



A guide to **preparing for**
GCSE exams





The importance of the **next few months**

The next few months are the most important of your school career. The grades that you get in your exams will be the 'keys' to post-16 courses and future job opportunities.

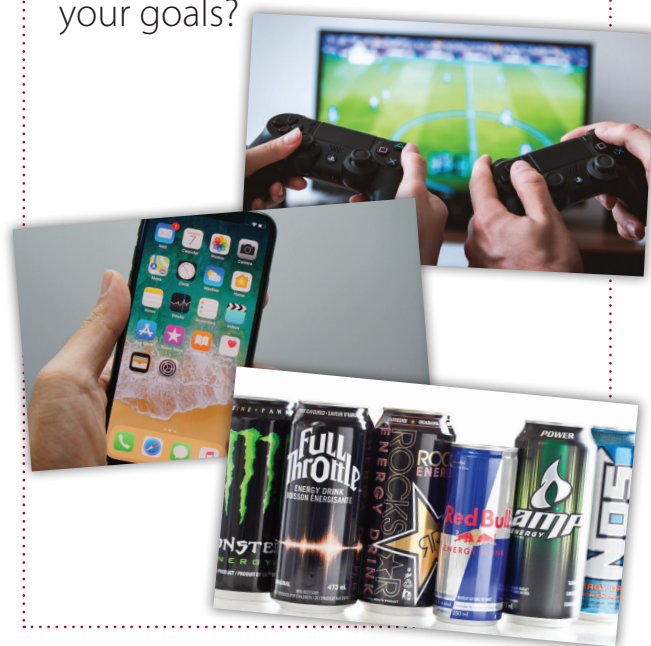
This booklet is designed to help you fulfil your potential.

All that anyone can ask is that you give your absolute best effort as you prepare for your GCSEs. To achieve this, you need to reflect and act upon the questions below.

What could you **improve / do more** of that would help you to achieve your goals?

- ✓ **Go to bed at a sensible time.**
- ✓ Eat a healthy breakfast.
- ✓ **Arrive at school on time.**
- ✓ Ask questions in lessons.
- ✓ **Respond positively to any feedback.**
- ✓ Catch up on any missed work.
- ✓ **Complete home work as instructed.**
- ✓ Make (and stick to) a revision timetable.
- ✓ **Attend revision classes after school.**
- ✓ Ask for revision materials.
- ✓ **Not give up when things get tough.**

What could you **do less** of that would help you to achieve your goals?



"A little progress every day adds up to **BIG** results."



- Don't stop working in lessons you find hard or dislike – talk to someone about any difficulties you are having – there is always a solution.
- Adjust your revision timetable if necessary and stick to it – even when you don't feel like it. Don't wait until you are in the mood – the further behind you get the less you will be in the mood (agree the timetable with your parents for a hassle-free life).
- Resist the temptation to bury your head in the sand if things are getting out of hand – talk to your parents/tutor/teachers/Year Head.
- Ignore what friends and others are doing or saying – you are working for YOUR future and your dreams – let your friends have the hassle of redoing coursework or even the full GCSE.
- Attend extra sessions (after-school and in the school holidays) if you know that they will help to boost your grades. Take every opportunity to succeed! **However, remember that hard work in normal lessons and regular revision out of school are the main keys to success.**
- Find the balance between work and social life and stick to the agreement.
- Accept that all students fall behind, feel demotivated or overwhelmed, or struggle with the balance of social, work and school demands at times. There may well be some 'bumpy' times over the exam period when you need help and encouragement from parents and teachers. If so, don't be afraid to ask.
- Try to avoid a 'catastrophic' approach to difficulties – "I've messed up this essay. I might as well give up." Maintain a growth mindset.

The reward...

You have the longest summer holiday of your life coming up!

Now is the time to give 100% and then enjoy it when it arrives.



Getting ready for revision

- Start revision early. The sooner you start the less you will have to do each day and the less stressed out you will be.
- The most important thing is to make a realistic revision timetable (like the one below) that you will stick to.
- Be precise on your revision timetable and note down what you will do for each subject.
- Get one good revision book or aid for every subject. They do much of the initial work for you by breaking the subject down into 'do-able' chunks.

Year 11 Revision Timetable

Day	School	Session 1 (50 minutes)	Session 2 (50 minutes)	Dinner	Session 3 (50 minutes)	Session 4 (50 minutes)	
Monday		Science (bio)	Science (chem)				
Tuesday		Maths (school)			Maths (past papers)		
Wednesday			English (R&J)		English (poetry)		
Thursday		History (Germany)			Cadets	→	
Friday		English (school)					
Saturday	DAY OFF						→
Sunday		DRAMA				PE	

Doing the revision

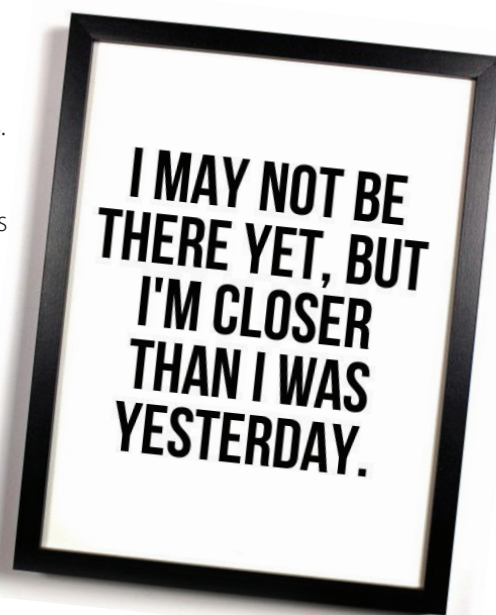
- ✓ Use recommended websites and videos to try out different revision techniques and strategies. They are full of great ideas!
- ✓ Focus upon exam technique as well as just revising the subject's content.
- ✓ Match the revision notes you make to the sort of questions you will be asked. Get hold of past papers.
- ✓ Have a clear goal for each revision period. For example – 'at the end of this slot I will be able to label a diagram of the heart and answer a question on how the heart works.'
- ✓ Have a start and finish time – and stick to it!
- ✓ Get into the routine of following your revision plan – if you really don't feel like it, tell yourself you will do 15 minutes and then decide whether to carry on. At least you will have done 15 minutes.
- ✓ **STOP** and take a break if you are becoming frustrated, angry or overwhelmed. Don't waste time struggling – note down anything you are finding hard and take it to your next lesson.
- ✓ **Do NOT be influenced by friends who talk about how little work they are doing.**
- ✓ Tell yourself it's not for long and think about that fantastic summer holiday.
- ✓ Make yourself start however much you don't want to – the hardest bit is over with then.



Improving your chances of getting the **highest grades**

There are a number of factors that cause students to lose marks in the exams. The factors below are often reported by examiners. You will also find them in revision books. Here is a list of factors that you need to be aware of and concentrate on –

- Start in good time – leave it too late and you will start panicking.
- Plan for half hour or, at most, one hour slots. Nothing extra is likely to sink in if one subject is revised for much longer.
- When revising during the evenings plan 1 or 2 subjects only. Leave some time for relaxation.
- Allow some days off, but not in the few weeks just before the exams.
- Plan to revise specific topics or aspects of a subject – for example, not just science, but human systems, or waves, or chemical reactions or electricity.
- Read through a topic and then make brief notes on cards which can be used for further revision later.
- Use colours to highlight key works.
- Work in small groups to discuss a topic.



Remember that **revising for exams** is like any big job that **requires preparation**.

Compare it to shifting boxes when moving house. **How would you do this?**

- ☒ Not do anything until the last minute and then try to carry all of the boxes at once.
- ☒ Sit around and hope that somebody else will move the boxes for me.
- ☒ Start straight away and move a few boxes at a time.





Key tasks on **the day before** the exam

- Make sure you know your timetable.
- Get there early – only fools leave it too late and rush – catch the much earlier bus.
- Allow time for your brain to wake up – have a shower, eat a healthy breakfast.
- Do a final check of the subjects you will be doing that day – know the structure and how many sections there are.
- Make sure you have **EVERYTHING** you need and take spares – do not get into the stress of asking teachers for things you should have brought.
- Take a pen you enjoy writing with – take 2 just in case.



During the exam

- ✓ Don't forget that it is natural to be nervous. It actually gives your brain the extra adrenalin it needs to make the final effort.
- ✓ If your mind goes blank, don't worry. Look at the question again, write down some notes – it'll get your brain ticking over again.
- ✓ Don't start writing until you know what the instructions are and you are ready to write sense.
- ✓ Make and keep to a time scale for each question depending on the number of marks (you will have done this in revision classes – stick to it). If you only have 3 minutes left for a question, write the answer in note form – the examiner will give you marks for it.
- ✓ Allow a little bit of time at the end to check through your work to see if any changes need making and maximise SPaG (spelling, punctuation and grammar) marks. Examiners have said that this can make the difference between a higher and lower grade.

If there is
no struggle
there is
no progress





Checklist and Good Advice

Do:

- ☒ start your revision as early as possible
- ☒ create a weekly revision timetable and **STICK TO IT**
- ☒ revise in a quiet space away from distractions
- ☒ use a variety of revision strategies
- ☒ ask friends and family to test you on your knowledge and understanding
- ☒ make sure that you take regular breaks during revision
- ☒ look after yourself. Eat, sleep and exercise well
- ☒ stay positive. Tell yourself, "I can do this!" Focus on the reward of the summer holiday.

Don't:

- ☒ leave everything until the last minute
- ☒ find excuses for not revising. "I'll do it later" will get you nowhere
- ☒ try to revise with your phone on and with other distractions
- ☒ just read through your notes. Be creative with your revision
- ☒ burn yourself out by trying to revise too much at once
- ☒ focus on negative thoughts and your worries. **Stay positive.**

Question

What should I do if...?

Answer

I'm missing key work and parts of the course

- Tell your teacher who will provide you with resources.
- Attend all revision lessons during which key content will be covered again.

I need to improve my exam technique

- Ask your teacher if you can borrow past papers. Practice the questions and use the feedback to make progress.

I don't know when my exams are or what to revise for each one

- The dates and times of all your exams are on your exam timetable.
- Details of each exam can be found on the school website subject pages.

I don't know how to revise

- Use this guide as well as the recommended videos and weblinks on the school's website. Try these out and see what works best for you.

Coping with the stress of GCSE exams

For many students, the pressure of sitting their GCSE exams can be intense and you may find yourself struggling to cope at times.

While they are revising, students are often stressed, anxious and irritable and can have trouble with eating and sleeping. But a few simple things can really help:

- ✓ Take regular breaks, to do something you enjoy, even if it's just half an hour off to listen to some music or to watch their favourite soap.
- ✓ Make sure you eat healthy snacks regularly and drink enough so you don't get dehydrated.
- ✓ Exercise is also a good way to relax, even just a walk round the block.



If you would like more information about coping with exam stress, we have uploaded a detailed parent's guide on the school website.

Some **useful websites** that you might want to look at are:

- A series of strategies from a top revision-based company:
<https://www.goconqr.com/en/gcse/revision-tips/how-to-deal-with-exam-stress/>
- A guide produced by the NHS:
<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/childhealth6-15/Pages/Examstress.aspx>
- Some practical advice from BBC Radio 1:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1y58ppPNfRBp41XQLb62gvt/anxiety-stress>



West Exe School

Hatherleigh Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 9JU

T: 01392 660100

E: admin@westexe.devon.sch.uk

W: www.westexe.devon.sch.uk

f www.facebook.com/westexeschool

t [@westexeschool](https://twitter.com/westexeschool)



West Exe School
community • opportunity • success