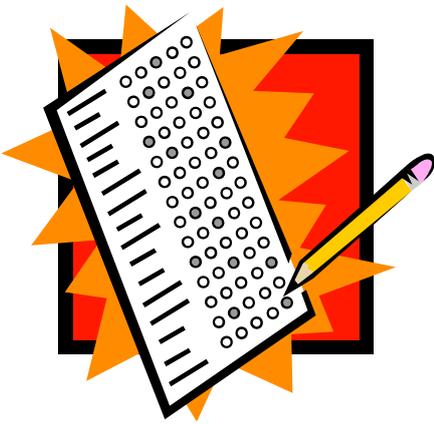
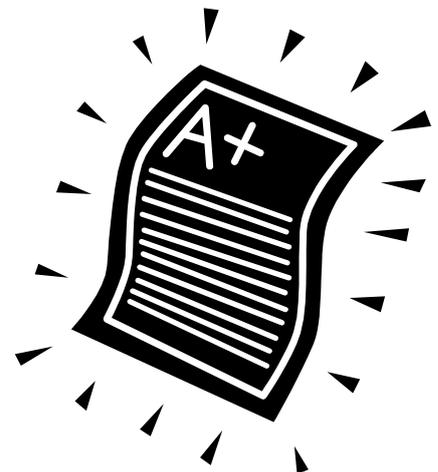




Whitburn Church of England Academy



How to revise for exams
- A guide for pupils and
parent/carers



Introduction

Preparing for GCSE exams is a daunting prospect for both pupils and parent/carers. The purpose of this booklet is to provide a guide for the key concepts of revision and help pupils and parent/carers to work together at home on a revision programme which enhances the prospect of success in exams. For each learner, a clear plan and an understanding of how best they remember information will aid preparation for exams and help achieve the best possible grades.



The key messages for revision are:

- First of all, don't panic!
- Start early - little and often is more effective than last minute cramming.
- Whatever you do, revise in an active way - simply reading over your notes will not work!

We wish you every success in your final exams - and know from experience that your hard work will pay off! Good Luck!

Study Environment

1. **Location** - Try to find somewhere to revise where you will be free from distractions, whether computer games, mobile phones, or even younger brothers and sisters!



2. **Time of Day** - Whenever possible, you should schedule your most challenging topics and most intense study sessions during the time of day when you are most alert. Ask yourself if you are more alert/productive during the morning, mid-day, or evening and plan accordingly. (Most people are more alert in the morning)



3. **Posture/Mobility** Some people prefer to sit at a table or desk in order to concentrate and study effectively. Others are able to learn more easily while sitting comfortably on a sofa whilst some need to move about in order to learn. Furthermore, some people have the ability to sit and study for long periods of time, while others need to take frequent breaks. Recognising your posture and mobility needs will help you to plan where and when you should study. If you are using a desk or table, make sure it is large enough and try to avoid clutter.



4. Sound - Contrary to popular belief, not everyone needs to study in a perfectly quiet environment. However, if you do choose to study to music, choose music without lyrics to prevent your thought process from being interrupted.



5. Environment - While you can't always control the temperature of a room, you should be aware of your preference for either a cool or warm environment. Be aware that light does make a difference. You should study in the environment that best matches your learning preferences.

6. Refreshments - Make sure you drink plenty of water to keep your brain alert. Avoid too many fizzy drinks and too much caffeine.

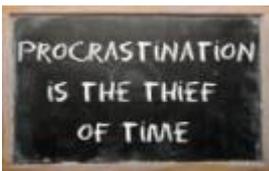


7. Equipment - Make sure that the place you choose for revision contains all the material you need, such as paper, pens and pencils, calculator, textbooks, notes and a computer if possible.



Using your Time Effectively

Proper Planning and Preparation Prevents Poor Performance
(Traditional British Army adage)



You could have all the time in the world, but if you don't use it wisely, it won't help you to meet your goals. Procrastination - or putting things off - is a problem for many who are faced with having to revise. The following tips might help you to deal with this:

1. Get motivated. Create a work area that is free from distractions and commit to staying there for at least one to two hours. If you get side-tracked, remind yourself how this activity will help you to meet your goals.



2. Prioritise. What has to be done first? When is it due? What is worth more in terms of your grade? What is worth more in terms of your personal, educational, or career goals?

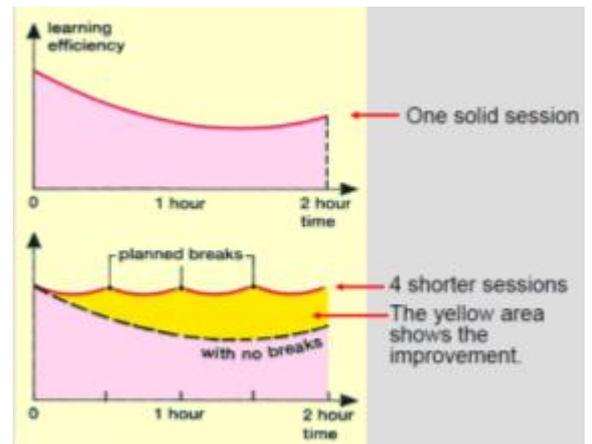
3. Make sure you understand the task. Ask questions. Get help if you need it.

4. Break down the task into chunks. Estimate how much time you'll need to complete the task. Don't try to do it all at one time. Break it down so that it's "do-able" and not so overwhelming.

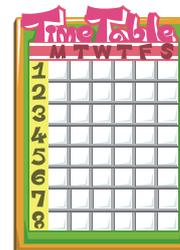


5. Try to make it as enjoyable as possible. Use a variety of revision techniques to avoid boredom. Reward yourself when you

complete more difficult tasks. Study with a friend.



6. Construct a Revision Timetable. Timetables do away with conflicts and indecision of time use. Stick to a timetable number of weeks in order to get used to it. You will have to decide when to relax and when to study because boundaries have been clearly defined. You will feel comfortable in the work pattern you have created for yourself.



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Top Timetable Tips

- Draft a long term timetable, and a weekly plan.
- Work out the amount of study time required on a weekly basis.
- Decide on time slots for each week.
- Include slots for homework as well as revision.
- Tick off each time slot after it has been completed.
- Try to make up for any time slot left uncompleted for whatever reason.
- Remember to keep a balance between subjects.
- Set aside the best time slots for the most difficult subjects.
- Remember that all subjects don't require the same amount of time.
- Don't forget to include leisure time on the programme.
- Include even short breaks in your programme - 5 minutes break during every 30 minutes revision session.



Memory fact...

We remember:

- 20% of what is said
- 30% of what we hear
- 40% of what we see
- 50% of what we say
- 60% of what we do
- 90% of what we see, hear, say and do**

Memory Facts

Knowing how your memory works will help you make the most of your revision time.

1. Understanding increases over time. Don't give up when things prove difficult!

2. Beginnings and endings. You remember more from the start and end of a revision session, than from the period in the middle. To maximise your learning potential, increase the number of beginnings and endings by taking 5 minute breaks every 30 minutes.

3. Interference reduces memory and makes you forget. This means that if you learn something on an evening, before you go to sleep, you are more likely to remember it than if you learn it at the start of a busy day.



4. Frequent reminders help you to remember. This means that you need to keep referring back to the information you have revised in the lead up to the exams. As a general rule, you should return to the information 10 minutes after you have learned it, then one day, one week and one month later to ensure it stays in your long term memory.

5. Maximise short term memory. Your short term memory can store a surprising number of key facts - but only for a maximum of 10 minutes. Use this to your advantage! Remind yourself of key information just before you go into the exam room - and write it down as soon as the exam starts. (This could even be the spellings of words you often get wrong!)

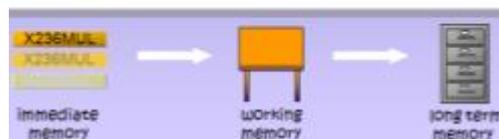


6. Relax! Your memory works best when you are relaxed. Don't leave your revision until the last minute when panic will set in and it will be less effective.

7. Interest. You remember the things you are interested in. Think about how you can use colour, diagrams, music or talk to help make all topics interesting.

8. Connections. You tend to remember things that are associated or connected to each other, or things which already exist in your memory. Try to connect new information with old learning by creating links as part of your revision. Anything can be remembered if it is associated to something already known - especially if it is in some unusual or humorous way.

You have a 'working' or short-term memory. It can only hold 7 pieces of information at any one time.
You have a long-term memory - a permanent filing cabinet.



Revision Techniques

Annotation

As an "active reader," when reading a section of text, 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" (make notes on) your text.

Unlike "highlighting," which is a passive activity, the process of annotating text or making notes helps you to stay focused and involved with you're the content of the text. You'll 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 about, you'll 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:

- Underline important terms.
- Circle definitions and meanings.
- Write key words and definitions in the margin.
- Use a highlighter selectively and creatively e.g. coding system for key words
- Signal where important information can be found with key words or symbols in the margin.
- Write short summaries in the margin at the end of sub-sections
- Write the questions in the margin next to the section where the answer is found.
- Indicate steps in a process by using numbers in the margin.
- Draw pictures to represent key ideas



Using Post-its, Colour Coding & Memory Cards

This is a good way of remembering the meanings of key words:

- For each topic, write up one set of cards with the word on the front, and the definition on the back. Shuffle them and test yourself.
- Categorise the cards into piles, put words with similar meanings together. Thinking about them helps you to understand them.
- Memorise the cards whilst listening to a particular song or album. So remembering the song might help you to recall them.
- For each card, come up with a specific visual example. This will help you to see the differences between the terms, and help you to use the words correctly.
- Practice one section of your word list every day, for no more than an hour.



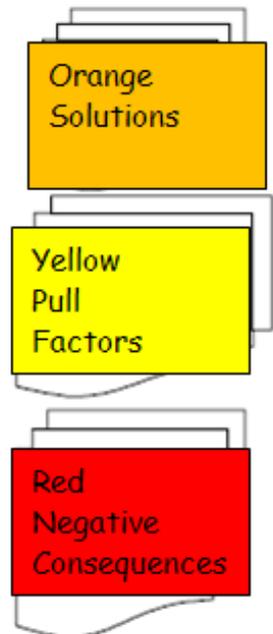
Write key points on coloured card/paper.

Use different colours for different aspects of the topic

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

Blue
Push
Factors

Green
Positive
Consequences



<p>•You may need to be active... cutting up 'heads and tails' and matching them up again..</p>	Mouth	grinds up the food
	Oesophagus	connects the mouth to the stomach
	Stomach	adds acid to the food to break it down
	Duodenum	connects the stomach to the small intestine

Revision tips using colour

- Something that can work well is colour coding revision material and in particular revision cards that notes are written on.
- Revision cards aren't for everyone but these techniques can be adapted for many different revision styles.
- If you are revising many topics within a subject then you can split each topic into a separate colour of card and you can easily pick up packs of colour cue cards from a shop.
- Alternatively you can highlight areas of revision using colour coding with highlighter pens.
- For example, if you are revising English Literature for an exam, have each characters' quotations and explanations about them in a colour:

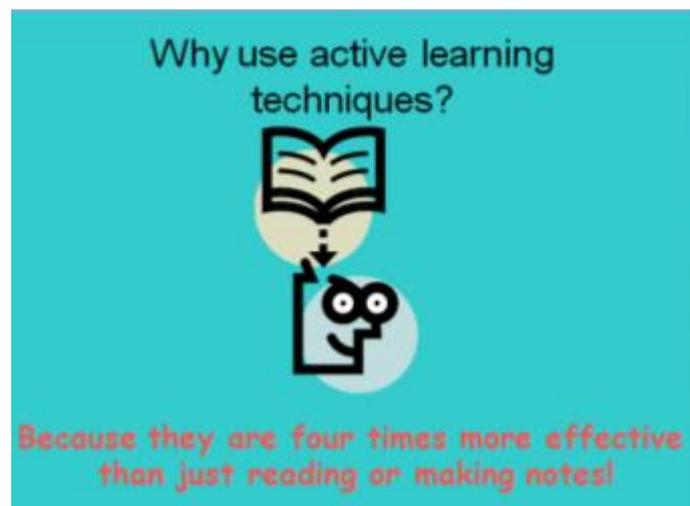
- **Mr. Birling colour code in blue:** "Community and all that nonsense". He is a selfish capitalist without social responsibility.
- **Sheila colour code in pink** "rosy" hue of the lighting at the start of "An Inspector Calls"/ Sheila bitter, angry and shocked at her parents' and Gerald's attitude towards the end of the play "I suppose we're all nice people".

In Biology ...

- Review the internal leaf structure and
- The role of the stomata..... link to wilting.
- The role of the guard cells their use to prevent too much water loss in a plant transpiration.

KEY WORDS - stomata, guard cells, transpiration.

- In this way, if you get a question on just one of these topics, you can automatically go to the red/green/orange/blue section of your brain and it will help you to visualise the colours and what is written on them.



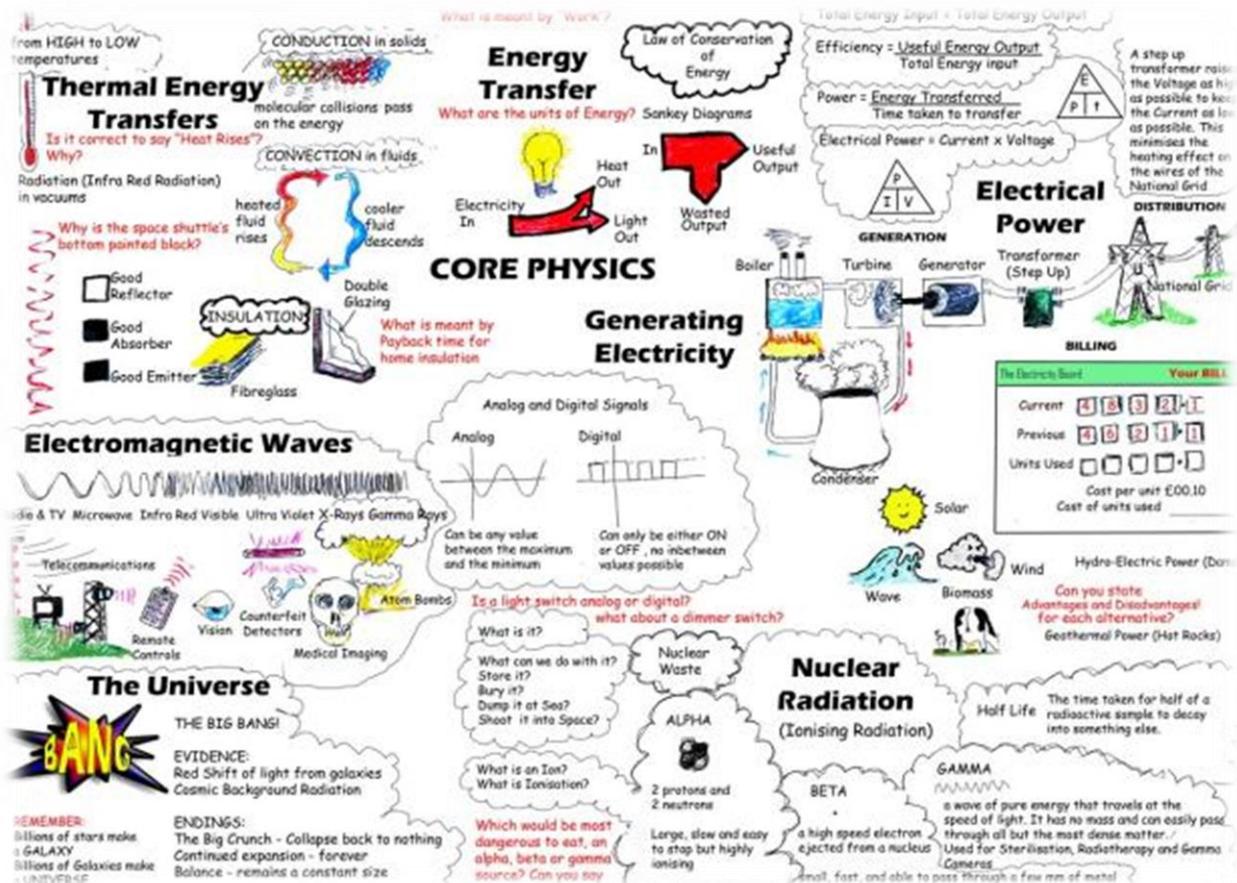
Sketches, Diagrams and Pictures

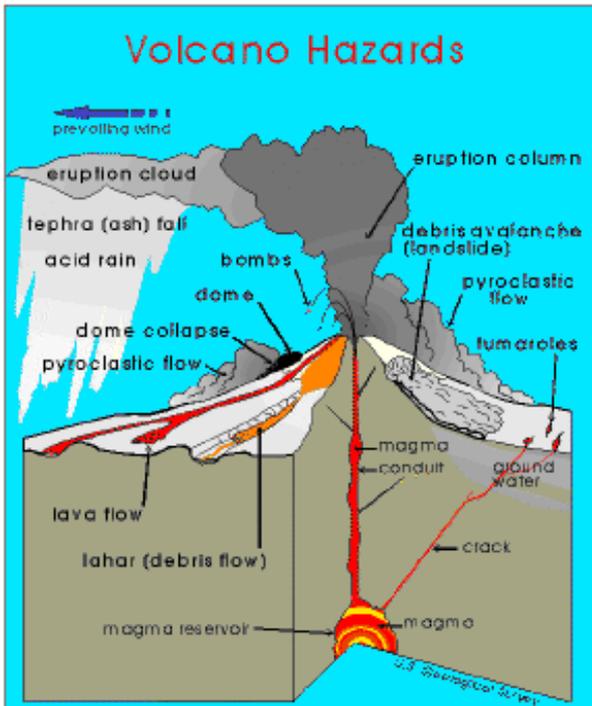
- Create a drawing can to help fix key points in your mind. Use your imagination - most information can be presented visually.
- Be surreal, Be funny
- You don't have to draw well - scribbling or stick figures will be just as effective as fine works of art.

A powerful way of remembering words (particularly if you need to remember them in order) is to link them into a story and visualise the story. Your brain remembers the unusual: make your story funny, strange, spooky, bizarre....

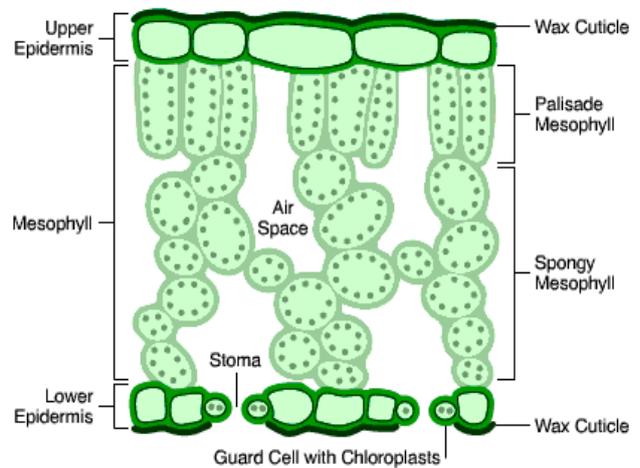


Add Pictures to Notes - Adding pictures and colour help to reinforce ideas.





Practise drawing and labelling - It's much easier than trying to 'explain it all'...



Talking it through

- Talking about your revision topics to someone else can help you process information and clarify ideas clear in your own mind.
- You can discuss the topic together.
- You can ask the person to explain it to you while you listen, then tell them a summary.
- You can explain it to them while they listen. They don't need to understand a word you are saying!
- Teaching someone else is a very powerful method, as to teach a concept or idea requires a very high of understanding to do so effectively.
- You can even talk to yourself. Stand in front of the mirror and explain it to yourself; or say into a voice recorder or MP3 player. Listen and see if it makes sense.



Mnemonics & Acronyms

A mnemonic is a simple system for recalling key information.

R O Y G B I V.....Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain is a mnemonic which is used to help recall the colours of the rainbow in correct order. This mnemonic prompts you to actively notice, transposes the letters into something meaningful, and possibly conjures up certain images as well.



You probably can't recall the shape of Brazil or Spain, but the shape of Italy is an easy one. Why? You associate it with your image of a boot. This is a mnemonic.

Bless My Dear Aunt Sally, is an example of first letter triggers. (Brackets, Multiply, Divide, Add, Subtract)

Thirty days has September..... is a rhyme mnemonic.

Forming an acronym is a good strategy to use to remember information in any order that can be remembered. An acronym is a word that is formed from the first letter of each fact to be remembered. It can be a real word or a nonsense word you are able to pronounce.

Here is how to form an acronym:

- Write the facts you need to remember.
- Underline the first letter of each fact. If there is more than one word in a fact, underline the first letter of only the first word in the fact.
- Arrange the underlined letters to form an acronym that is a real word or a nonsense word you can pronounce.

HOMES is an example of an acronym that is a real word you can use to remember the names of the five Great Lakes in the USA: Huron Ontario Michigan, Erie, Superior, ; In HOMES, H is the first letter of Huron and helps you remember that name; O is the first letter of Ontario, and so on.

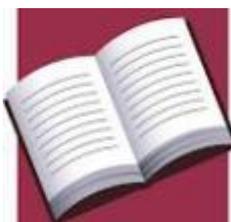
Making good use of your exercise and text book for revision

One of the most common misconceptions about revision is that you are able to do good, quality sound revision by just spending hours reading back through text and exercise books..... **THIS IS WRONG!!** Research suggests that you will be lucky to remember less than 30% of what you have read IF you don't do anything WITH it.....



Why is your **exercise book** a good source of information from which to revise?

- It's been with you all the way through your learning!
- Your book has titles in it which indicate particular areas covered
- There are written notes, which have been made by you about what you have learned!
- It shows different methods/ways in which you have learned certain concepts
- It identifies all of the **key words** and **key concepts** that have been **important**
- It shows methods, maps, graphs, diagrams and pictures to enhance your learning



****However, before you start using your exercise book you should have produced a revision plan and have an idea of an area of focus****

How should you use it?

- Once you have identified a topic you should then look back through your book (using the titles of your work)
- Read through the area of work and use highlighters to identify **key concepts** and **key words** - make sure you **CONCENTRATE!** Only do this for one particular topic **AND** only a few pages at a time
- Now, close your exercise book and on a plain piece of paper reproduce what key words and concepts you remember - draw diagrams and coloured pictures to go with what you have recalled - the visual nature of your revision will help it stick
- If you think there are any gaps then don't be frightened of looking back at your book
- Continue to do this in conjunction with your syllabus/topic outline until you have covered all of the topics in your book.

Steps in creating a mind map

Step 1: Grab some coloured pens/pencils, a blank piece of paper and turn it sideways. In the centre of the page draw the first image that comes to mind on the topic you are mind mapping. Label the image.

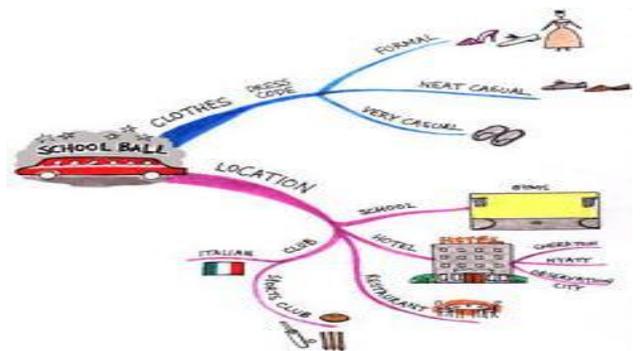


Step 2: Branch off from your central image and create one of your main ideas (think of each branch as being like a chapter in a book). Label the branch. You can also draw a picture for it.



Step 3: From your main branches draw some sub-branches and from those sub-branches you can draw even more branches. What you are beginning to do is create associations between ideas.

Step 4: Draw pictures for each branch or for as many branches as possible. Make each picture as absurd, funny and/or exaggerated as possible. The reason for this is that we think in pictures and remember vivid, exaggerated images more easily.



Step 5: Draw another main branch but this time use a different colour. Colour helps to separate out different ideas and keeps your mind stimulated). Draw sub-branches and pictures. If you get bored at any stage, move on and create another branch.

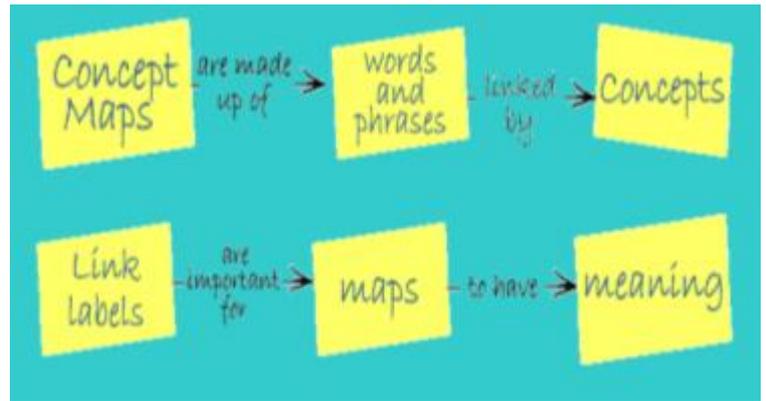


Stage 6: Keep repeating the above process (different colours, main branch, sub-branches and absurd pictures). Make sure each branch is curved and not a straight line. The brain is more stimulated by curved lines

Step 7: Voila! You have created a mind map. Remember, it doesn't have to be a work of art. Allow yourself to be as messy and creative as you like. It doesn't matter if other people can't understand your mind map. You just need to be able to.

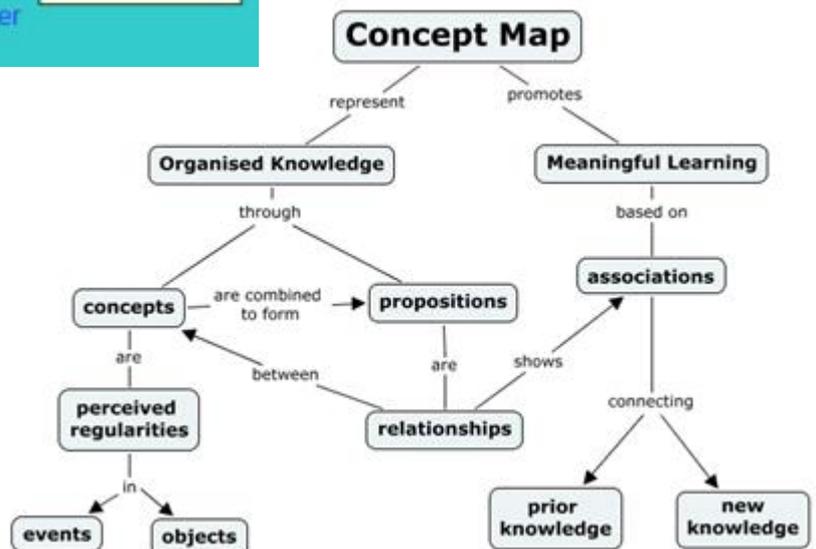
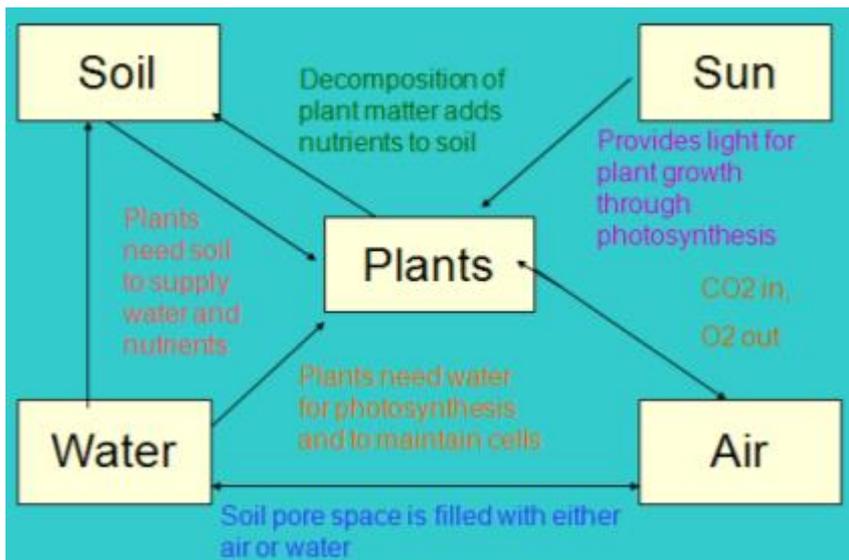
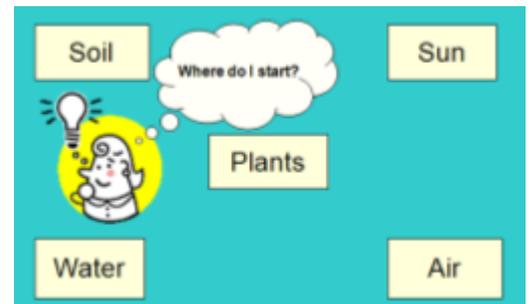
Concept Maps

Often confused with mind maps, concept maps are a way of linking a series of key words and phrases to see the bigger picture. The more connections made and explained, the greater the understanding of the topic. It is also a very useful way of identifying gaps in knowledge or understanding.



Stages in the construction of concept maps

1. Select the concepts you wish to link
2. Arrange into an appropriate pattern on a blank piece of paper.
3. Link as many concepts as possible using an arrow and an explanation.



Useful Web Sites



Exam technique and preparation:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/14To19/Courseworkandexams/DG_10034950 Good quality guidance on revision technique from the government

<http://www.how-to-study.com/study-skills/en/procrastination.asp> Some sound advice on procrastination!

<http://www.cambridgestudents.org.uk/examtime/revisiontips/> Some good revision ideas from those clever people at Cambridge

http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Revision_Techniques some more advice about revision and preparation

http://www.brainboxx.co.uk/a3_aspects/pages/RevisionTechniques.htm One page advice for getting the best from your revision

Advice for parents/carers:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents/helping_with_exams/ Some ideas for parents/carers as to how they can support you

Revision mapping:

<https://bubbl.us/> Good quality, easy to use software - no need to register to begin

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/maps/index.shtml> Plan your revision using this revision mapping software from the BBC

Revision resources:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/> General revision resources from the BBC, notes, questions and activities

<http://getrevising.co.uk/> A whole range of revision materials for various subjects anything from flash cards, revision timetables to word searches - searchable

<http://www.topmarks.co.uk/Search.aspx?Subject=11> Links to hundreds of subject specific revision resources

Examination board GCSE websites:

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/>

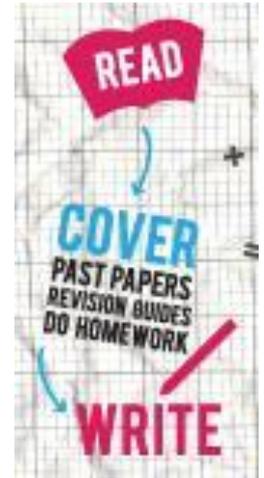
<http://www.ocr.org.uk>



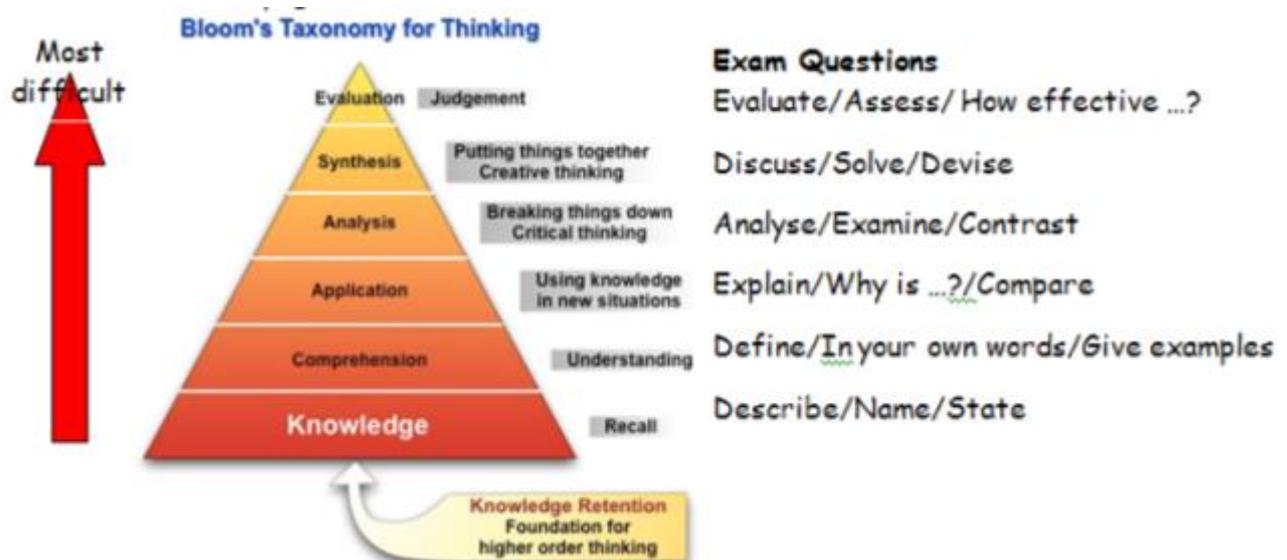
Top Tips for Taking Exams

Firstly practise makes perfect! You will have at least 3 full exam papers and mark schemes issued to you for exam subject. You need to practise timed exam questions regularly to familiarise your self with the exam requirements and develop your exam technique.

To do well in an exam, you must have good skills, knowledge and understanding of the content being tested. You must also have a strategy to successfully apply your knowledge, skills and understanding in the exam situation.



- Read the exam instructions on the front cover very carefully.
- Allocate your time appropriately. If you are familiar with the format of the exam then you can work out a rough amount of time per mark. E.g. if a paper had 60 marks in total and lasted 90 minutes, you have about 1½ minutes per mark; you therefore spend about 3 minutes on a 2 mark question and 15 minutes on a 10 mark question.
- Planning your time is especially important for exams with longer written answers where you must avoid spending so much time on one item that you have little time left for other questions.
- If you get stuck on a difficult item that comes up early in the exam, move on and come back to this later or you may not get to answer topics you know.
- If you have planned your time correctly, you will have time to review your answers and make them as complete and accurate as possible.
- Also make sure to review the exam instructions to be certain you have answered all questions required. Make sure that you check there is nothing on the back page!



Main GCSE exam command words and their meaning	
Command	Definition
Analyse	Separate information into component parts and identify key characteristics
Apply	Put into effect in a recognised way
Argue	Present a reasoned case
Assess	Make an informed judgement
Comment	Present an informed opinion
Compare	Identify similarities
Consider	Review and respond to given information
Contrast	Identify differences
Criticise	Assess the worth of something against clear expectations
Debate	Present different perspectives on an issue
Deduce	Draw conclusions from information provided
Define	Specify meaning
Describe	Set out characteristics
Discuss	Present main relevant points
Estimate	Assign an approximate value
Evaluate	Judge from available evidence
Examine	Investigate closely
Explain	Set out purposes or reasons
Explore	Investigate something that does not have a definite outcome
Identify	Name or otherwise characterise
Illustrate	Present clarifying examples
Interpret	Translate information into recognisable form
Justify	Present a reasoned case
Outline	Set out main characteristics
Prove	Demonstrate validity on the basis of evidence
Relate	Demonstrate connections between ideas
Review	Survey information
State	Express in clear terms
Summarise	Present principal points without detail



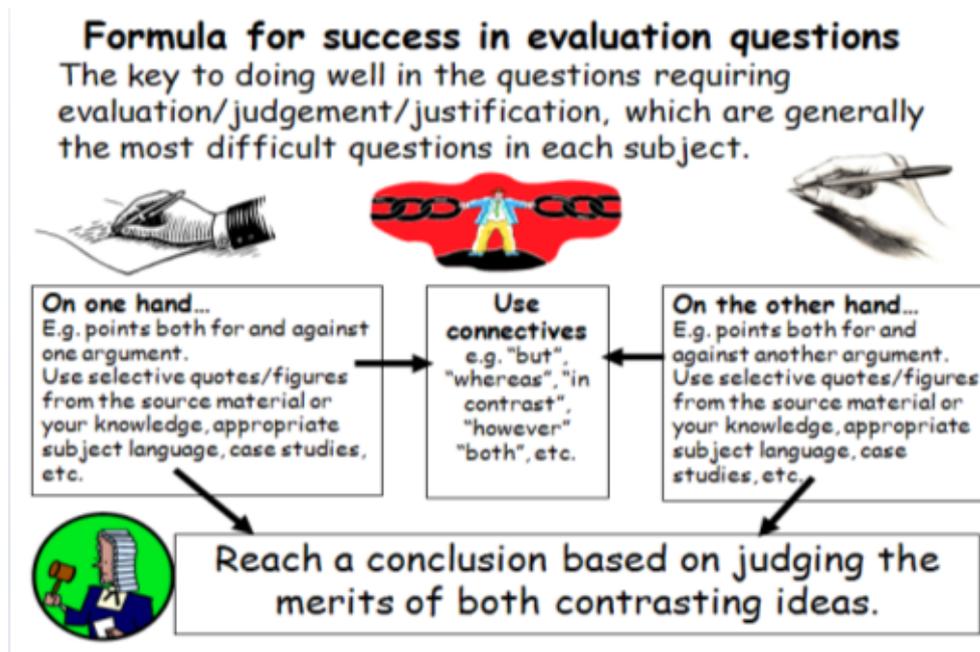
Improving Exam Technique

Avoid the most basic error - READ THE QUESTION! Too many candidates put the same answers down for more than one question because they didn't read it properly. Questions are often in TWO or even THREE PARTS you will only get full marks if you answer all parts properly .

Plan your answers (especially for extended written answers)

Examiners say that time given to planning is an important factor in successful writing. Your plan is your route to organised writing and higher marks. To plan effectively, follow these steps:

1. Read all the tasks carefully.
 2. Highlight the key words in the question.
 3. Plan the order in which you are going to write about your ideas.
- (N.B. Plans do not have to be written down)*



Exam Top Tips!!

- Include your judgement - what do you think
- Use examples to back up and exemplify your points - PEE
- Use the source material - refer your argument or response back to it. Make it relevant!
- Make sure all your longer answers have balance. Look from both points of view!
Even if you have a brilliant answer that is one sided you won't gain full marks
- Don't waste space re writing the question out. You won't get any marks for it!

During the exam period



Stay hydrated

Drink plenty of water - your brain needs it to work properly - especially when you are revising

Attend school

Revision sessions are planned in lesson time throughout the exam period. These vital sessions are designed to ensure that you are fully prepared for exams.



Keep up leisure activities



Just because it is exam time, don't give up your extra-curricular activities. You may need to cut back a little and give priority to revision but don't stop doing things you enjoy; you need a balanced approach to life

Exercise

If your body is tired and sluggish, your mind won't effectively. Make sure you get proper exercise - walk, run, swim, play football. Do a little bit every day.



Sleep



15 and 16 year olds need around 9 hours of sleep each night; that means if you are getting up for school at 7am, you need to be in bed by 10pm. Don't make the mistake of staying up revising the night before the exam. Being fresh in the morning is far more likely to benefit you than a bit of rushed last minute revision!

Good luck!

