

St Mary's Catholic Academy

GCSE

Revision Support Booklet



Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to offer advice on study skills and exam preparation. It is full of tips and explanations of different study skills that will help you to achieve the very best you can in your mock exams and this summer's GCSE exams. All of these study skills have been covered in Revision & Practice time during Y10 & Y11, so you should be familiar with them.

Different revision techniques work better for different individuals. You should **use your mock revision period to experiment** with a wide range of techniques **and discover which techniques work best** for you in each of your subjects. This will ensure you are well prepared for the summer.

Remember, just reading and highlighting is not an effective revision technique.

Wellbeing

The revision and exam period can be a busy and very stressful time, so it is **important** that you do all that you can **to look after your physical and mental wellbeing**. Please remember that it is **completely normal to feel some stress during the revision and exam period**. Some stress can actually be **beneficial**, helping us to **focus** and **keep going**. However, **too much stress is not beneficial**. Remember to **look after the following** during your revision and exam period in order **to help manage stress**:

Eat

Diet is important, so don't neglect it during the revision and exam period. **Regular meals are important** – you can't concentrate if you're hungry. **Eat regularly**, ensure your **meals are balanced**, **lay off the junk food** and **stay hydrated**, but **avoid energy drinks**, which can wreak havoc with your sleep patterns.

Sleep

Staying up late to revise is not a good idea. Sleep deprivation can have a very negative impact on concentration, performance and memory.

Exercise

Take **regular breaks** from your revision and **do some exercise**. Take part in a sport you enjoy, get outdoors and go for a walk or just build more activity into your daily routine.

Relax

It is essential that you **make the time to switch off** and have a break by relaxing with family and friends, watching TV, reading or doing whatever else you find relaxing.

If you are concerned about your physical or mental wellbeing, talk to your parents/carers and let your form tutor know. They have been through the stress of exams, and can help you.



How do I improve my sleep?

In order to learn and revise effectively, you have to think hard. Being able to think hard partially depends on being well rested and sleeping well. There are strategies you can use which can help you get to sleep more quickly and which can improve the quality of your sleep.

If you have serious and/or long-term issues with your sleep, discuss it with your parents or carers.

When revising:

Do:

- ✓ ...establish times for when you go to bed and wake up every day (including weekends).
- ✓ ...create a routine that you follow before you go to bed.
- ✓ ...avoid screens for at least an hour before you go to bed.
- ✓ ...avoid caffeine from the afternoon onwards.
- ✓ ...make your sleeping environment quiet, dark, and cool in temperature.
- ✓ ...get up and reset if you're finding it difficult to sleep.

Don't:

- X ...go to bed and get up at different times each day or over the weekend.
- X ...prepare for bed differently every night.
- X ...browse your phone or computer directly before you go to bed.
- X ...drink caffeine before you go to bed.
- X ...try to sleep in a bright or stimulating environment.
- X ...try to force yourself to sleep.

An example of a routine that encourages good quality sleep:

Several hours before you go to bed:

1. Get some light exercise, ideally outside.
2. Stop drinking drinks containing caffeine, such as coffee, tea, cola, or energy drinks.

An hour before you go to bed:

1. Put your phone on charge in a different room to where you are going to go to bed.
2. If you *have* to have your phone in your bedroom because it is your alarm clock, set your alarm now and place your phone face down.
3. Stop using and turn off any devices with screens, such as computers, TVs, laptops, and tablets.
4. Go through your bedtime routine. This could include tasks to prepare for bed, such as cleaning your teeth or having a shower, but could also include calming activities, such as reading a chapter of a book or meditating.

Once you've gone to bed:

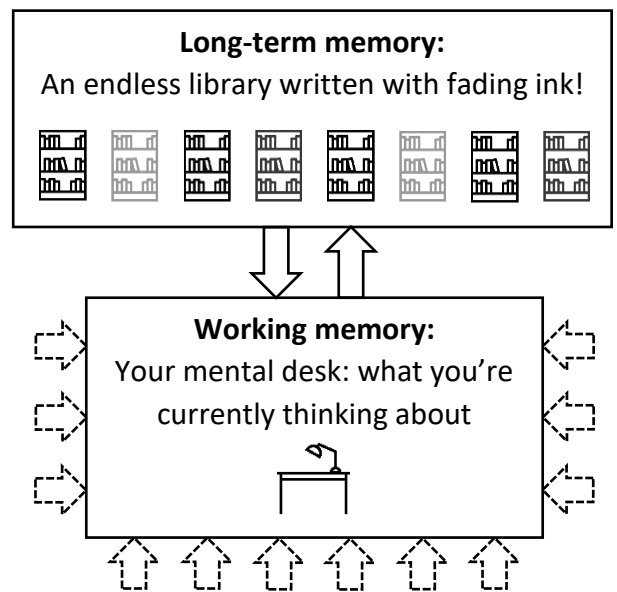
1. Close the blinds or curtains and turn off the lights.
2. Make sure your room is a cool but comfortable temperature by turning on a fan or opening a window (if safe to do so).
3. Go to bed, ideally at the same time every night.
4. If you can't sleep, get up, leave the room, and spend 15 minutes resetting. Reset by having a short walk or doing something that *doesn't* force you to think hard.
5. Try again after you have reset.

Where should I revise?

When you revise effectively, you pull information from your long-term memory and strengthen it in your working memory. You may also be finding gaps in your long-term memory and closing them by thinking hard about new information in your working memory.

Your working memory can only hold a small amount of information at once. In order to revise and learn effectively, you should use techniques which stop your working memory from becoming overwhelmed.

Anything that you are currently experiencing or paying attention to takes up space in your working memory. One way that you can free up space in your working memory is by working in an environment which is free from distractions.



When creating a space to revise:

Do:

- ✓ ...work in a tidy environment where you have the tools you need to revise effectively.
- ✓ ...work in a quiet environment.
- ✓ ...put your phone in another room or use an app on your which blocks social media.
- ✓ ...work in a space that you use only for home study, schoolwork or revision.

Don't:

- X ...work in a cluttered environment.
- X ...distract yourself with (loud) music or noise.
- X ...work near your phone or other devices that can access social media.
- X ...work in the same space where you relax.

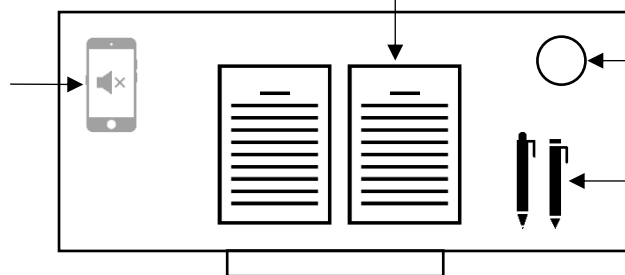
An example of an effective revision space:



A quiet environment, such as a classroom or library.

The resources you will need to revise using your chosen method.

Put your phone on silent if you will need to use it or put it in another room.



A drink, such as a glass of water.

The pens and pencils you will need to revise.

A chair that is similar to the chair you use at school (not a sofa or bed).

Tips in a nutshell

Do:

- revise in a quiet space, free from distractions (i.e. your mobile phone).
- get into a regular revision routine, revise in short chunks of 30 minutes and take breaks.
- eat regularly and well, avoiding junk food.
- get into a good sleep routine.
- take regular exercise.
- build in some 'down-time'.
- talk to an adult if you feel your stress levels are too high.

Don't:

- revise late at night or when you are tired.
- revise for long periods of time with no break.
- listen to music with lyrics when revising as it will distract you.

On the day of the exam

- Try to get a good night's sleep before the exam.
- Have breakfast, even if it's just a banana on the way to the bus!
- Check you have all the equipment you need - at least black pens, pencils, ruler and rubber. Some exams may require special equipment, for example: Maths equipment - calculator, compass, protractor, ruler; DT - coloured pencils, rulers, compass, protractors etc.
- Ensure you have a copy of your exam timetable.
- Ensure you know the location and start time of the exam(s).
- After the exam, don't go over and over it, instead focus your energy on preparing for the exams coming up.

Revision timetables & techniques

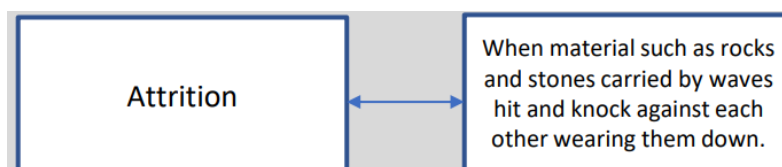
Your teachers have put together a recommended revision timetable for you. They have included topics they advise you revise, and resources that you can use to do this.

Ultimately, **your revision is your responsibility**. You may feel that you need to spend longer on a particular topic than has been recommended, and less on another.

CORE FOUR Revision Techniques

1. Flash cards

Flash cards are very effective for self-testing. Use both sides of the card with the question/key concept on one side and the answer on the other. Keep it simple and short so it's easier to remember.

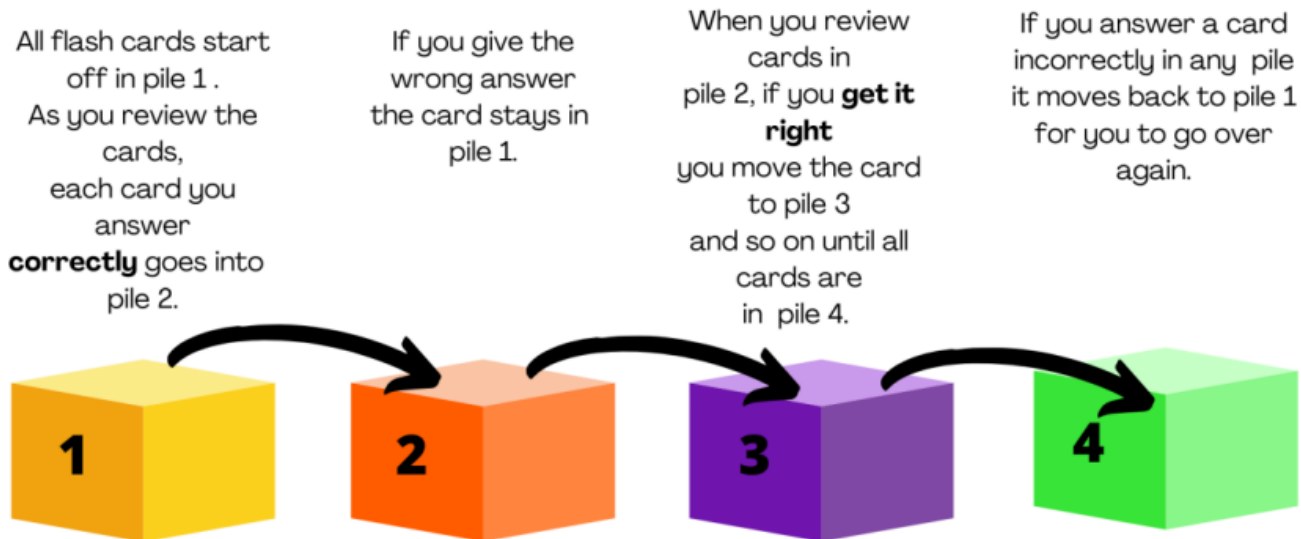


Tips:

- Creating your own cards is better than buying them as it helps you retrieve knowledge.
- Try adding pictures to make them more memorable.
- Use colour coding to organise different topics.

- Try recalling the information out loud or writing it down before checking the card. Research shows that just answering it in your head is not very effective for remembering.
- Use your flash cards in both directions.
- Get friends and family to test you with the cards. Use the Leitner system (introduced on the next page) to recall knowledge over different time intervals:

Introducing the Leitner System



2. Self-quizzing

Quizzing is a great way to introduce self-testing into your revision. Research shows that self-testing is very effective at helping you retrieve and embed knowledge. The process of forgetting and then remembering is excellent for building long-term memory of knowledge.

Tips:

- Write your own questions and test yourself (using paper and pen!) or get someone else to test you verbally.
- Alternatively, use an online resource to do a ready-made quiz or to produce one, e.g. Educake, Seneca, BBC Bitesize.

How to quiz:

1. Identify knowledge – what do you wish to cover?
2. Review and create – spend 5-10 minutes reviewing content (use notes/knowledge organiser/revision guide) then create 10 quiz questions or use an online resource.
3. Cover and answer – answer the questions from memory
4. Self-mark and reflect – go over the answers and mark in a different coloured pen.
5. Next time – revisit the areas where there were gaps in knowledge.

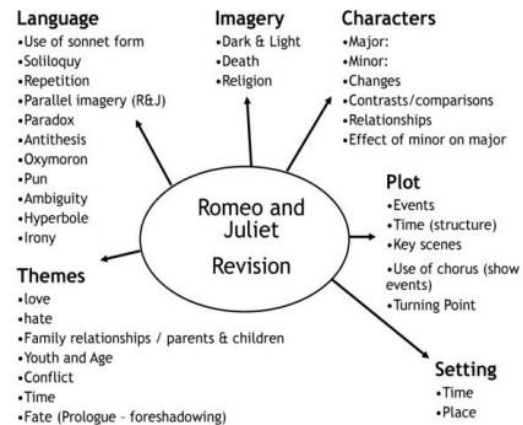
3. Mind maps

Sometimes also known as **concept** or **knowledge maps**, mind maps allow you to map out the main points of a topic and then elaborate with further detail e.g. facts or quotes. They help you memorise information and see the connections between different ideas.

Tips:

- In subjects where you have to write an essay or long written response, take a question and map out your answer without writing a full response.
- Check your response against the exam mark scheme.
- Do this for a number of questions then choose one and complete a full response.

1. Identify knowledge
2. Identify sub topics
3. Branch off
4. Use pictures and colour
5. Put it somewhere visible



4. Brain dumps

Also known as recall revision, **brain dumps are similar to mind maps but you only refer to your notes at certain points:**

1. Read through your notes or revision guide/knowledge organiser on a topic and then put them away.
2. Write down everything you can remember on the topic in a set period of time e.g. 15 minutes, without looking back at your notes.
3. Look back over your notes to see what information you have missed.
4. Put your notes away again and attempt to fill the gaps using a different colour pen.
5. Finally check your notes a third time and add in the missing information in another colour pen.
6. Each time you should find you can remember more.

Exam vocabulary

There are subject-specific key terms that you need to learn for each of your subjects. However, below are a range of common command words used in exams. Make sure you understand what the exam question is asking you by knowing what these words mean. Command words can vary across subjects so ensure you understand the context, too.

Analyse: Examine something in detail and try to explain or interpret it.

Annotate: Add to a diagram, image or piece of text to illustrate or describe features rather than just identify them, which is labelling.

Assess: Consider different options/arguments/factors and weigh them up to reach a conclusion about their effectiveness or validity.

Calculate: Work out the value of something.

Compare: Give a point-by-point identification of similarities and differences.

Define: This means what is meant by “.....” give the precise meaning of a term or concept.

Describe: Provide an account in detail of an event/individual/concept etc.

Discuss: Set out both sides of an argument and reach a conclusion, including evidence.

Evaluate: Consider different options/factors and reach a conclusion about their importance, impact, value or worth.

Examine: Consider carefully and provide a detailed account of the topic.

Explain: Provide a detailed description or interpretation of a term/concept etc.

Identify: Point out and name from a number of possibilities.

Illustrate: Refer to a specific case study or example (not illustrate as in draw).

Label: Point out specific features on a diagram, image or piece of text.

Justify: Explain why your selected choice/judgement is better than other options.

Summarise: Sum up the main points/arguments (this can be similar to outline).

Exam boards

All of the following are correct for the Summer 2024 exams.

To find the specification, simply put the subject, exam board and specification code into Google.

Subject	Exam board	Specification code
English Language	AQA	8700
English Literature	AQA	8702
Maths	Pearson Edexcel	1MA1
Religious Studies	WJEC	3121QS Catholic Theology and Judaism
Combined Science: Trilogy	AQA	8464
Biology	AQA	8461
Chemistry	AQA	8462
Physics	AQA	8463
Art & Design: Fine art	AQA	8202
Art & Design: Photography	AQA	8206
Art & Design: Textile design	AQA	8204
Business Studies	OCR	J204
Child Development (Cambridge National)	OCR	J809
Computer Science	AQA	8525
Creative Design & Production (Level 2 Technical Award)	NCFE	603/7003/8
Drama	WJEC	3690QS
Food Preparation & Nutrition	WJEC	3560QS
Geography	AQA	8035
Graphic Design (Level 2 Technical Award)	NCFE	603/7011/7
Health & Social Care (Cambridge National)	OCR	J835
History	Pearson Edexcel	1HI0
IT (Cambridge National)	OCR	J836
Media Studies	WJEC	3680QS
Music	WJEC	3660QS
PE	OCR	J587
Spanish	AQA	8698

Revision Technique Checklist

	Revision technique	Tried it successfully	I will try it	Subjects where I will use it
CORE FOUR Revision techniques	Flash cards			
	Self-quizzing			
	Mind maps			
	Brain dumps			
Revision techniques from R&P time	Trigger words			
	The Memory Journey			
	Flow charts			
	Revision clocks			
	Past papers			
	Revision classes			

Useful online resources

General revision tips and videos

[Tips for beating exam stress](#)

[How to revise](#)

[Revision tips](#)

[Revision tips for students](#)

[The importance of spaced practice](#)

[How to use retrieval practice](#)

[How to improve your memory](#)

[How to develop memory techniques](#)

[How to create and use quizzes](#)

[How to use flash cards](#)

[How to create mind maps](#)

Subject revision resources

English:

<https://www.youtube.com/@mrbruff>

<https://www.massolit.io/>

<https://www.physicsandmathstutor.com/english-revision/gcse-aqa/>

Science:

<https://sciencequiz.st-mary.blackpool.sch.uk/>

<https://www.educake.co.uk/>

<https://www.physicsandmathstutor.com/>

https://www.youtube.com/@Primrose_Kitten

Computer Science & IT:

<https://erevision.uk/>

<https://senecalearning.com/en-GB/>

Spanish:

[Quizlet](#) ([GCSE Spanish](#) | [Quizlet](#))

[Getrevising](#)

[Seneca](#)

[BBC Bitesize](#)

[Oak National Academy](#)

[Corbett Maths](#)

[Dr Frost Maths](#)

[Sparknotes](#)

[Kahoot](#)

Exam boards

[AQA](#)

Pearson [Edexcel](#)

[NCFE](#)

[OCR](#)

[WJEC](#)