

A parents' guide to study and revision skills for GCSE and Vocational examinations

Helping your child to achieve their best

How can I make a difference?

You don't have to be an expert in any of the subjects your child chooses to make a real difference. You just need to know how best to spend the time you do have to support your child.

Parental support is one of the most important factors in a child's success.

You don't have to become a 'super parent' you just need to be supportive..... but you do need to be supportive in particular specific ways.



We all know exams are important but did you know?

Students with 5 GCSEs at grades 9-4 including English and Maths are likely to earn £250,000 more in their career than students without the qualifications.

That's a lot of money but it isn't just about the money!

Examinations are the first step to securing virtually any job nowadays and having a job has lots of other benefits including;



- Developing self-confidence and competence
- Having a sense of purpose in life
- Better mental health
- Less stress

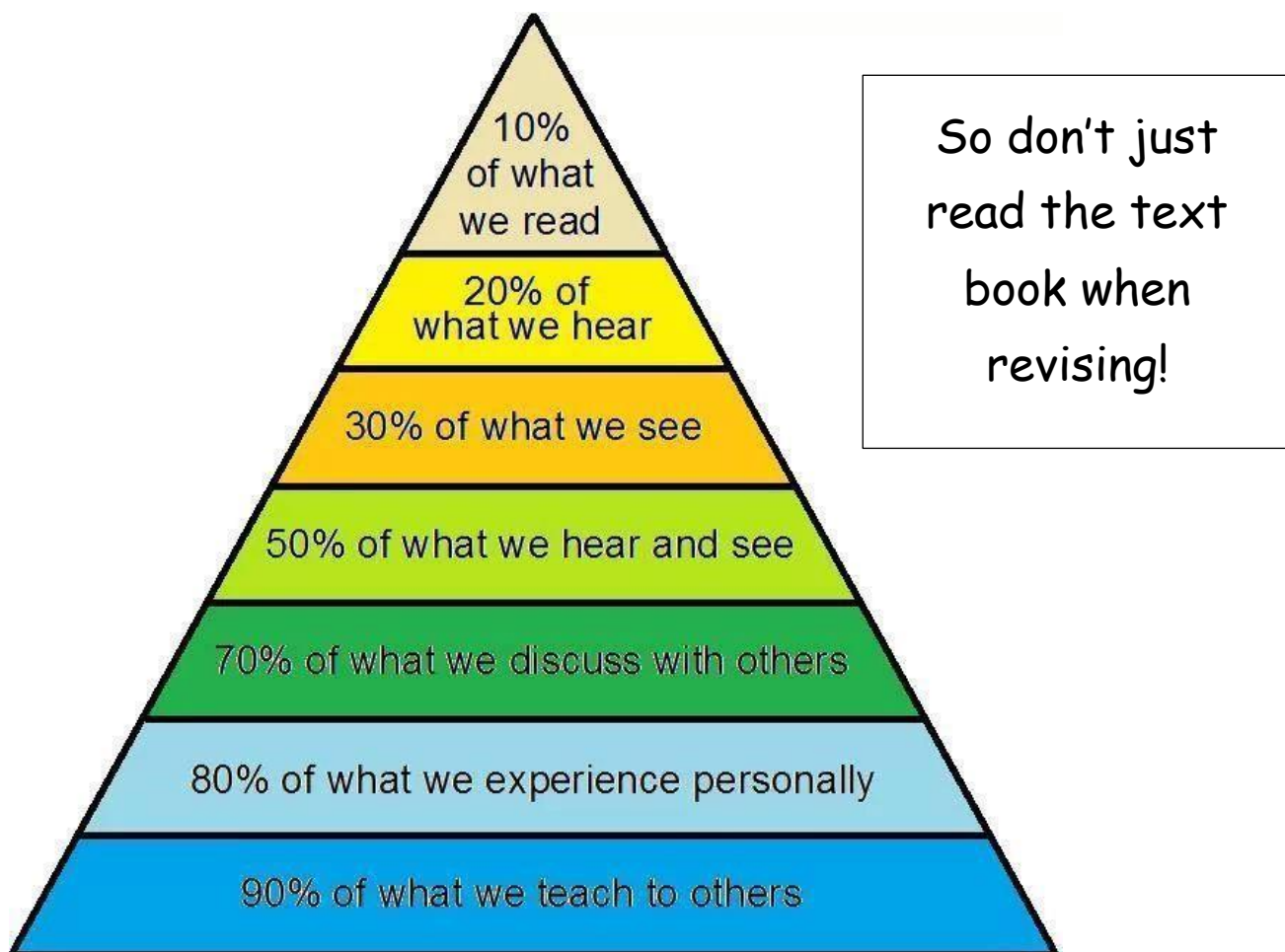
- Greater enjoyment of work
- More choice over work

So passing exams at the highest level they can at this time in their life will help your child throughout the whole of his or her life.

Why do we need to revise?

Your child may be studying a wide range of GCSEs and vocational subjects. Each syllabus will cover a wide range of complex information, concepts and skills and all of this needs to be mastered.

Regular revision is the key to success to build up a depth of knowledge, conceptual understanding and skills that will last a lifetime. Your teachers will have taught your child first time round but we don't remember everything. We actually remember;



So they (and it is your child who needs to do it) need to regularly revise to make sure it is embedded and can be accessed during the examination.

The most effective revision technique is teaching something to someone else!

What can go wrong with revision?

- Not doing any
- Leaving it until the last minute
- Not having a plan
- Being too rigid about a plan
- Not being sure what to revise
- Being unrealistic about what can be achieved in the time available
- Revising the right things but in the wrong order
- Revising the right things but in the wrong ways
- Being overwhelmed
- Not knowing where to start
- Not starting somewhere because you are overwhelmed
- Not dealing with stress and losing perspective
- Not making the most of what teachers offer in terms of extra revision sessions.

Is your child attending the weekly Week A (English/Maths/Science) and Week B (all other subjects) subject interventions?

Right mental attitude

Your child needs the right mental attitude to be successful at revision. Some things to remember are:-

- They need to believe that revision will make a difference (it will).
- They need to believe they can be successful.
- They must start somewhere and actually get started.
- They need encouragement to keep going even if it seems hard.
- They need to know they are not alone in this task and can get help from their teachers and friends and support from you.

Planning Revision – Revision for the summer exams has started!

Your child should produce a revision plan. Lots of people find planning difficult. It is a high level skill. However, sometimes the planning process is misunderstood.



A plan is not a strait-jacket that you need to slavishly follow. A revision plan is your child's way of organising his/her time over a long period and coordinating this revision with other important events e.g. revision classes and exams so that everything is done at the right time.

Your child should expect to re-draft their plan every week and even every day nearer an exam.

Here is a way to use a revision timetable template;

- Plan when social times are first - clubs, evenings off etc
- Identify how many hour slots a week to revise
- Make sure you are realistic and try to stick to what you say you will do
- Split each hour slot into two shorter slots with a break in between
- Reward time spent actually revising - not just time spent organising revision
- Don't forget to put the actual exams on the timetable*



Some tips to share with your child

Revision needs your child to ...

- Have a plan
- Be organised
- Revise a little but regularly e.g. each day
- Plan revision of the topics in the right order

Use the individual subject knowledge organisers to review the knowledge content required for the exam.

When revising...

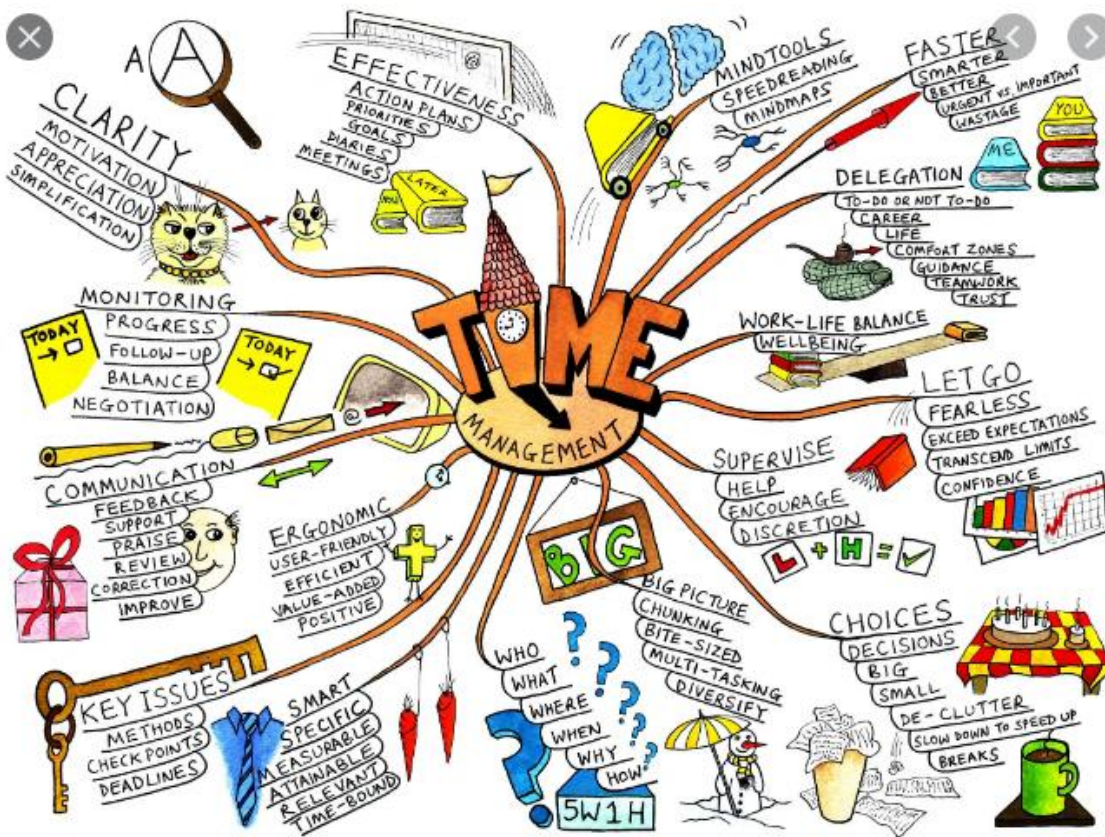
- Plan to revise specific topics in each subject, not everything at once
- Break your material into chunks.
- Many students think revising is simply reading notes or a text book see the pyramid diagram! Only reading the text book is not good revision!
- Break the 40 – 45 mins up into revision activity (30 mins) and testing what you have learned (10 – 15 mins).
- Checking your work correctly gives you FEEDBACK and feedback is another key factor for success.
- Revise for short periods e.g. 40 - 45 mins with a 5-10 minute break.
- Stay focused, hours can be easily wasted on social networks and mobile phones.
- In the evenings, plan to revise one or two subjects for one to two hours.
- Leave some time for relaxation very evening.

- Don't leave revision to the last minute



Revision Activities

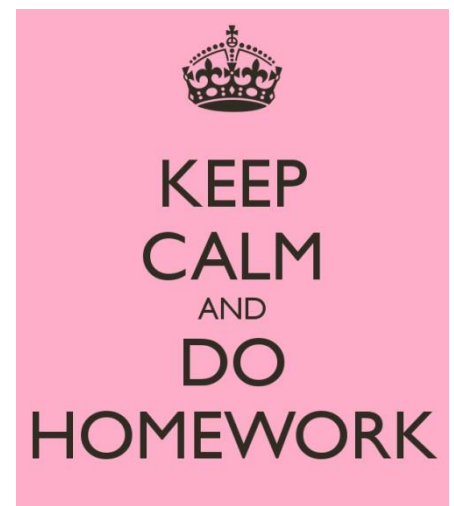
- Use the subject 'Knowledge Organiser' to revise the knowledge content for the exam
- Do something with the notes from your book or text for each topic e.g. make your own brief notes for that topic
- Make a mind map to see how the ideas and knowledge fit together
- Use flash cards to help remember key information
- Put revision resources e.g. cards and sheets up on the walls at home
- Get someone else to test you
- Explain key ideas to someone who hasn't studied the topic so they understand it
- Make up memory aides e.g. mnemonics, etc.
- Do short tests and practice using past exam papers
- Use the mark schemes from exam papers to give you feedback on the detail of right answers.



More tips for parents

Some basic ensure that your son/daughter:-

- attends school regularly and punctually
- completes all Homework
- Show an interest in what they are doing – you don't need to understand it!
- Support your child with revision
- Plan family time e.g. holidays and visits to relatives around their revision not the other way round



Some specifics ensure that your son/daughter:-

- gets enough sleep, especially the night before exams.
- is eating sensibly - especially breakfast on exam days.
- has all the equipment required e.g. pens and sharp pencils, eraser, a ruler, a protractor, a calculator (mobile phones are not allowed in the exams)
- has a suitable place to work at home (not in front of the TV).
- knows what day the exam is on and what time it starts, knows how long the exam is
- knows what is being tested in each exam
- Encourage them to start revising now
- Ask them to explain something they have just revised
- How you approach the next few months can have a real **impact** on your child's future.

- Studies show that high levels of parental support is linked with better exam results than for children whose parents show no interest.
- Help your child create a revision timetable from now (see example below)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7.30am	Breakfast and getting ready	Breakfast and getting ready	Breakfast and getting ready	Breakfast and getting ready	Breakfast and getting ready	Sleep zzz	Sleep
8 am	School	School	School	School	School		Sleep zzz
9 am						Breakfast and getting ready	
10am							Homework
11am						Option 3	
12pm							Dinner 😊
1pm						Work/Personal time	
2pm							Chillax
3pm						Option 1	
4pm							Option 2
5pm						Science Maths	
6-6:30	Dinner 😊						
6:30pm		Social Time					
7pm	Dinner 😊						
8pm		Social Time					
9pm	Social Time						

“It’s never too late to be what you might have been.”

George Eliot

Help your child beat exam stress

Tests and exams can be a challenging part of school life for children and young people and their parents or carers. But there are ways to ease the stress.

Watch for signs of stress

Children and young people who are stressed may:

- worry a lot
- feel tense
- have headaches and stomach pains
- not sleep well
- be irritable
- lose interest in food or eat more than normal

- not enjoy activities they previously enjoyed
- be negative and have a low mood
- feel hopeless about the future

Having someone to talk to about their work can help. Support from a parent, tutor or study buddy can help young people share their worries and keep things in perspective.

Encourage your child to talk to a member of school staff who they feel is supportive. If you think your child is not coping, it may also be helpful for you to talk to their teachers.

Try to involve your child as much as possible.

Make sure your child eats well

A balanced diet is vital for your child's health, and can help them feel well during exam periods.

Some parents find high-fat, high-sugar and high-caffeine foods and drinks, such as energy drinks, cola, sweets, chocolate, burgers and chips, make their children hyperactive, irritable and moody.

Where possible, involve your child in shopping for food and encourage them to choose some healthy snacks.

Read more about [healthy eating for teens](#).

Help your child get enough sleep

Good sleep improves thinking and concentration. Most teenagers need 8 to 10 hours' sleep a night. Learn more about [how much sleep children need](#).

Allow half an hour or so for your child to wind down between studying, watching TV or using a computer and going to bed, to help them get a good night's sleep.

Cramming all night before an exam is usually a bad idea. Sleep will benefit your child far more than a few hours of panicky last-minute study.

Be flexible during exams

Be flexible around exam time. When your child is revising all day, do not worry about household jobs left undone or untidy bedrooms.

Staying calm yourself can help. Remember, exams do not last forever.

The Family Lives website has more about [coping with exam stress](#).

Help them study

Make sure your child has somewhere comfortable to study. Ask them how you can support them with their revision.

Help them come up with practical ideas that will help them revise, such as drawing up a revision schedule or getting hold of past papers for practice.

To motivate your child, encourage them to think about their goals in life and see how their revision and exams are related to them.

Talk about exam nerves

Remind your child that it's normal to feel anxious. Nervousness is a natural reaction to exams. The key is to put these nerves to positive use.

If anxiety is getting in the way rather than helping, encourage your child to practise the activities they'll be doing on the day of the exam. This will help it feel less scary.

For example, this may involve doing practice papers under exam conditions or seeing the exam hall beforehand. School staff should be able to help with this.

Help your child face their fears and see these activities through, rather than avoiding them.

Encourage them to think about what they know and the time they've already put into studying to help them feel more confident.

Encourage exercise during exams

Exercise can help boost energy levels, clear the mind and relieve stress. It does not matter what it is – walking, cycling, swimming, football and dancing are all effective.

Activities that involve other people can be particularly helpful.

Read more about the [benefits of physical activity](#).

Do not add to the pressure

Support group Childline says many children who contact them feel that most pressure at exam time comes from their family.

Listen to your child, give them support and avoid criticism.

Before they go in for a test or exam, be reassuring and positive. Let them know that failing is not the end of the world. If things do not go well they may be able to take the exam again.

After each exam, encourage your child to talk it through with you. Discuss the parts that went well rather than focusing on the questions they found difficult. Then move on and focus on the next test, rather than dwelling on things that cannot be changed.

See Childline's advice on [exam stress and pressure](#).

Make time for treats

With your child, think about rewards for doing revision and getting through each exam.

Rewards do not need to be big or expensive. They can include simple things like making their favourite meal or watching TV.

When the exams are over, help your child celebrate by organising an end-of-exams treat.

When to get help

Some young people feel much better when exams are over, but that's not the case for all young people.

Get help if your child's anxiety or low mood is severe, persists and interferes with their everyday life. Seeing a GP is a good place to start.

Read more about [anxiety in children](#).

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-exam-stress/>