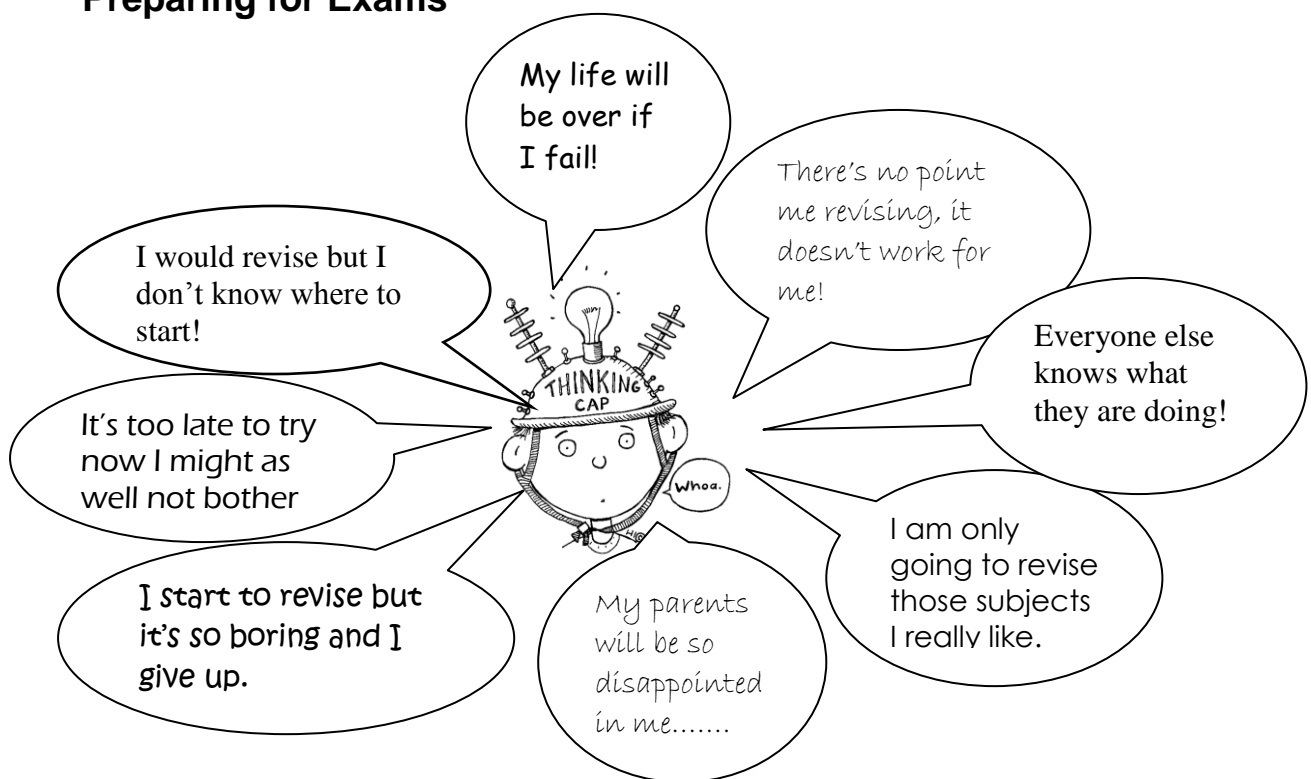


How to revise

Introduction

Few people like exams, but if you think carefully about how to approach them they can be easier to handle than you might imagine.

Preparing for Exams



When students struggle with exam preparation, it's often because they're not clear about:

- Whether revision will make a difference
- What to revise.
- How to allocate their time.
- How to actually revise!

It can seem a good idea to plough straight into revision without finding out the answers to these questions but good planning can make the whole revision process much less stressful.

It can make a real difference to how well you do!

My Exam Timetable

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What to revise:

Here's a list of some of the things you might need to know to make an effective plan.

For each subject:

- a) Ask subject teachers to help you make a list of topics to revise.
- b) Find out what kinds of questions there will be in the exam. Ask your teacher how you should answer each different type.
- c) How long you'll have to work on each question.
- d) Whether you'll have a choice of questions.

Once you have all of this information you are a good way towards working out what topics to revise and in what depth. The next step is to look at how much time you have available.

Making the best use of your time.

There's no one way of time planning that will suit everyone but there are some broad guidelines that many students find useful.

Don't worry if things don't go exactly to plan remember that no one manages their time perfectly!

- One:** Work out a reasonable amount of time to revise.
- Two:** Break it into reasonable revision sessions
- Three:** Leave time to relax
- Four:** Put in the exam dates.
- Five:** Fit sessions in for each subject

How detailed a plan this is will depend on your own personal preferences.

Revising:

Before you start, make sure you check you have notes on all the topics you need to revise!

If you have missing work, think how you can replace it:

1. Talk to friends, can you photocopy their notes?
2. Are there notes on **moodle** or on the web?
3. Can your teacher help?

Got all the notes?.....Lets start!

How?

Some of you may well have good ideas about revision from exams you've sat in the past. So developing effective revision strategies at GCSE may just mean thinking over what you've done before and adapting it.

What is active revision?

The **world's worst** method of revision is to read through notes and leave it at that.

Only a few scary people remember all that information after just reading notes!

Revision is boring and you must find ways of tricking your brain into engaging with it!

Remember:

Revision should be an **active** process!

You remember better when you understand

Even if your exams require you to remember a lot of facts, you are much more likely to remember the information if you understand it!

Ways to help you understand the work...

Look for the **idea** behind the work

Think about how things **link** together.

Relate what you are learning to **'real-life' situations**.

Thinking how the solution to one problem may help you solve others.

Organise the material into an ordered structure.

Create diagrams or charts to represent a topic.

Look for **similarities or differences**.

Look for points **for and against** an argument.

Try to **really understand** how formulae work.

Discuss topics with a friend.

And of course ask your teacher for help

Strategies!

1. Note taking:

(a) Lots of students revise by condensing their notes down. This might involve summarising your notes from your classes and readings onto post cards. You could do this for each topic and build up a bank of postcard and read them on the bus or whenever you get a chance.

Or....you might create a list of headings and bullet points.

2. Mind maps or spider diagrams:

These involve:

- Writing your study topic in the middle of a page.
- Drawing branches and twigs out from the centre for key themes.
- You can have words, pictures, diagrams ... whatever seems to help.

You can make this more effective by adding a time limit.

- You start by choosing a topic and then put the title in the middle of the page.
- Next add what you think are the main areas in the topic and any detail you can remember before revising at all.
- When you are stuck – give yourself 2 minutes only with your books and try to remember more information (keep thinking about the diagram so far).
- Now you have 1 minute to add new information to the diagram.
- This continues until you are happy with the diagram.

You may get half way and realise you need to re plan – this is a good thing! It means you are now understanding the topic better and can move to a new level!

3. Mnemonics

One of the best known mnemonics is this one for learning the colours of the rainbow -

'Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain'

Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet

4. Story

If you have a group of facts to remember and it is hard to see how they are related.....try to link them to something else.

- You could make up a story to link them together.
- Link them to objects in a room you know well

5. Images and text

Try representing a topic using only pictures. If you are desperate, you could always add labels!

The point is that you have to think how to show the information in another form and that means that you can't bypass your brain!

6. Check your progress

Test yourself as you are going along.

- get a friend to help you
- ask Mum or Dad to help.
- use revision websites
- try talking through a topic outloud – you may want to avoid this when on the bus!

7. Use past paper questions

Look at past exam questions on different topics.

- Sketch out rough answers to exam questions.
- Write full exam answers. This may help to build up your confidence for the exam. (Practising examples is particularly important for exams that involve calculations).
- Write some practice answers under exam conditions.

If you're lucky, some kind member of staff might read over some of your answers to help you see if you are on the right track.

You may also surprise yourself by discovering that you can write less in the time than you thought, so you might not need to learn as much material as you had first imagined.

8. Revision websites

These can be really useful and well worth a look. Ask your teachers which are the best for their subject.

Final preparation

As the exams come closer, there are some things that you can do to help you arrive at the exam in a fit state to do yourself justice.

- **Double check the exam times** and locations; you don't want to be panicking about this on the day.
- **Check what materials you are allowed to take into** the exam and what will be provided for you; for example, if you have to use a particular kind of calculator, it might be a good idea to practice with it.

- Think about what routine would help you relax before the exam.
- Think through how you might avoid any additional stresses.
- Keep doing things that you enjoy and that relax you; for example, sport, meeting friends, going to the cinema.
- Try to keep to a sensible diet and sleep patterns.

Sitting Exams

Loads of people lose marks just because of poor exam technique.

These ideas might help!

- Go to the toilet before the exam!
- Start off the exam by taking some time to settle down and **look through the paper carefully**
- **Start with the easiest question** to settle you down, or getting the hardest question out of the way first – **ask your teacher** for the best approach.
- If there is a choice: make sure read questions right through before deciding. It may be that the second part of the question asks for something you don't know about and you'd be better to make another choice.
- Make sure you are **answer the question that has been asked**
 - Try underlining **key words** in the questions
- Be careful to **answer fully**.
 - Writing a brief plan for longer answers, so that you stay on track.
- **Share out your time** effectively between questions, according to the number of marks they are worth. (Remember that it's almost always easier to get the first 50% of the marks for each question than to get the next 50%. This means it's usually a bad idea to neglect one question in the hope that your marks on other questions will be so high that they pull your grade up.)
- Try to leave some time at the end of the exam so that you can **check your answers** over. A little time spent checking can sometime save you quite a lot of marks.



Let's take a closer look!

Key Words!

Look for the *Action* word in each question.

It tells you what the question actually wants you to do?

	to write details so the reader can picture or imagine something
	to study or examine something in detail, in order to discover more about it.
	to examine in order to spot the differences and similarities
	to show differences when compared
	Put forward arguments for or against; you might need to argue both sides of something
	to make something clear, with reasons
	give a number of possibilities.
	to think carefully, especially about possibilities and opinions.
	to investigate by argument giving reasons for and against
	to judge the usefulness or success of something
	to make something clearer by use of example or comparison; to provide a text with explanatory or decorative pictures, photos or diagrams
	to translate; to make something clearer by offering an explanation, your own judgement may be required
	to show good reasons for decisions; to demonstrate something to be just, right or valid.
	to present in brief, clear form

State

Reflect

Contrast Analyse

Explain

Discuss

Evaluate

Interpret

Compare

Justify

Illustrate

Argue

List

Describe

Point, Evidence, Explain!

This is a strategy used in lots of subjects; Geography, Science, English, History, RE, Citizenship and others.....

- 1: Make your **point**
- 2: Quote some **evidence** to support your point – this could be a quotation, figures from a graph, comment on a photograph or diagram.....
- 3: **Explain** why it is so

Running out of time!

Hopefully this won't happen to you.....but if it does.....

Answer in brief bullet points to show how you would have answered if you had the chance.

You may still pick up some marks for this.

Plan

It can help some people to make a short plan (maybe just bullet points) before starting an essay question. It helps focus your mind and makes sure you don't leave anything out. Some exam papers give you space to plan an answer before starting. Never cross this out....you may get marks for something you put here but don't get chance to put in the final piece.

Stress

and what to do about it!

A little bit of stress can be a good thing! It makes you get on with what you need to do. Sometimes however it can get out of control and stop you doing as well as you should. Are you too stressed?



Make sure you have **prepared** and planned your revision carefully and that you know how to revise. This might help you feel better.

Make sure that you **don't overdo it**. Working all night will not help! Allow yourself some time each day to relax or exercise. Your revision and exams will go better for it.

Relaxing

Try these relaxation techniques, they can work!

1: Centring

Sit with your feet flat on the floor, legs uncrossed, your arms comfortably supported on your lap. Let your shoulders drop and move apart and check that your lumbar spine is long. Allow yourself to receive the support of the chair and the floor.

Let your eyes close. Listen to the sounds you can hear outside the room, and to sounds inside the room. Then take your attention inside yourself. Notice the thoughts passing through your mind. Notice how you are feeling. Go through your body from your feet right up to your head observing the sensations in the different parts - feet, legs, pelvis, chest, back, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, head, face. Notice sensations of warmth, coldness, lightness, heaviness, stillness, restlessness, any places where you feel pain or discomfort. Observe your breath moving in and out.

Without any forcing, take a deeper breath so that your stomach fills like a balloon. Breathe out slowly and completely. Do this a couple of times, and then breathe normally.

Again listen to the sounds you can hear in the room and sounds from outside the room. Start to gently move finger and toes, do any other moving and stretching that feels good and when you feel ready, open your eyes.

2: Avoiding panic in the first place.

Step one:

If you think you are starting to panic, give yourself a few minutes to deal with it. Try to relax some muscles, and use breathing to calm down.

Step two:

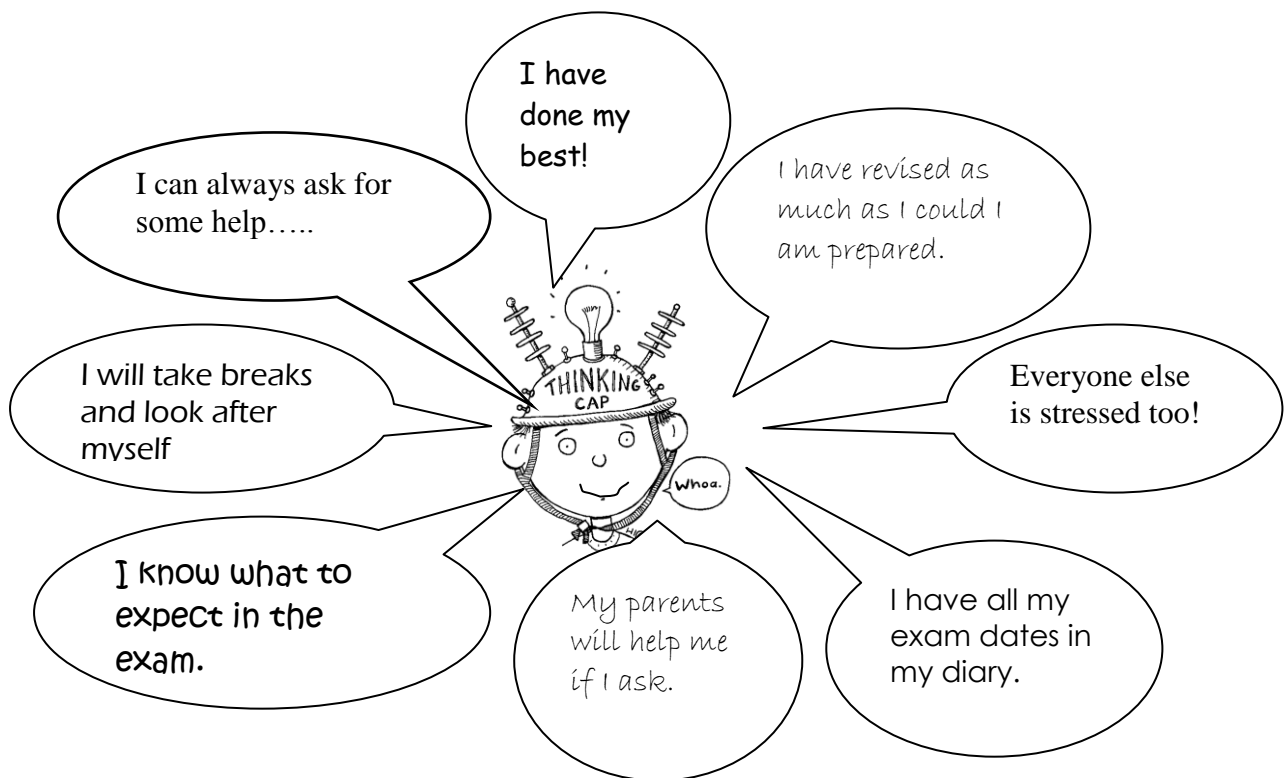
Think what it is that has made you anxious. Could you try a different way of approaching the problem? If you are in an exam and are totally stuck, try a new question, or a different bit of the problem question. Go back to your question plan and look at those bits you are confident to try. Try not to think about the actual panic, once you have acknowledged that it is there.

3: The "STOP!" technique for overwhelming panic.

When you are stressed you often have increased increased tension in the muscles of the face, shoulders and hands. If you can deliberately relax, you can stop the increase of tension and stress.

The STOP! Technique is a simple way of helping. It won't solve everything but should let you relax enough to carry on. It takes less than a minute and can be done without anyone noticing.

- Say "STOP" to yourself (out loud if the situation permits, probably best not to do this in an exam!).
- Breathe in, and hold it briefly.
- Breathe out slowly, relaxing SHOULDER AND HANDS.
- Pause.
- Breathe in again.
- Breathe out slowly, relaxing FOREHEAD AND JAW.
- Support yourself with a confident statement e.g. "I can handle this".
- Stay quiet for a few seconds.
- Then try again with the task.



My Revision Plan

[illegible]

