



GCSE Exam Guide

2017

INTRODUCTION

So you've got GCSEs coming up! If you prepare well, there's nothing to worry about – you should get the good results you want. This booklet helps you to prepare by giving you ideas about organising your work. You'll find plenty of tips on the three main steps to exam achievement.

Step 1 Understand your coursework

Step 2 Learn coursework thoroughly

Step 3 Practice using the information so you're prepared for anything

Teachers mostly help you with Step 1. They can guide you in finding information, and help you to understand it, but the rest is up to you!

There's so much you can do at Steps 2 and 3 to boost your confidence – and your grades. Read on for some ideas.

LEARNING AND REVISION

There are a lot of differences between learning your work and revising it for an examination. Here are a few of them:

Learning is an on-going process in which you build upon previous knowledge and understanding. There will be a lot a new work and if you really learn this new work as you do it, you'll save yourself a lot of time later on, when it comes to revision.

Learning is a long-term process and cannot be done by trying to cram information into a few weeks. It involves completely understanding topics and memorising information.

Learning is rather like inputting and processing the information on a computer. At first the computer needs to be programmed – the information it will use needs to be fed into the processor – the computer's brain. This stage takes time. Once 'stored' in the processor, the program and data can be 'accessed' as required. This is learning.

Revision is fixing in your memory the things that you know. Think of the computer again. It can reproduce the information you have put into it, provided you ask it the right questions. Unlike the computer, your memory needs refreshing regularly, but if you do this, the information can be 'called up' in the same way.

Revision is learning to unlock your memory. You need to have memory prompts to help you to 'call up' what you know.

Revision is learning to select and adapt what you know. By doing this, you can answer different types of exam questions

LEARNING TO LEARN

You've been learning all your life, but you need to start learning for GCSE as soon as you start your exam courses.

Here are some practical 'Dos' and 'Don'ts':

DO make sure that you get all you can from each lesson.

It makes sense to ask if you don't understand

DO make sure you understand new concepts – if in doubt ask. Never leave something you don't understand in the hope that it will sort itself out.

That won't happen!

DO discuss new ideas and concepts with a friend. Try to test your own understanding by explaining the idea or concept to someone else.

DO go over your day's work at home. You know that homework helps you to learn your class-work – programme the brain – and helps you understand new concepts. Don't let yourself down – do it!

DO practise doing questions. This helps to ensure that you understand your work, gives you practice in doing research, and helps your memory.

DO develop ways of memorising information. Write notes or read out loud – this helps concentration. Keep doing this until you can remember all the information easily.

DON'T let yourself get tired. Your brain will be 'fuzzy' after a really late night and even easy tasks may seem harder.

DON'T worry if you haven't solved every single problem before you finish your evening's work. The brain is a problem solver and can solve problems while you are asleep – use it!

WHEN TO START REVISING

It's not all work, work, work – of course, you can enjoy life and revise at the same time.

Revision does need **determination** and **planning**, though.

You need to keep refreshing your memory of what you've learned. If you spread the workload over a period of time you:

- Are likely to achieve more.
- Will be under a lot less pressure and can enjoy your work.
- Are less likely to experience stress and strain.
- Will have more time to relax, keep fit and enjoy life.

A PLANNING TIP

You should begin revising for examinations between 6 – 8 weeks before the exam. If you start later than this you can still succeed, but it will be more difficult because you will have less time to revise in – this means harder work and less time to enjoy yourself.

PLANNING YOUR WORK

Planning your work means that you are more likely to revise all your work properly. Another bonus is that good planning always reduces stress. Try to:

- make a list of what you have to do
- find out the dates of the exams and make an exam timetable
- Plan / design / draw up a timetable for revision.
- Think about the best way to fairly divide your evening time



Remember to:

- Find a quiet place where you can work undisturbed.
- Include every subject in your revision. Plan to do short burst of revision in a variety of subjects every day.
- Get into the habit of revising at set times. Different people learn best at different times. Find out which is the best time for you.
- Arrange to have regular breaks of 5-10 minutes between revision sessions. Can you use this time to treat yourself to something you really enjoy?
- Switch off the radio, TV or CD. Your mind will concentrate better if you are not distracted. Ask people not to disturb you – not even to bring you a coffee – until your revision period has finished.

PREPARING YOUR REVISION PLAN

Your revision plan will help you to know what you want to do and when you want to do it. It also helps you to enjoy life.

Use the timetable on the next page to help you – make as many copies as you like. Use a new one for each week between now and the first examination.

Divide each day into session with a break of 5 minutes between some and 10 between others. Don't forget to mark in time for meals and be realistic about how long you can keep going – eight hours a day, even if you are behind with your work, is really over the top!

Set some time aside each day for relaxation – perhaps an hour each evening during the week and a little more time in the afternoons on Saturday and Sunday. Plan some treats for these times.

FILL IN ALL YOUR COMMITMENTS, INCLUDING:

- Lesson times
- School activities – matches, rehearsals, clubs etc
- Other activities – part-time jobs etc
- Times for relaxation and enjoyment

If time is short you may need to decide on which activities to drop for a while:

Remember, it will only be for a few weeks.

REVISION PLANNER

Week Beginning: _____

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9am						
10am						
11am						
12 noon						
1pm						
2pm						
3pm						
4pm						
5pm						

AVOIDABLE STRESS

A little bit of stress can be good for you, but too much of it causes strain, which is very harmful.

Reasons for Stress:

- Loneliness
- Fear of failure
- overwork
- Pressure from parents
- Guilt
- Boredom

People who are suffering from excess stress often show it. They often:

- want to be alone
- have difficulty in sleeping
- lose the ability to concentrate
- become very emotional or sensitive
- lose self-esteem and feel depressed
- become irritable and short-tempered
- suffer from headaches, skin problems etc.

BEATING STRESS

If you are organised, you are far less likely to suffer from stress. Some people can cope with stress and always seem to be very relaxed, but most of us find stress difficult to cope with. If you experience some of the symptoms of stress, the chances are that you are under too much strain. Here are some strategies which may help you to cope with stressful times.

DO establish a routine – and stick to it. Make sure that you have proper meals and that you sleep well and keep to your work plan.

DO get plenty of exercise. If you are fit, your mind will be more alert and revision will be just that little bit easier.

DO start revising as early as possible. Give yourself a head start.

DO take regular breaks when revising – the result is less stress

DO practice past papers – these help you to know what to expect and give you experience in doing exam papers.

DO build in variety – beat the boredom factor this way.

DO seek company – make sure that you see friends regularly, enjoy yourself and get right away from work!

Do your best. Decide what works for you, and stick to it. If others are panicking keep away from them.

DO relax regularly. Make sure you still have plenty of fun.

DON'T feel guilty. If you miss a session in your revision plan try not to panic – you

IN THE EXAM ROOM

Try not to worry about being nervous – everybody will be.

Action checklist to calm your nerves!

DO get out all the equipment that you will need for this exam and arrange it on your desk.

DO take your watch off and check the time against the exam room clock; put it in on your desk so that you can easily see it.

DO fill in the relevant sections on the front of your exam script, including your centre number and candidate number in the boxes provided for them.

DO read your exam paper. Make sure that you read the instructions – underline important points.

DO read the exam paper twice over. Ten minutes now can save errors later on.

DO underline important words, in the questions.

DO work out how much time you have for each question.

DO decide which question you can do best and do it first – this helps to boost your confidence.

DO make sure that you have at least five minutes at the end of the exam to go over what you have done.

DON'T panic if your mind appears to go blank. Once you start answering questions your memory will start to work again – look at key words in the question, this will help.

DON'T forget to include all your workings – you could get plenty of marks for them.

DON'T waste time thinking and worrying about losing an odd mark in part of a question you don't know the answer to. Leave it. Come back to it later, if you have time.

DON'T let your handwriting let you down – if they can't read it, examiners can't give you marks.