
- ✓ Encourage them to exercise
- ✓ Encourage them to drink lots of water

Think positively

- ✓ If your child is constantly saying negative things, find something positive to say about the way they are working
- ✓ Look for ways to help them believe in themselves
- ✓ Get them focused on short term revision to avoiding feeling overwhelmed about the long term goals.

Above all, keep things in perspective!

Sitting exams

Key points:

- Sitting the final exams is the most stressful time for your child – and you!
- Exam days can be particularly anxious
- Emotions after exams vary considerably

The night before an exam

- ✓ Ask them if they need to leave earlier than usual for school – adjust your routine
- ✓ Make sure they have all equipment ready for the next day (including water bottle, pencil case, bus pass)
- ✓ Check they know the timing of the exam (e.g. AM or PM)
- ✓ Make allowances for the fact they may behave differently and could possibly be more moody or short tempered

On the day of the exam

- ✓ Avoid asking how they feel or giving them last minute advice
- ✓ Encourage them to have breakfast
- ✓ Arrive in good time if you are taking them to school or ensure they leave in plenty of time
- ✓ Tell them to avoid people who may talk negatively about the exam
- ✓ Wish them luck!

During the exam period

- ✓ Continue to show an interest, supporting them and giving plenty of praise and encouragement

Once all exams are over CELEBRATE! Treat your child (and yourself)!