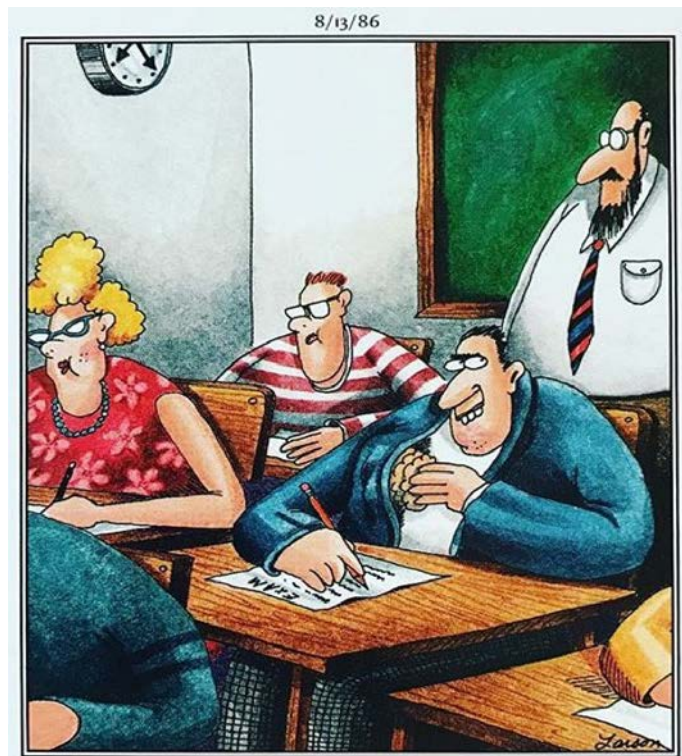


The Kimberley School

Revising for your GCSE exams



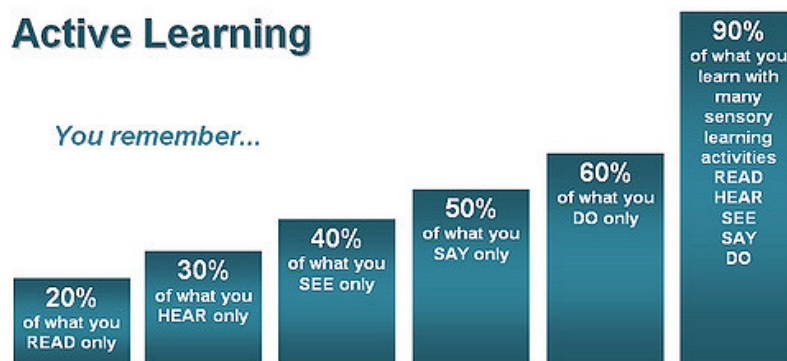
Midway through the exam, Allen pulls out a bigger brain.

How do I prepare for my GCSE exams?

There are three stages to revising effectively:

1. Transforming your subject work into revision notes / diagrams etc
2. Committing revision notes to memory and testing yourself
3. Applying your knowledge to practise answering examination questions in the correct way

Revision does not mean just looking at books and reading. Revision is only effective if you do something active with the material you are trying to learn; by creating revision resources you are forced to think about the subject matter and this will help commit it to your memory.



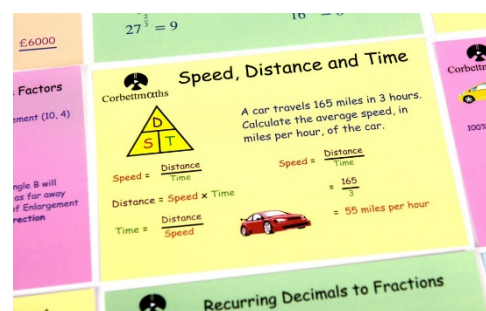
There is no ‘best way’ to revise – different people will prefer different methods. Here are some effective revision methods that are worth considering:

Revision cards

Put a simple piece of information and/or a picture on one side of the card, and a full explanation/definition on the other. This is particularly useful for revising:

- Key people or dates
- Formulae
- Key words

There are also some fantastic flashcard Apps on the Appstore and in the Android Marketplace – free and paid. Some even allow you to draw pictures. Just search for ‘flash cards’. Get someone at home to test you regularly.



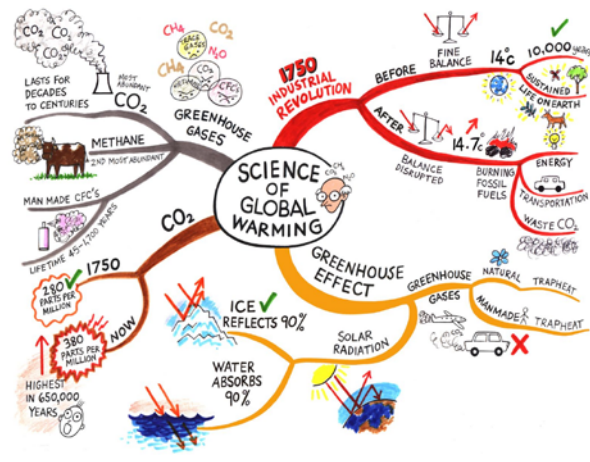
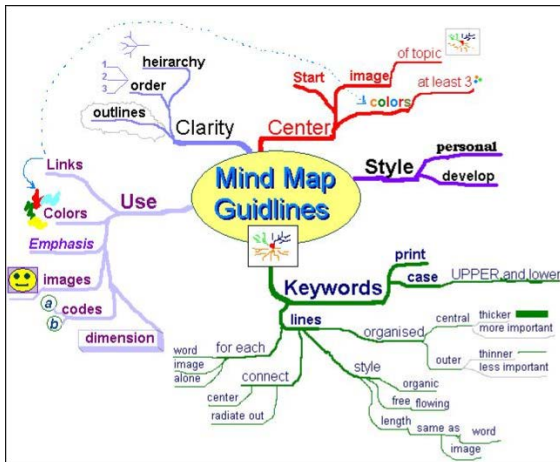
Post-it notes



Write short, sharp notes about things you find hard to remember and stick them in places where you know you will look (light switches, the kettle, by the toilet roll...). The more times you see it the more likely you are to remember.

Mindmaps

Put the main point (e.g. 'Global warming') in the middle of the sheet. Coming out of this, put subdivisions for this topic. Include pictures, diagrams, colours, arrows to connect things – the variety will help you get a clear mental image and aid your ability to memorise it. Good for summarising a lot of information.



Test yourself by revising the mindmap for ten minutes then try to recreate it on a blank piece of paper. Do this two or three times over a longer period and it will stick in your memory.

Traffic lights

Highlight your notes in terms of how confident you are with different parts.

- Red/pink = priorities for revision; things you really don't understand
- Orange/yellow = things you have some understanding of
- Green = things you are confident about



Once you've done this, you can apply other revision strategies to the things you have put in pink/red.

Do the Youtube thing!

Other students have done GCSEs in the past, and many of them are creative geniuses! There are a huge array of revision videos available, many of which include memorable songs. ***Don't get distracted by videos of cute cats etc***

Write mnemonics, rhymes or silly sentences

How to remember the Reactivity Series?		
Please	Potassium	Most reactive ↑ Least reactive
Stop	Sodium	
Calling	Calcium	
Me	Magnesium	
A	Aluminium	
Careless	(Carbon)	
Zebra	Zinc	
Instead	Iron	
Try	Tin	
Learning	Lead	
How	(Hydrogen)	
Copper	Copper	
Saves	Silver	
Gold	Gold	

Writing these for yourself can help you to remember sequences of information, especially when they need to be in a particular order.

Make recordings

Record yourself saying key things and play them back. Mobile phones all have a voice-recorder function, so you can listen to them wherever you like.

Write summaries

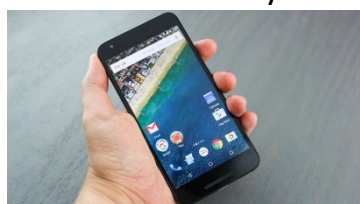
Write a summary of each section of your exam; for example, condense an entire set of notes into one A5 set of bullet points

Draw up a lastminute.com sheet

Make an A5 piece of paper that contains a really concise list of things that you absolutely cannot forget. Take this with you on the day of the exam so that it's the last thing you see before you go into your exam. ***Make sure it goes in your bag before the exam and not left in your pocket!***

Harness your inner geek

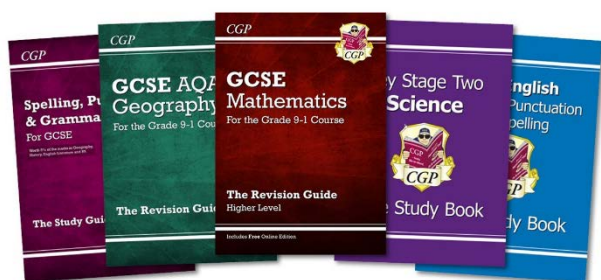
Set reminders in your mobile phone; this is ideal for remembering small bits of simple information, like dates and names. If the same reminder goes off seven times, it will become a part of your long-term memory. You can have several reminders going at a time. You can also take a photo of a piece of revision e.g. a mind map so you can revise whenever and wherever you have a few minutes e.g. on the school bus. Use some of your data to access revision apps or a revision website – even if it is only for ten minutes every little bit helps.



Using websites

There are some fantastic resources on the internet to help your revision and apps you can get on your smartphones. Sites like BBC Bitesize and s-cool.co.uk have some amazing resources and quizzes to test yourself. *Make sure you know which exam board you are studying for each subject as you may need this to get to the right content to revise on these websites.* Ask your subject teachers if they would recommend a particular website for their subject. **Don't rely only on websites for all your revision and beware getting distracted!**

Revision Guides



Many of you have purchased revision guides and your teachers think those we have recommended are a great resource. You need to use these **actively** just like any other revision resource. They usually have practice questions and advice on how to

answer exam style questions as well as all the subject content you will need.

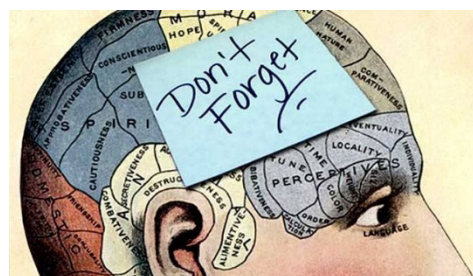
If they just stay in a drawer they are a waste of money!

Revising with a 'study buddy'

This can be a great way of revising but it should be with someone you know is going to be serious about it. Agree a definite set of topics you are going to revise, build in ways of testing each other, apply it to exam questions, push each other to make sure you finish. **Have a laugh but don't get distracted.**

Memorising

By creating the revision resources you will already have started to memorise the key bits of subject information. There is no quick fix to memorising. There needs to be some **repetition over an extended period of time** and you have to test yourself. Aim



to revise your revision notes **three times** over the space of two to three weeks prior to the exam. Each time try to reproduce the notes/diagram. If you are using revision cards get someone to test you regularly over several weeks.

Planning your revision

GCSE Revision Timetable

Don't forget to take regular breaks!



Time \ Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9am							
10am							
11am							
12noon							
1pm							
2pm							
3pm							
4pm							
5pm							
6pm							

If you don't plan out your time it will be difficult to ensure you have given enough time to each of your subjects. Look carefully at the dates of each exam so you can plan out which subjects need to be revised sooner and which are later in the schedule. When doing your revision timetable think about these key things:

- ❖ Spread your revision over many weeks – it is always better than cramming at the end – ***if you need help look at the 12 week revision plan you have been given for each subject***
- ❖ Make sure you cover all your subjects not just the ones you like the most
- ❖ Don't spend too long revising things you already know pretty well – be brave and tackle the topics you are less sure of.
- ❖ Keep a list of things you are not sure about so you can ask your teachers to explain them when you are back at school
- ❖ Don't make a revision session too long – it will be less effective. Be clear exactly what you are going to revise in the sessions. After a maximum of 45 minutes of creating revision notes / diagrams etc take a short break of 5-10 minutes then come back and test yourself. Switch to a different subject for the next hour if you have planned to do more revision
- ❖ Make sure some of your revision is practising different types of exam questions – it is crucial you know precisely how to answer different questions to secure the highest marks possible
- ❖ You will have fifteen days in the Easter holidays and another nine days part way through the exams at May half term – using this time effectively will make a huge difference
- ❖ Keep a log of how long you have spent revising – *be honest*. It will help to build confidence as you see the number of hours rise.
- ❖ Don't worry if you miss a revision session – you can always re-schedule it. We are all human and none of us keep perfectly to a plan
- ❖ Keep doing some of the things you enjoy – everybody needs some downtime. You should not be revising constantly
- ❖ **It will come to an end. You know the date of your last exam and you have Prom and a very long summer holiday to look forward to**

Exam Technique

Having a very good level of factual knowledge about a subject will get you some way in your exam but it will not secure a very high grade on its own. You have to be able to apply your knowledge to the specific questions set on the exam paper.

Your teachers will have emphasised to you exactly what you need to do for each of the different types of questions. They will have shown you how to set out your answers and explained what you need to include in your answers to secure the highest marks. You will have examples of model answers in your books to show you exactly how to do this. **It is essential in your revision that you also memorise the techniques of how to answer the different types of questions in each subject.** Think about these things to get your exam technique right:

- ❖ Find the information you have been given by each subject about your exam paper(s) and how to answer the different types of question – make it a key part of your revision. ***If you cannot find this information ask your teacher as soon as you can***
- ❖ Highlight or underline the key words in a question so you are clear what you need to do (always read the question twice)
- ❖ Make sure you know the meaning of the key ‘command’ words in the question e.g. explain, describe, how far do you agree etc
- ❖ Do as many practice questions as you can – ask your teachers for examples of questions and look in your revision guides for example questions and they often have exemplar answers as well
- ❖ You don’t always need to write your answers out in full – you can just bullet point what you would include
- ❖ Always think about using the correct subject language in your answers so you are showing detailed and accurate knowledge
- ❖ Make sure you know how long you should spend on different types of questions – ask your teacher for advice -they may give you a certain number of minutes per mark on a particular paper
- ❖ Practise getting the timing right when you answer exam questions

Question 1b	
Question 1b – Explain why the Soviet Union blockaded West Berlin in 1948. (8) <u>8 minutes</u>	
Exam Rules	Model Answer
PEE x 2	In 1945 Berlin was divided into zones run by Britain, France, the USA and the USSR. Stalin blockaded West Berlin in 1948 because he hoped to drive the Western Powers out of Berlin altogether. Stalin opposed the introduction of a new currency and economic recovery in the Allied zones. This led to the Soviets being concerned that the Allies were trying to create a new Germany that was wealthier than the Soviet Eastern Germany. He wanted the Western Allies to pull out after Germany had been starved into surrender leaving it dependent on the USSR.
•Point	
•Evidence	
•Explanation	Stalin believed the Western Allies had no right to be in Berlin. They saw them as a threat to the communist way of life and this was emphasised by showing off the capitalist way of life. Stalin saw this as a threat as Germany would become strong and threaten the USSR and therefore he wanted them out of Berlin.

On the day of an exam

- ❖ Stick to your normal routine (unless you are regularly late!)
- ❖ Have your usual (healthy) breakfast – you need some energy
- ❖ Check you have all your exam equipment - including water
- ❖ Check you know the format of the exam and the types of questions
- ❖ Give yourself enough time to get to school comfortably. If you have a problem and might be late – don't panic. Contact school and we will ensure you can complete your exam when you arrive
- ❖ It is natural to be a little nervous – go in and do your best

In the exam

- Read through the information on the front of the exam paper – it will help you focus and ensure you know what you have to do.
- Listen carefully to the invigilator in case there is anything extra you need to know
- Don't panic when you look at the questions and don't rush your answer
- Think back to what you know about how to answer each type of question
- You don't always need to do questions in the order they come up. You can always skip a question and come back to it later in the exam
- Read the question twice and highlight the 'command' words so you are absolutely clear what you are being asked to do
- Work out how long you should spend on the question – keep your eye on the clock and stick to your timings
- If it is a short answer question the amount of space on the exam paper should be enough – if you go over check you are not waffling
- Use the right structure for longer answers (e.g. PEEK)
- Write in paragraphs; don't use slang; use correct subject language
- Use relevant examples to make your point clear / prove your point
- Show your 'working out' – it may be required to gain all the marks
- Check your spelling, punctuation and grammar carefully on any SPAG questions – these will be shown on the exam paper
- Make sure you have had a go at every question you need to. Don't do extra questions or questions from the wrong section
- If you finish early take a moment and then check your paper carefully making corrections as necessary

Sleep

Exam time can be stressful and it is essential you get enough sleep. A lot of youngsters report that they aren't sleeping well (especially at this time of year) and don't know what to do about it. Some useful information on the subject:

- Sleep is when the body recharges its' batteries.
- Without adequate sleep, our ability to think, to remember and to interact with others is impaired. We make poorly considered decisions, think slowly and forget things when we tired. Exam season is the worst time to suffer from problems like these.
- Biologically, teenagers feel tired later in the evenings than adults do, which means they play on phones, tablets, consoles, watch TV etc to fill the time.
- Evidence shows that looking at a screen last thing at night actually keeps the brain awake (the light from screens stimulates melatonin, which is the chemical that keeps us awake). Therefore, access to electronic devices just before bed stops young people from sleeping!

So what can you do to get a better night's sleep?

- Our bodies work well if they stick to routines. It is helpful to have the same sleep routine at weekends and during the week.
- It's better to have a nap for 20m during the day than to have a lie-in.
- Something calming (drawing, reading, having a bath, talking etc) before bed aids rest.
- Doing exercise during the day (but not just before bed) also aids a good night's sleep.
- Having a notebook by the bed means that if your child is worrying or thinking about something, they can write it down to get it off their mind.
- Avoid caffeine after about 8pm.
- Encourage a comfortable sleeping environment. Sometimes, a long bath and a clean duvet cover can be enough to encourage really deep sleep.
- Encourage a quiet sleeping environment; no music, other people in the house talking quietly, phones and tablets charging downstairs
- Avoid eating too late as this can make it hard to get to sleep.
- Don't drink too much in the evening

Build your confidence

The only way to really feel confident about your exams is to know that you have put in some quality preparation. You will always be a little nervous going in to an exam but you can reduce that by knowing you have taken your preparations seriously. If you can answer 'Yes' to the following then you will be in pretty good shape:



- Are you sure of exactly what topics will be tested on each exam paper?
- Do you know the format you need to answer each different type of question on the exam paper and the timings you should work to?
- Have you revised all of the topic areas and tested yourself more than once?
- Have you done some practice questions?
- Do you have the mindset that, no matter what the questions are, you know you will try to answer to the very best of your ability?

Keep a tally of the number of hours you have revised. If you start revision early this tally will very quickly rise to an impressive number – that must show you that you are preparing effectively. Don't listen to what others say they are (or are not) doing – do what is right for you!

**All of the staff at The Kimberley School wish you
the very best for your exams!**

How can parents help with revision?

There are lots of things that you can do to ensure that your child is healthy, happy and learning.

- ❖ Help your child to plan out their revision time
- ❖ Support a sensible diet; sugary food and caffeine do not help with revision! Healthy snacks that provide energy over a longer period of time are helpful- look at this BBC guide <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z3xdq6f>
- ❖ Ensure your child gets enough sleep (see below)
- ❖ Provide a quiet space where there are **no distractions**. If that means getting everyone else out of the house from time to time, so be it
- ❖ Suggest you look after their phone whilst they are revising – it will be their number one distraction
- ❖ Make sure that your child is sticking to their revision plan
- ❖ No revision is perfect; sticking to the plan 80% of the time is reasonable!
- ❖ Sometimes it will all get on top of your child. Remind them that they have worked hard and there isn't long to go.
- ❖ Make sure it is not all revision – they will need some downtime, time with friends etc. Try to ensure they get some exercise and time outside.
- ❖ Avoid nagging, but gentle revision reminders are helpful.
- ❖ Offer to test your child on their revision cards.
- ❖ During the revision period, highlighters, large pieces of paper and post-it notes are also really useful. Revision guides, revision cards and revision apps are also handy.
- ❖ On the night before an exam, your wonderful teenager may be stressed and difficult to be around, but you may have to let that slip!
- ❖ Try not to talk about what it was like 'in your day'. Things have changed a great deal, and it's likely to irritate your child if they think you just don't get it.
- ❖ Be interested; ask questions about revision subjects!
- ❖ Whatever your child might say, all the research says that TV and music (unless it has no words) in the background does not help you to revise. It should be relatively quiet too... There are several YouTube videos that contain music which is ideal for studying.
- ❖ Help your child to organise and file their learning.

- ❖ Make sure that your child has a watch or a clock so that they can keep an eye on how long they have spent on each revision task, and when it's time to stop.
- ❖ Ensure that your child turns up for the right exams, at the right times, on the right days!
- ❖ Make sure that your child has all the equipment that they need (black pen, spare black pen, pencil, rubber, ruler. Maths / Science exams may also need a calculator, protractor and compass). It should be in a clear bag or pencil case.
- ❖ Help your child not to dwell on the exam they have just sat – it is done, they cannot do anything more about it and it probably wasn't as bad as they think it was – time to move on to the next one
- ❖ Remind them that you love them to bits whatever happens in the exams!