

Grobby Community College



The Big Revision Guide

A guide for students
preparing for
GCSE examinations

Introduction

To help you over the next few months we have put together this advice booklet. It contains all the key information you will need to revise more effectively for your exams.



The Task Ahead

Before you can plan your revision you need to know what you have to cover, what your strengths and weaknesses are and what you need to help you revise. To do this well you have got to be systematic and go through each subject in turn, working out:

- ✓ What you need to cover.
- ✓ Your current level of understanding.
- ✓ What you are going to need to revise in that subject.

Once you have the information listed you can start to plan your revision. Here is an example of how you might begin:

Subject	Area	Topic	Resources	Priority
Maths	Numbers	Equations	Revision book Class notes Past papers MyMaths	Low
	Graphs	Pie Charts	Website Class notes *some missing Past papers	High



*Don't panic now as you find things are missing or there are things you don't understand. Everyone feels like that, but students who succeed in exams are the ones that do something about it. Make sure you build up all the information you need and gather together resources ready to begin planning a revision timetable. Get help from your teachers to support you in doing this.

Preparing the Basics

How much time do you have?

- ✓ Your revision timetable must be realistic and flexible.
- ✓ Be honest with yourself and plan to tackle the most important things first.
- ✓ Don't waste the time you do have.

Find the time

- ✓ How many days to the first exam?
- ✓ How many study hours in the average day?
- ✓ How many study hours can you do at a weekend?

Allocate your time

- ✓ Set a time and date for each subject and chosen topic (remember you will need to revisit topics a few times).
- ✓ Planning the time available is crucial.

What's the right space for you to work in?

Make sure you have the following:

- ✓ Comfortable chair and desk.
- ✓ Good light, comfortable temperature.
- ✓ Complete revision kit of: pens, coloured pencils and highlighter pens, paper, dividers and folders, post its, dictionary, thesaurus, text books and revision guides.
- ✓ Revision timetable planner.
- ✓ Storage to keep your space tidy.

Remove distractions

- ✓ Let your family know your study timetable so you are not distracted.
- ✓ Remember, useful concentration lasts only about 30-40 minutes.
- ✓ Then take a break of 5-10 minutes—drink water, text a friend, get some fresh air.
- ✓ Like anything else, concentration improves with practice.



Have you got a Study Buddy?

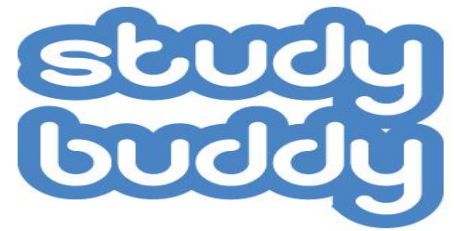
Working with a study buddy means questions and answers. This helps you (and your study buddy) interact with the information and work out what you know and what you don't.

Your buddy also motivates you to study. It is easier to stay in and study if someone else is doing it with you.

- ✓ Pick someone reliable, someone you like and trust.
- ✓ Plan in advance what you're going to discuss.
- ✓ Share your summary sheets, mnemonics and other methods of remembering.
- ✓ Subject information and skills.

Working with your Study Buddy

- ✓ Structure your meetings: study, discuss, study, discuss.
- ✓ Teach your study buddy a subject, have them teach it back to you.
- ✓ Stay in touch by phone and email, support each other.
- ✓ Check your revision planner for areas to focus on and plan for.
- ✓ Don't get side-tracked, stay focussed.



Planning to Succeed

Now it's time to actually plan your revision. Your aim is to prioritise the difficult topics first, get them sorted and move on to the easier areas in good time for each of your exams. That means you need to know when your exams are and how much time you have left for each of your subjects. Then you need to start to plan your revision time. Remember that 20 to 30 minute sessions are best, and then have a short break. At the beginning of the next session test yourself on what you have just learned to reinforce the learning. It is better to do 2 hours a night over a long period of time than cram it all in at the last minute. You should aim for 3-4 hours on a non-school day. That is not as easy as it sounds because to do it really well you have got to plan in loads of detail. Here is an example....

Monday	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
Subject	Maths	Science	English	French
Area	Number	Human Body	Anthology	Oral
Method	Mind mapping	Past paper	Notes	Cards
Aim	To understand....	To Practise....	To look for.....	To prepare.....

Now, if this looks like a lot of hard work it's because it is! But exams are straightforward if you prepare thoroughly.....

1. Revision Cards

A very good way to turn lesson notes into a form that is more manageable when you come to revise is to make a set of REVISION CARDS. A good revision card should contain all the KEY POINTS on a topic in a clear and concise way. It should be a condensed version of whatever you have in your notes and you should be able to take in the information on the cards at a glance. By transferring information from your notes to the revision card you are re-learning what you have covered in class. This is because you have to put information in your own words, and to do that you have to understand it!

A revision card should just have the key points on it. It should not have loads and loads of detail. If you come back to a revision card and you do not understand it, use your more detailed class notes to recap and re-write it in a form which you do understand.



2. Podcasts

A great way to learn is to record your notes on to MP3 and listen to them on your mobile phone or iPod. There are also some podcasts for your subjects to download from the Learning Platform.

Top Tip

If you make revision posters or mind maps a good place to put them up is next to your bed, next to the mirror, above the toilet or on the back of the bathroom door. Alternatively, stick your revision cards on the fridge door!

3. Mnemonics

Mnemonics are really simple but very useful for revision. You can use them to remember a sequence of events, a list of facts or parts of a process. To create a Mnemonic all you have to do is write down a list of facts or information. Here is an example designed to help remember the order of the planets that circle our sun. The first thing to do is write them down in order.

Mercury Venus Earth Mars Jupiter Saturn Uranus Neptune Pluto

M V E M J S U N P

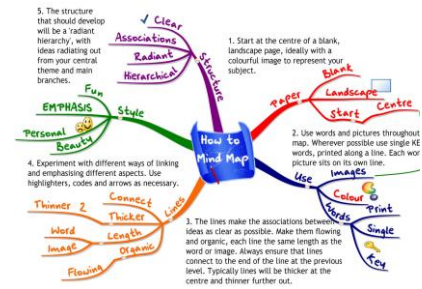
Then you create a memorable sentence or phrase that uses each of the letters above in turn as the first letter of each word in a new sentence.

My Very Early Morning Jam Sandwich Usually Nauseates People

Doing this helps you to create something memorable that you can decode when you need to.

4. Mind Mapping

Mind mapping is really useful for listing lots of ideas and connecting them together. Some research shows that mind maps are the best way of learning. You can use this technique to record information as you are revising or you can use it to see how much you know or have remembered about a topic, area or subject.



mindmeister.com

How to mind map:

- Start from the centre of the page and work out.
- Make the centre a clear and strong visual image that depicts the general theme of the map.
- Put key words on lines. This reinforces the structure of the notes.
- Print rather than write the script. It makes them more readable and memorable.
- Lower case is more visually distinctive (and better remembered) than upper case.
- Use colour to depict themes, associations and to make things stand out.
- Anything that stands out on the page will stand out in your mind.
- Think three-dimensionally.
- Use arrows, icons or other visual aids to show links between different elements.
- Do not get stuck in one area. If you dry up in one area go to another branch.
- Put ideas down as they occur, wherever they fit. Do not judge or hold back.
- Break boundaries. If you run out of space, don't start a new sheet; paste more paper onto the map.

5. Key Command Words to Learn

Command words are the words in an exam question which tell you what to do. It is vital that you understand what each one means.

Analyse	Comment on something by looking closely at the details.
Compare	Say how things are the same and different.
Illustrate	Give examples to make your points clear. It can also mean to use diagrams, drawings or figures to support your answer.
Outline	Describe without too much detail.
State	Present information clearly but briefly.
Summarise	Using your own words to bring together the main points without including details or examples.
Review	Go over the whole thing picking out important parts to give your opinion on.
Clarify	Say a bit more by giving a simple and clear explanation.
Comment on	Give your opinions or point of view.
Consider	Take into account and give your thoughts on something.
Demonstrate	Show using lots of examples.
Describe	Give a detailed account of something as it is. You do not need to give your opinion on it.
Discuss	Give important reasons for and against and come to some conclusion from these.
Contrast	Show how things are different.
Explain	Make the information clear by giving reasons for it.

6. Bookmark

Make a bookmark with important information written on it. Keep it in a magazine or book you are reading for pleasure. Glance at the bookmark each time you start and finish reading.



7. Annotation

As an 'active reader', you already know that when you read textbook assignments, you should have questions in your mind. As you read, you should be looking for the answers to these questions. You should also have a pencil in hand so that you can 'annotate' your text. As the word suggests, you 'make notes on your notes'.

Unlike 'highlighting', which is a passive activity, the process of annotating text helps you to stay focused and involved with your textbook. You will find that the process of taking notes as you read will help you to concentrate better. It will also help you to monitor and improve your comprehension. If you come across something that you don't understand or that you need to ask your teacher about, you will be able to quickly make note of it, and then go on with your reading.

The following is a list of some techniques that you can use to annotate text:

- ✓ Draw pictures to represent key ideas.
- ✓ Indicate steps in a process by using numbers in the margin.
- ✓ Write the questions in the margin next to the section where the answer is found.
- ✓ Write short summaries in the margin at the end of sub-units.
- ✓ Signal where important information can be found with key words or symbols in the margin.
- ✓ Write key words and definitions in the margin.
- ✓ Circle definitions and meanings.
- ✓ Underline important terms.

You will probably be use to this technique from your work in English lessons.

8. Post It



Write information onto post it notes. Put each post it in a place where you will see it often.

You could use them to learn key quotations in English, key dates in History or formula in Maths. The possibilities are endless.

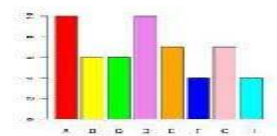
You can put the post it notes into a logical pattern of key points.

You could write down all the things you haven't fully understood on individual post it notes and stick them to an area of wall. Remove them from the wall as you sort out your difficulties.

9. Charting Progress

Use bar charts and pie charts to show different pieces of information.

This helps you to see and remember the relative importance of each item.



10. Doodles

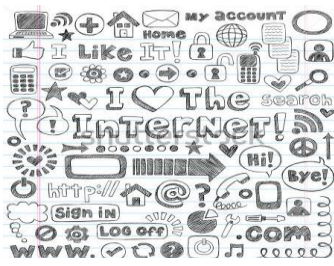
Create a drawing to help fix key points in your mind.

Use your imagination presented visually.

Be surreal.

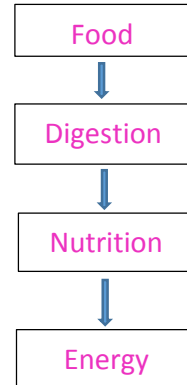
Be funny.

You don't have to draw well—scribbling or stick figures will be just as effective as fine works of art.



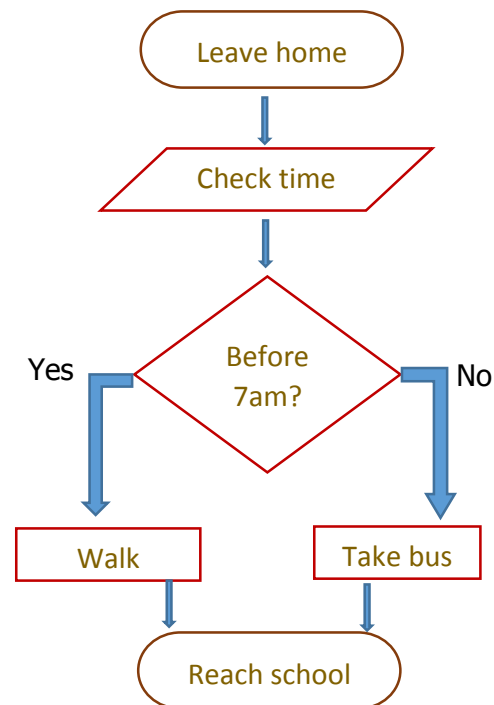
11. Simple Flow Charts

If your mind works in a straight line try creating a list of connecting ideas.



12. Complex Flow Charts

Sometimes the connections between ideas are too complicated to be shown in a straight line. Here is an example of a more complex flow chart.



13. Colour Code

Write key points on coloured card or paper.

Use different colours for different aspects of the topic.

Turn pieces of paper over to use as flash cards and test yourself.

quizlet.com



14. Musical Mind

Turn the information into the lyrics of a song.

Create a rhythm to help you remember important points—a sequence of words that can be tapped out.

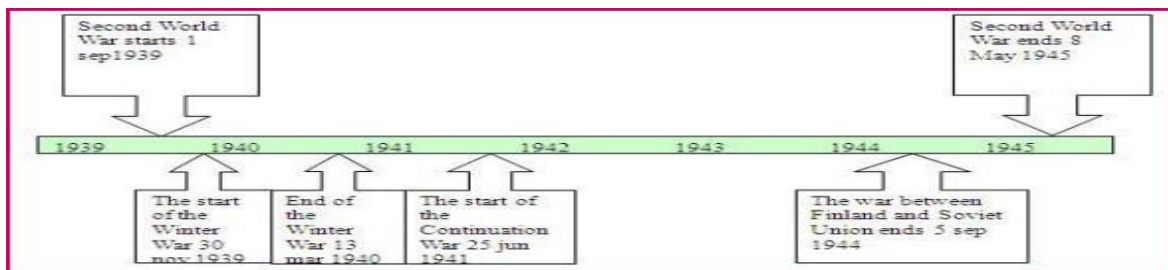
Play the same piece of background music every time you study a particular topic.

15. Timeline

A timeline is a good example of a visual organiser. It works in most subjects.

For example, you could use it to remember steps in a scientific experiment; significant moments in a novel; the life of Jesus; stages in a process in technology or dates and events in a historical period.

timetoast.com



16. Brainstorm

Carefully read the text you are revising.

Now cover it up and brainstorm— write down all the bits of information you remember as fast as you can in any order.

Look at the text again. Add any bits you have missed and alter any bits you got wrong.

The brainstorm is good for remembering information, but not for putting it in a correct order.

So now use the words to create a bookmark, a keyword plan or any other method to help you organise your ideas.



17. Using Past Papers

How do past papers improve your exam technique?

Exams are like anything else—the more you do, the better you get. That is why past papers are so important to your exam preparation.

Get to know:

- Their layout, names/numbers of questions.
- The format of instructions.
- The range of questions: multiple choice, short answers, essays etc.
- What is required in your answers to different kinds of questions.
- The marking scheme.
- What really good answers actually look like.

Successful Revision: Ten Steps

1. Find a good environment in which to revise (comfortable, quiet and no distractions).
2. Make a realistic revision timetable; mark subjects and topics on it (use your subjects' revision lists to do this; see your teachers about missing work).
3. Know your areas of strengths and weaknesses; mix them up on your timetable (you don't gain by revising all the easy topics—but you'll have nightmares if you only revise your worst bits).
4. Always make your own revision notes (you will learn as you write and once you've made the notes, you're half way there).
5. Stay focused (don't try to make notes about everything ... Stick to the important points).
6. Use other active revision techniques for extra success and to break up the boredom.
7. Tick off topics when you've revised them; feel good about it!
8. Split your revision into 10, 20, 30 minute long sessions. At the beginning of each session test yourself on what you learned in the last session.
9. Have a short relaxation/exercise break between revision sessions to unwind.
10. Frequently remind yourself how useful your revision is, and look back at what you've achieved so far.

In the first few minutes of the exam

Always read the instructions carefully.

As you read through the examination paper, circle the questions you want to answer.

Make sure you read through the whole paper before you start to write.

Check how many marks are given for each question. This gives important information about how much detail is required.

Stay calm, don't panic. Counting to ten or breathing deeply may help if your mind goes blank.

Before you start writing, work out how much time you have for each question. Don't spend too long on one question!

Don't forget revision and warm up sessions at college!

You are expected to attend. Your teachers are experts at preparing learners for exams. They have lots of past papers for you to try as well as important tips on achieving the best grades in the exam.

Examinations have really strict rules. If they are not followed, in a worst case scenario, a learner can be disqualified. This section outlines the basic examination rules laid down by the QCA (the Government body that oversees external examinations).

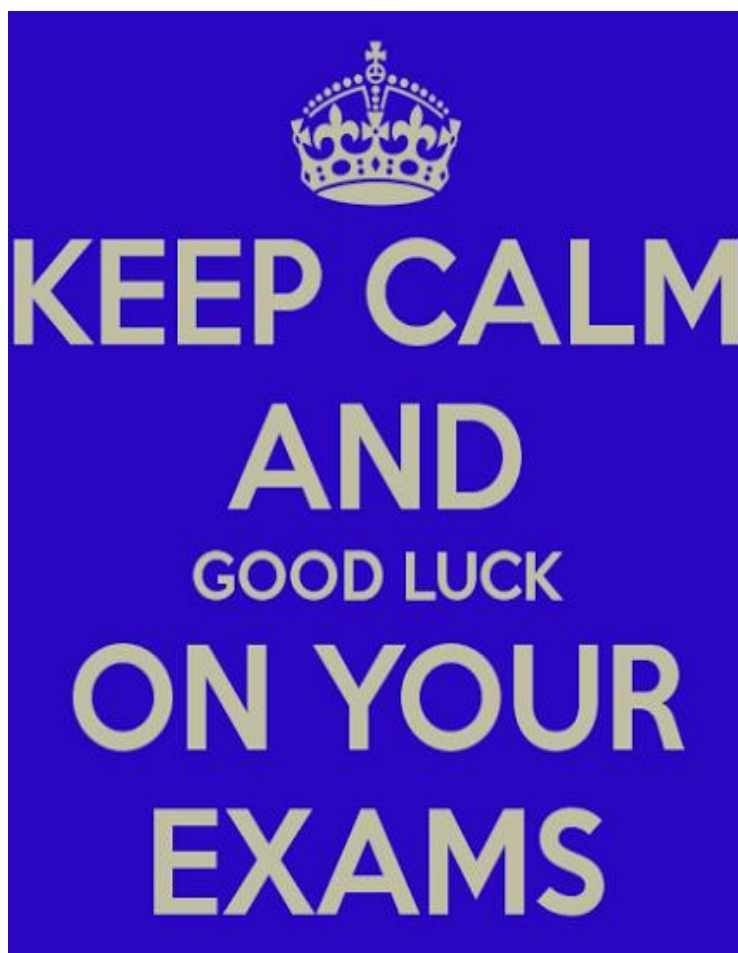
Examination Advice

- Check your timetable. They do NOT all have the same start time!
- Know when and where your exams are going to take place.
- Know your candidate number.
- Arrive at least 10 minutes before the start of your exam.
- Do not be late! If you are late you may not be allowed to sit your exam.
- If you are unwell on the day of an exam and you cannot attend you must call in as soon as possible. In order to apply for consideration you will need to supply a doctors' note.
- Do not communicate with any student while you are in the exam room. If you do, you may be disqualified from your exams.
- No mobile phones/iPods/MP3 players or Watches on your person.
- No correcting fluid/pens.
- Pencil cases must be transparent.
- Bring a spare BLACK pen. You can only use black ink in exams.
- Make sure you bring a calculator to any examinations they are required for.
- Listen and follow all instructions carefully.



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GCSE Revision Guide - 2015



We hope you have found this booklet useful.

For more guidance or support please see or contact any member of staff at college.

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Finally, we would like to wish all our students success in their examinations.

GCSE Results Day - Thursday 20 August 2015 from 9.00am to 12.00noon

Post 16 Registration Day – Thursday 27 August 2015