



# Preparing for Examinations

## A Guide for Parents

### Why does the school have end of year examinations?

New courses at GCSE have been introduced since September 2015 with greater emphasis placed upon the completion of the terminal exams. It is imperative that students are prepared for these changes.

### Revision – the parents' dilemma!

Many parents are frequently faced with the dilemma of how to best help their child with revision. It is difficult to know what the best thing to do is. *Should I leave them alone in their room to revise? Should I force them to revise? Exams and school work has changed so much since I was at school, I don't think I can help?*



It is important to provide a supportive and encouraging environment for your child to achieve, while making sure that they do not feel under too much pressure or stress. Help them to see how important qualifications are to their future. It is difficult to know how to achieve the balance between offering your child too much support (and being accused of fussing) and leaving them to flounder and perhaps fail.

### Why should I encourage my child to revise?

- It can reduce panic – gives them control and confidence
- It means exams reflect what they can do, not what they didn't bother to do
- It can help them to identify areas for development or in examination technique

### Where to start? When to do it?

- Help them work out how much time they have
- Get them to take into account their ideal time of day to work – work out when they will revise
- Break it down to make it seem manageable

### Should I help with revision?

- Research and experience shows that children whose parents/carers take the opportunity to be frequently interested in their child's learning make the most progress
- Revision should be used to fix learning beyond the classroom. It can provide the opportunity for your child to reflect upon their knowledge and understanding, and extend skills in a particular area
- Helping your child with their work is not the same as doing it for them and discussing work helps them strengthen and consolidate their understanding

### What is Revision?

It means actively looking back over work to:

- remind a student of things they might have forgotten
- make links with other learning so they have a bigger picture
- reinforce learning – so it stays remembered
- show what they don't know
- check that they have understood everything

## Some Revision Strategies ....

Revision is a very personal skill and everyone will have an opinion on the best method. Throughout KS3 a student's preparation for the end of year examinations can be a trial for the GCSE and allow them to develop the best and most effective revision strategies. It can often be trial and error to identify the techniques that suit your child, so encourage them to try different strategies.

top tips...

**Revision Notes** are useful for any subject which has lots of knowledge to learn. Students should develop active learning from their notes and it forces them to tackle bulging folders of notes or exercise books full of notes.

Help them organise, summarise and condense their notes under different headings.

**Writing Traditional Revision Notes.** They should:

- Identify a topic they want to revise and help them **break it into 'bite-size' chunks of work.** They shouldn't complete an entire unit in one sitting.
- have all their books or published notes before they start. They should read through their notes and you can check their understanding by asking questions about their notes (ask them to write down a list of questions as they revise for you to ask). Start early enough so you can check any topics you don't understand with your teacher.
- organise their notes - **Pick out any key words, ideas, diagrams that are essential information.**
- develop notes that are **interesting by using colour, boxes, circles, underlining, highlighting to make things stand out.**
- **organise their notes into a revision folder.** This could be by subject/exam/topic etc. so they can find their notes easily and this means less wasted time.

**Revision Cards** are usually postcard size and they can make their own or buy them yourself from a stationary shop or Student Reception. Their small size gives revision cards advantages – they can be carried around and as they only contain a small amount of information your child won't feel swamped when they look at them. Revision cards should be clear. They should:

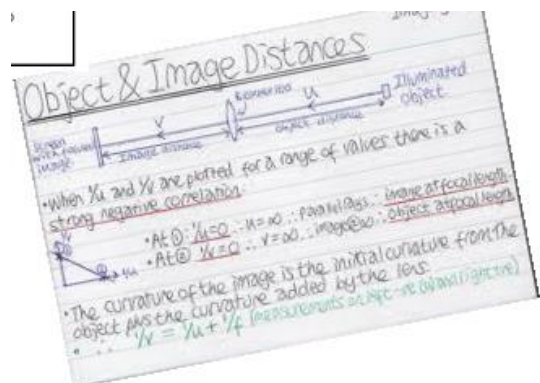
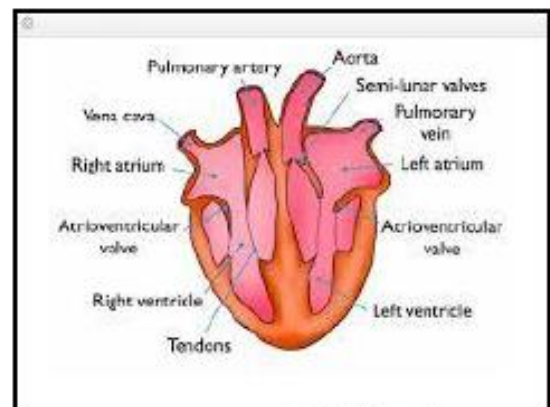
- always write the subject in the top right hand corner
- always put a title at the top of the card
- develop their own method of numbering the cards
- check and revise it
- bind cards covering the same topic together - an elastic band or a treasury tag can be used
- use colour and pictures to make them interesting
- use the Revision Cards as a way of memorising any writing frames

### 'SOURCES' EXAM: KEY TOPIC 1: The Impact of the Depression

#### Unemployment in Britain in the 1930's

- Unemployment in the 1930's was highest in the coal, iron, steel, cotton and shipbuilding industries of the north and east of England and in Scotland
- By 1932 34% of miners out of work
- When a mine (pit) closed often the whole village/town that served them became unemployed – a massive impact on the community

80% of all new factories were in London or nearby e.g. car making

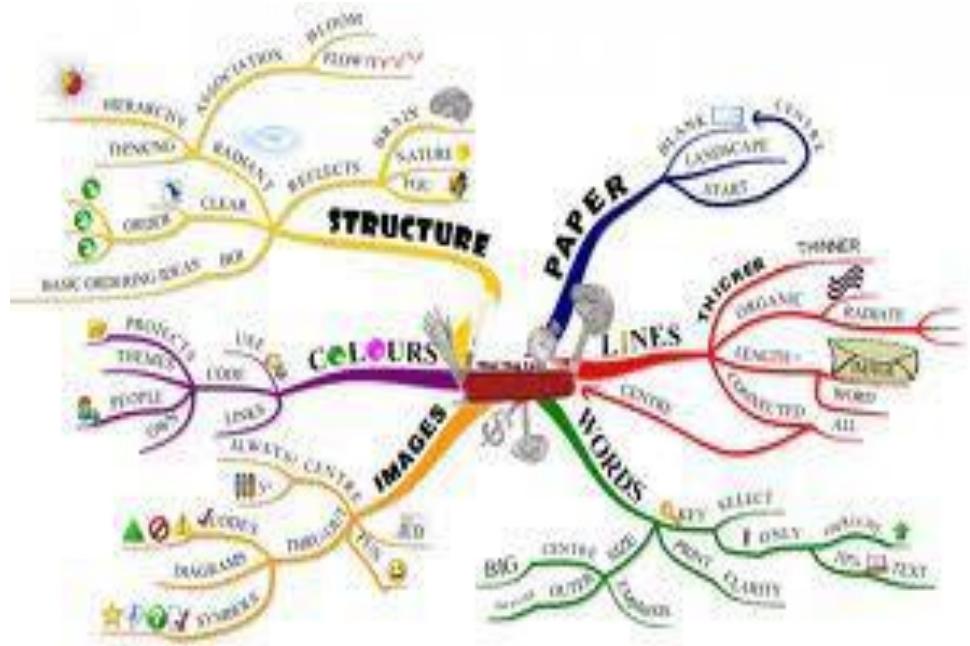


## Mind map/Concept Map

Some students find revising using mind maps or concept maps more fun to do and more interesting. They are particularly good providing an overall view of a topic and for showing links and connections.

They should:

- Write the main topic in the middle of the paper
- Draw a branch out from the main topic for each key point
- Write a key word or phrase on each branch
- Add details including diagrams, pictures. Highlight links and connections – the more creative the better



**Using revision notes: Memorise and Test** It helps your child understand their notes. They should:

- read through their notes/revision cards/mind map
- memorise the notes by re-reading them several times.

You can help your child by:

- creating memory hooks to help them remember things, these work best when they are unusual and funny. Use links, pictures and stories.
- testing them – ask them to provide a list of questions
- asking them to “Teach” you the topic



they have learnt.

- encouraging the use technology if appropriate - use revision websites; download audio revision topics to iPod's and phones to collate the information

**If you would like any other information about other strategies or clarity about these techniques please contact the school via your child's mentor.**



## Helping your child to organise their time by developing a Revision Timetable

There are many good reasons for your child to use a revision timetable:

- It avoids a last minute rush and panic before the exam
- It helps to set up good routines and habits
- It ensures that each subject gets a fair amount of time and spreads out their revision
- It avoids wasted time and helps to plan in leisure time (just as important)

**HOWEVER...**lots of students start revision timetables but don't use them effectively. Half the problem with revision is **down to organisation**. You can aid your child to plan and organise what they are going to do and what they need to be successful.



### Some handy hints:

- **Set a definite time for revision** by agreeing the most appropriate time to start & finish (i.e. between 4 pm – 6pm, after dinner, weekends between 9 – 11 am)
- **Keep revision sessions to a reasonable length**. An effective revision session might be divided up into 20 minutes revising, 5 minutes testing, 5 minutes resting.
- **Get involved and help your child test themselves** – let them guide you rather than imposing what you did at school (things can and have changed!!!)
- **Decide what are the revision ground rules** - whether they can or cannot listen to music when revising or there will be no TV or background distractions
- **Find a place to work which suits** – a calm well lit environment, working at the kitchen or dining table, or in their bedroom.
- **Have they got everything you need to revise** – pens, paper, revision cards, folders, highlighters, revision guides etc. These can be purchased from Student Reception.
- **Arrange breaks during revision but keep them short** – a drink and biscuit/fruit.
- **Make sure they drink enough water** – brain function will suffer if your child doesn't drink water regularly

### KEEP CALM and CARRY ON REVISING

Everybody gets nervous and worried about exams but you can help manage your child's anxiety and reduce their nerves.

- **Be prepared** – Let them know you know they have worked hard and revised well and this will reduce stress
- **Encourage them to talk to people** – family, friends and teachers and reinforce the idea that **Asking for help** is not a sign of weakness – it is a sign of maturity
- **Be positive and take an interest in their revision** – Being negative makes them less enthusiastic about working hard
- **Exercise** is a great way of dealing with stress as it relaxes them, so arrange leisure activities for them to “let off steam”
- **Food** – make sure they have a good breakfast and drinks
- **Sleep** – your child will need to get plenty of sleep during the exams. Sleep helps them review their revision and subconsciously sort the information.



### Check Show My Homework website

Revision hints, tips and notes can be found on the Show My Homework. Make sure your child checks the website regularly to ensure they have all the information for the examinations.