

# GCSE revision: a family survival guide

GCSEs are the gateway to the next step in your child's future.



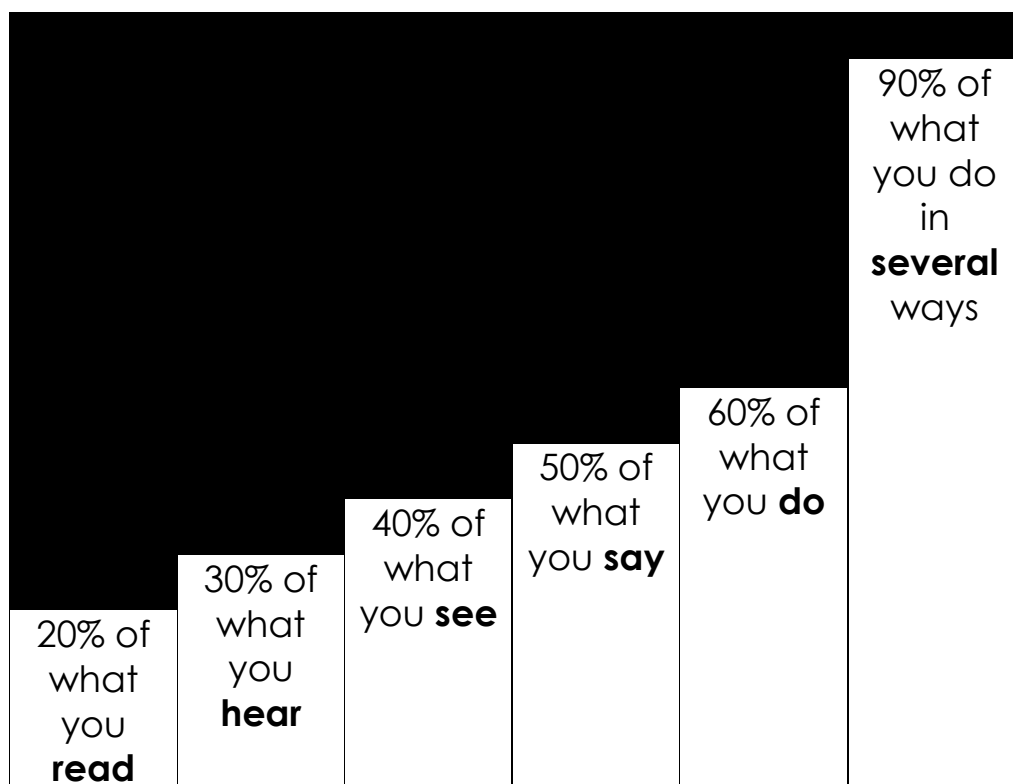
Support from parents has a massive impact on stress levels and on grades. This booklet should give you some ideas about how!

## 1. What does 'revision' mean?

Firstly and most importantly, revision does **not** mean looking at books and reading.

Revision is only effective if there is some kind of **interaction** with the material concerned; you need to **do** something with it.

You remember:



Here are some effective revision methods that are worth considering:

### Revision cards

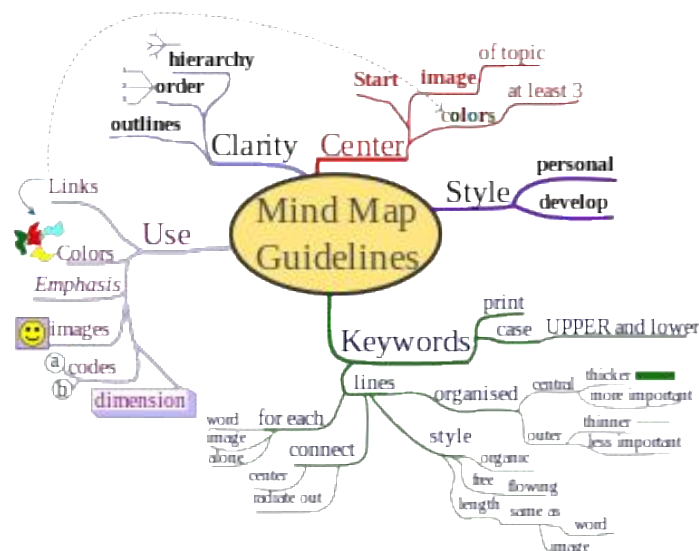
Put a simple piece of information and/or a picture on one side of the card, and a full explanation/definition on the other. This is particularly useful for revising:

- 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'.

### Mindmaps

Put the main point (E.g. 'human reproduction') in the middle of the sheet. Coming out of this, put subdivisions for this topic. Include pictures, diagrams, colours, arrows to connect things.



## **Traffic lights**

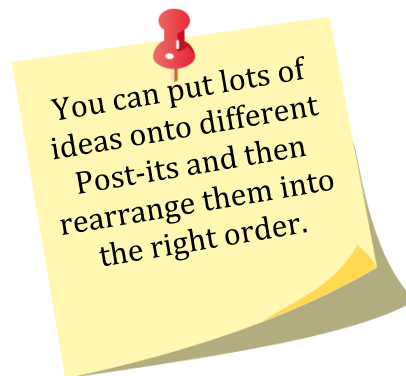
Highlight your notes in terms of how confident you are with different parts.

- 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.

## **Post-it notes**

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



## **Colour coding**

Come up with a colour-coding system for your notes. For example: key words are in one colour, case studies in another, positive/negative points in another. You can also apply this to mind maps or revision cards.

## **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.

### **Write mnemonics or rhymes**

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



### **Work with a friend**

Do your revision with someone else who wants to revise the same thing. You can help each other out if you're stuck, and test each other.

### **Write summaries**

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

### **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.

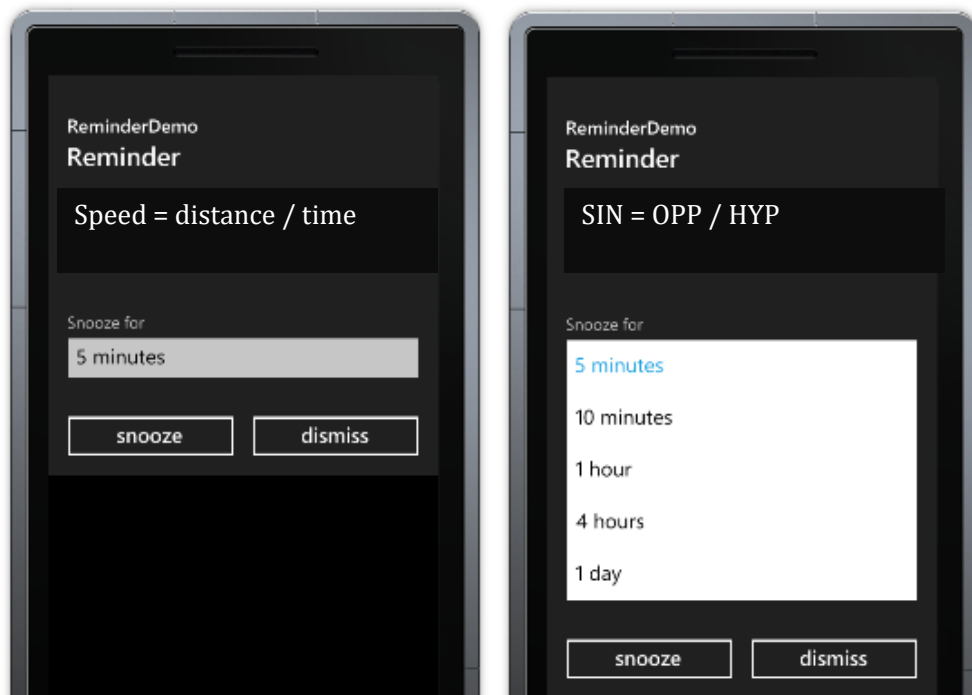
### **Draw up a lastminute.com sheet**

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.



## 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.



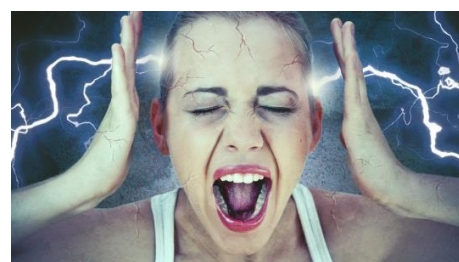
## 3. Key words

Developing the right vocabulary for each subject is absolutely **crucial**. Without it, understanding exam questions is really hard, and writing answers that give top marks is also really hard. It is therefore a good idea to have key word lists, revision cards and conversations that involve these key words.





- \* 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 far to go.
- \* Avoid nagging, but gentle revision reminders are helpful.
- \* 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 of the equipment that they need (**black** pen, spare black pen, pencil, rubber, ruler. Maths exams may also need a calculator, protractor and compass). It should be in a clear bag or pencil case.
- \* 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.
- \* Remind them that you love them to bits whatever happens in the exam!

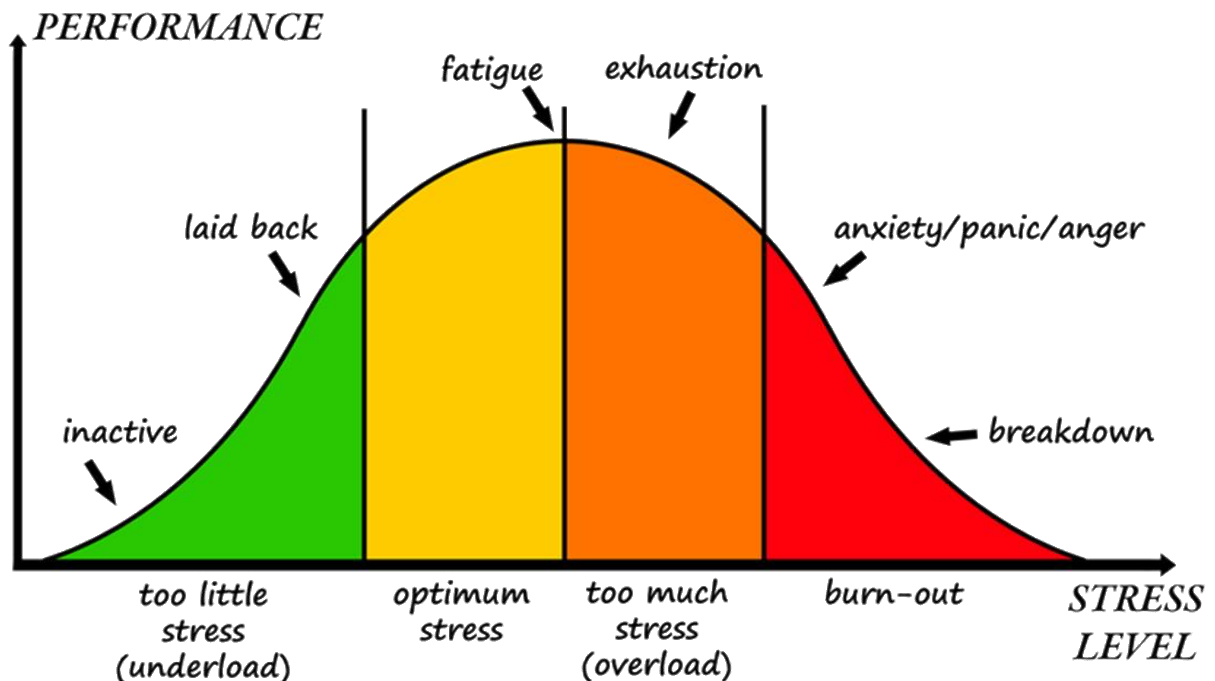
\* Be prepared to get in contact with the school if there's something you need to know, or something you feel we should know.

## 4. Stress

Stress is the feeling of being under too much mental or emotional pressure. Pressure turns into stress when you feel unable to cope. People have different ways of reacting to stress, so a situation that feels stressful to one person may be motivating to someone else.

As a parent, one thing you need to look out for is evidence of stress. A small amount of stress and adrenaline is good, but *too much* stress can have a massive impact on revision and general mental health.

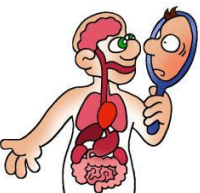

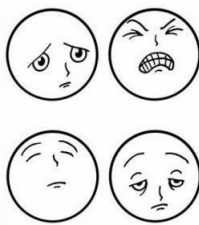

### STRESS CURVE



While you might not be able to get rid of exam stress, you can perhaps help your child to deal with other sources of stress, so that exams are less of a focus.



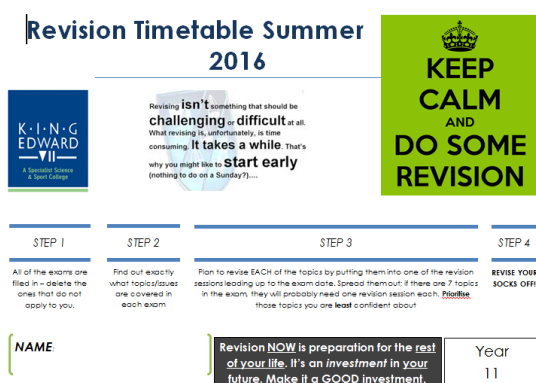
Look out for behaviour that is not normal for your child:

Body	<p>Headaches Colds Muscle tension Twitches Tiredness Skin conditions Breathlessness</p> 	<p>Excessive worry Confusion Poor judgement Nightmares Indecision Negativity Rushed decisions</p> 	Mind
Emotion	<p>Loss of confidence Fussy behaviour Irritability Depression Apathy Withdrawn Anxious</p> 	<p>Accident prone Loss of appetite Insomnia Restlessness Unhealthy behaviours</p> 	Behaviour

Tips for reducing stress:

- ✚ Sport is extremely helpful; a walk, a run, an organised class/team sport...
- ✚ Time with friends, doing something which *isn't* revision!
- ✚ A film night or family meal.
- ✚ Listening to music.
- ✚ Manage time effectively; use a revision plan and stick to it to avoid last minute panic.
- ✚ Keep a checklist of everything that needs to be revised. Being able to cross things off the list makes the revision seem like it's getting somewhere.

## 5. What is the best way to plan revision?



Your child has a revision timetable that contains all exams (although please check this against the exam timetable).

Your child also has a list of all of the topics in each exam. Each topic needs to appear at least once in one of the revision slots on the timetable.

Topics and subjects should be mixed up during the course of a revision session; never more than half an hour at a time.

Work backwards from the date of the exam so that the right things are included at the most appropriate times.

## 6. On the day of each exam...

- Set an alarm so that there's plenty of time.
- Prepare a good breakfast.
- Ask last minute questions *if asked*.
- Check that your child knows the *format* of the exam; which questions should they answer etc?
- Make sure that your child has the right equipment.
- Wish them good luck!



## 7. Sleep

Although sleep has already been mentioned, 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 in 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 how can you help your fabulous teenager 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 in the room switched off...
- € Avoid eating too late as this can make it hard to get to sleep.
- € Don't drink too much in the evening...

Teenagers need around **9 hours** of sleep per night.





## **8. Things you might like to note down:**

Find out which exams your child has, and what dates they're on. Bear in mind that some subjects do not have exams.

Subject	Exam date(s) and times

Find out what revision methods your child finds effective:

<input type="checkbox"/> Revision cards	<input type="checkbox"/> Mindmaps	<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic lights
<input type="checkbox"/> Post-it notes	<input type="checkbox"/> Colour-coding	<input type="checkbox"/> Youtube
<input type="checkbox"/> Mnemonics	<input type="checkbox"/> Revision	<input type="checkbox"/> With friends
<input type="checkbox"/> Summaries	<input type="checkbox"/> Recordings	<input type="checkbox"/> Lastminute
<input type="checkbox"/> Revision	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone reminders	