



Revision Hints for Students & Parents

STEP 1: PREPARING TO REVISE

It is essential that you prepare all of the materials you will need for every subject BEFORE you start your revision programme. If you don't, your timetable will fall apart, because you will spend the first twenty minutes of each session finding your notes or finding a pen or tidying your room!

1. Ensure you have an uncluttered, quiet, private space where you can begin work without distraction or prevarication. This space should have plenty of pens, pencils, paper and drinking water / fruit.
2. Create (if you don't have one already) a file for each subject. Even if your notes are in an exercise book, you will be creating many other resources as part of your revision and you will need somewhere to put them. Store all of these close to your work area.
3. Make sure all of the notes and textbooks you need for revising are transported to and from school as necessary. You should not be leaving textbooks and notes in your locker permanently – they are absolutely no good to you there!
4. Organise all of the notes you have into topics. Use dividers to separate the notes.
5. At this stage, you should make a list for each subject of the topics you think you have to revise. **If you are in any way unsure what it is that you need to revise, prepare your list and check with your teacher.** Do you have all of the notes you need? If you were absent and didn't catch up with class work at any point, now is the time to borrow the notes from others.

Other Resources

1. Make sure you have plenty of past questions – using the examination board websites or those given to you in lessons.
2. Download the mark schemes from examination board websites.
3. Make sure you have a clear idea of the order of your examinations – you should prioritise your schedule based upon which examinations are coming first / last.
4. If your subject teachers have advised purchasing a recommended revision guide, then do so.

At this stage it is absolutely crucial that you ignore anyone who says that they are not doing / not going to do any revision. This is important for two reasons in my experience:

1. Your grades aren't linked to theirs! If they decide not to do any revision, then that is fine, but why does that mean that you should pass up the opportunity to do well?
2. They are probably lying!

STEP 2: CREATING A REVISION TIMETABLE

If you don't plan your time in advance, you can't ensure that you are going to have time to hit all of the areas in each subject. You will, of course, have to give more time to areas that you find more difficult (and perhaps enjoy less than others). I would suggest the following structure:

Date	Time	Subject Topic	Active Method	Testing Method?

This forces you to specify not only subject, but topic and method.

STEP 3: PLANNING THE REVISION SESSION

1. There should always be a clear outcome for the session 'I will be able to draw and label a diagram of the heart'. 'I will be able to recall the key dates of the Russian Revolution' 'I will have planned and written the answer to two examination questions'.
2. For each subject you should create a list of topics / sections and then rate yourself out of ten for each – how far do you understand each topic? (0=No understanding / No recollection; 10=Understood, will require brief revision to commit to memory) This helps create priorities. If you don't know what all of the topics are – this is when alarm bells should be ringing and you need to check with your teacher.
3. You should produce something from all revision – key notes – bullet points – cartoon strips – mind maps etc. This is part of the process of committing material to memory.
4. You should plan in your revision to go over all topics again a week / a month later, so that you are reinforcing the knowledge.
5. Have a list of topics displayed on your notice board so that you can tick them off as you go along – this will help you feel like you are getting somewhere.

STEP 4: REVISING!

Revision methods which are passive: 'I'll read through my notes'; 'I'll watch a DVD' 'I'll look at some exam questions' are unlikely to be very helpful at all. This can be frustrating. Four hours spent doing a variety of the above is four hours badly spent! You should link your revision methods to your preferred learning styles (from your online assessment).

Deciding which methods to use is crucial – everybody is different – but unless you have a genuinely photographic memory, reading your notes will not get you very far at all. This, paradoxically, is because of the brain's efficiency. When it sees items that are familiar and unthreatening, it tends to register them as unimportant / insignificant. In other words it tricks itself and says 'yes, I know that', when actually it recognises it and understands it, but won't necessarily remember it. In other words, your methods must be active and therefore in time chunks with REGULAR BREAKS.

Whilst understanding is obviously key to revision, there is a large degree of this process which is a case of rote learning – remembering dates, equations, technical names etc. Whatever strategies you use, it is best to start your notes in a simple manner and then build them up.

You should apply the following steps to dealing with each topic. You shouldn't move onto the next step until you have successfully completed the one you are on.

1. Check initial understanding.
2. Write it out.
3. Apply it (e.g. to an examination question).
4. Explain it to someone else.

By looking at your notes / revision guide / textbook create a spider diagram that summarises all of the key points of a topic. Colour code the points you have made (Green = Understood; Amber = Some uncertainties; Red = No understanding). Mind maps are also a very helpful way of structuring knowledge so that brain recalls it – see <http://www.peterussell.com/MindMaps/HowTo.php>

Acronyms can be very helpful as memory joggers. Take the key stages in a process, which may well be quite difficult to remember on their own and turn them into an easy memory jogging word – as a nonsense example remembering ‘Wholly inadequate, needless, darned, outrageous waste of space’ is much easier to remember if thought of as W.I.N.D.O.W.S. as the brain is prompted for a particular word beginning with each of those letters.

For more complex points like scientific processes / historical processes create a series of pictures / cartoon strip to summarise and then post them up all over your room or anywhere where you spend a lot of time. It doesn’t matter whether your drawings are awful – it is often easier to remember things that amuse you – so poor skills can be a bonus in this regard!

Create a recording of your voice (or someone else’s!) with the key points of a topic and play them to yourself when doing other mundane tasks (like washing the dishes?!). Once you have listened to one topic, stop the tape and write out the points.

STEP 5: TESTING KNOWLEDGE

One of the main anxieties is knowing whether or not you have remembered the information you have revised – do not avoid testing – testing can be reassuring.

1. Ask parents to test you on your knowledge using your key notes.
2. Get together with friends for a set period of time and test each other (BUT you must be subject and topic specific. Otherwise, there is the chance for others to make you feel insecure by bringing in their own anxieties about topics that you haven’t revised yet!).
3. Plan and or complete past examination questions.
4. Create for yourself a genuine mock for each subject – clear timing; examination conditions. If you ask your teachers in advance, they are likely to be able to mark this for you as well.

FINAL TIPS

- Don’t leave all revision until the end and most certainly do not leave all of the difficult bits until the end – this will just be depressing as you get closer to the exams.
- Don’t use revision as an excuse for poor / incomplete homework. The topics covered in Year 11 will also be on the exam papers – so the homework is essential!

- Don't revise and then immediately go to bed – this is a common cause of sleepless nights as your mind is whizzing with information. Finish at a reasonable time and relax for an hour.
- Don't work 24/7. You will become anxious, bored and at worst completely disaffected. Take days where you don't do any revision.
- Don't allow topics to get on top of you. If you keep going back to something and you really don't understand it, then ask a friend or your teacher – do not let your worries over one issue colour your attitude to an entire subject.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

1. **It is difficult to quantify how much time boys should spend on revision- 2 hours a night is enough up until their GCSEs. More at the weekend is a must.**
2. Basically, if they claim not to have homework in Year 11, they are lying! There is always revision preparation to get underway with.
3. By reading the whole of this booklet you will be able to help reassure your son that he is doing the right thing. All of us like to have a degree of autonomy in our work, but if he is ignoring all of the above points, then his revision sessions are unlikely to be as successful as they could be.
4. Try and help your son with the things that you know he finds more difficult – organisation / designing a revision timetable / providing pens and paper /testing etc without him feeling that you are taking away the responsibility from him.
5. Keep an eye on your son's progress by looking at his revision timetable, but don't use it as a stick to beat him with!
6. Be flexible about social arrangements – your son will want to go out and really needs to go out if he is to keep fresh – however, if he wishes to go out during a revision period, then negotiate with him when the time will be made up.
7. In terms of techniques for revision, your son might not work in the same way that you would – but so long as there is a rationale that doesn't go against the general principles set out above, support him. The bottom line is that he should tailor his revision to his learning preferences.
8. Make yourself available – your son is likely to feel under extraordinary pressure and boys notoriously 'shut down' at these points. Support in any way you can and if at all possible, try not to nag!