

REVISION GUIDE



Revision is a very personal thing. There isn't one way to go about it. You need to decide the combination of strategies and techniques that works for you based on experimentation and the results you get.

Preparation

- Before you begin make sure that all your files are in order and that nothing is missing.
- Make sure you have in your possession useful study aids that will help you with your revision like highlighter pens, coloured felt tip pens, Post It notes, a set of revision cards for key words.
- Ask your teacher and make sure you are clear what topics the exam in each subject will cover.
- Make sure you know how long the exam will be and what form the questions will take as this will affect how you revise.

Revision Tips

Start your revision in good time and avoid doing it in a rush. You will be more relaxed, there will be no sense of panic and it will be easier to learn. Usually, unless you have a photographic memory! it is not any use just staring at the page of your notes or text book. Plan your session rather than reading in an unfocused way. Set yourself a target for each session.

Here are tips that can help. Choose the ones that suit the way you learn

- Take notes as you read. These will help to
 - Increase your capacity to recall information, especially under the stress of exam conditions.
 - put the text into your own words cementing your understanding
 - summarise and emphasize the key points
 - focus your attention

- Memory cards. If you like to write out your revision notes it is then helpful to condense that information into small manageable facts. On cards you can write bullet points or key facts which should then act as prompts for all the other revision facts you have been learning. Make sure every card has a title e.g.
Romeo and Juliet – facts
Romeo and Juliet - quotations
Put the question on the front and answer on the back? You can carry a set of cards around and look at them when you have a free moment.
- Write key words and phrases out on Post It notes.
- Use mind maps (see appendix 3) – these are made to illustrate key points by using drawings/colours/symbols. Be creative!
- Use spider charts (see appendix 4) – main idea in circle in the centre, lines drawn to other ideas that emerge from this
- Use colour coding and highlighting – link connecting points by colour themes
- If you are in a suitable place where you aren't disturbing others say things out loud. Works well for lists, formulae etc. Speak list rhythmically.
- Revise in half hour slots then take a break for 5 minutes and change to another topic.
- If you come across something you don't understand then ask someone. There is no point learning something from memory if you don't understand it. Go to a clinic!
- Practice examination questions. Use the questions in your textbook, past exam papers, topics given by your teachers. Many Departments have past papers and mark schemes on the Intranet. Test yourself using these past exam papers and then mark them yourselves using the mark scheme – this will help you understand how marks are allocated and what you need to do to access the higher levels of responses.
- Don't just revise the subjects you like!
- Test yourself! Set yourself challenges – look at the title of a card/cover it up/try to recite as much as you can remember. Once you have done this 2 or 3 times and feel you know the material you can reduce the notes even further to make a new card. Headings should prompt your memory.
- Reward yourself for achieving targets but do not get demoralised if you fall behind. If necessary amend your objectives to a more realistic level.
- Revise with others – it's good to have moral support / talking it through helps to make sense of the material / hearing how other people view a topic can be helpful. Be careful not to waste time chatting and getting negative.
- Monitor how you may be wasting time – texting, facebook, fiddling with you i pod.
- You may find it helpful to refer to revision guides (make sure they are specific to your exam specification) and resources on the Internet such as GCSE Bitesize.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/>

<http://www.s-cool.co.uk/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks3bitesize/>

Exam itself

3 most important skills for exams are

- **Reading skills** You need to make sure that you take the time to read the INSTRUCTIONS and the QUESTIONS slowly and carefully to know exactly what you are being asked for. This is not time wasted! Use a highlighter for the key words.
e.g. Give a reason for your answer
Give reasons for your answer
- **Thinking skills** You need to have SLEPT WELL and EATEN A GOOD BREAKFAST so that you can be as relaxed, not panicking, and have lots of energy to think clearly.
- **Time management skills** In exams you need time for Reading the paper
Thinking
Planning - when the question requires an essay or an extended piece of writing.
Writing – work out how much time you will need for each section so that you can split your time between the questions to make sure they all get answered.
- Think about the type of exam
 - Multiple choice: lots of facts; don't need to answer questions in order; don't rush as easy to make mistakes
 - Short answer questions: get detail/length of answer right for marks allocated
 - Essays: planning; timing
- Top up your memory just before the examinations. Use key cards for concepts, formulae that you find difficult to remember
- Look at the allocation of marks for the question to judge the length of your answer.
- Don't spend all your time on questions you know the answer to. You will get a worse mark for answering some of the questions brilliantly and some not at all.
- Show your workings out – especially in Maths and Science where you will get marks for thinking along the right lines even if the final answer is wrong.



APPENDIX 1

Exam questions – It's very important to make sure your answer gives what the question is looking for. Here are some key words to look out for to guide your answer.

Account for: Give reason for; explain why something happens

Analyse: Examine in very close detail; identify important points and chief features

Comment on: Identify and write about the main issues. Avoid purely personal opinion

Compare: Show how two or more things are similar. Indicate the relevance or consequences of these similarities

Contrast: Look at and discuss the differences between things

Criticise: Give your opinion and use evidence to support it

Define: Give the exact meaning of

Describe: Give the main characteristics or features of something or outline the main events

Discuss: Write about the important aspects of the topic. Consider the arguments for and against. Support your point of view with reasons

Evaluate: Assess the worth, importance or usefulness of something, using evidence. There will probably be cases to be made both for and against

Examine: Put the subject "under the microscope" looking at it in detail

Explain: Make clear and understandable how something works

Illustrate: Give examples which make the point clear

Interpret: Explain the meaning in your own words

Justify: Give reasons to support an argument

Outline: Give only the main points, showing the main structure

Relate: Show the connection between things

State: Write briefly the main points

Summarise: Bring together the main points only omitting details or examples

To what extent: Consider how far something is true or contributes to a final outcome

Trace: Show how something has developed from beginning to end

APPENDIX 2

REVISION TIPS FOR DIFFERENT SORTS OF LEARNERS

Here are ways you might try to help you with your revision. I have divided them up into sections for different sorts of learners. On the other hand, if you think any tip in any section will help, give it a try!

REMEMBER!

Trying to revise is useless if your books and files are not tidy and in order.

GET ORGANISED!

Visual learner

- Mindmapping
- Put posters/ post it notes on walls
- Draw pictures/diagrams alongside notes
- Use colour coding and highlighting
- Use computers/Watch videos to support topics
- To review information close eyes and see what you remember
- Study in a quiet place away from verbal disturbances

Auditory learner

- Taping notes and play them back
- Discussing revision with your friends/work buddy
- Reading notes aloud – works well for lists formulae etc. Speak list aloud rhythmically
- Asking questions of yourself
- Devise quizzes with a friend and test each other

Physical/kinesthetic learner

- Walk about talking to yourself
- Make revision cards and put them in sequence. Question on front, answer on the back. Colour code them
- Explain a topic to someone else to help you remember it
- Underlining and highlighting can help you learn
- Listen to music while you work

Appendix 3

3rd Form Revision Tips "Made by 3rd Form for 3rd Form"... (Courtesy of the XX Group)

1. Getting Started

- Turn your phone off whilst you are revising. It will only distract you.
- Create a working environment. Make sure you have paper and pens. A tidy desk is a tidy mind.
- Plan what you are going to revise before hand.

2. The Actual Revision

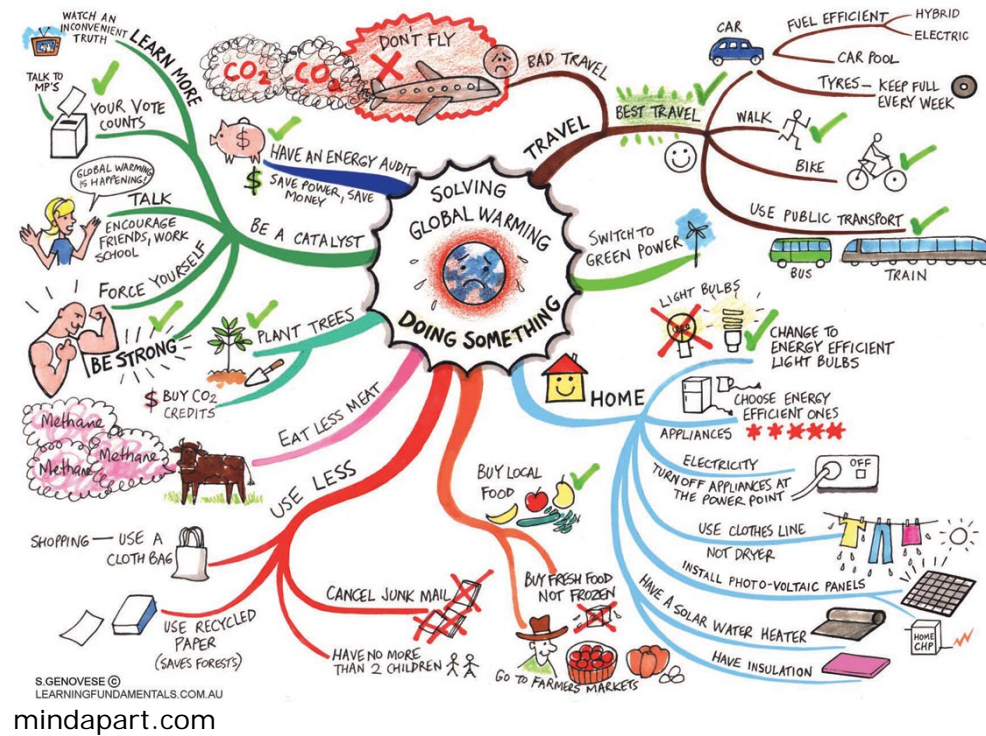
- Do not try and revise for hours on end, you will only get bored.
- Split your revision up into manageable chunks. 30-45mins MAXIMUM.
- Therefore, do take breaks (15/20mins).
- Do not revise lots of the same subject in one day, you will get bored. Vary your subjects to keep your brain engaged and to keep revision fresh.
- Drink lots of water. A hydrated brain is a fully functional brain.
- Do exercise during the day – active body, active mind.
- Make sure you eat. Your brain will use lots of energy revising.
- If you want to listen to music, try classical music. You won't have the problem of lyrics effecting your revision.

3. Top Techniques

- Record yourself saying facts and then you can play it back to yourself.
- Make revision flash cards, with key words, phrases, ideas on.
- Get someone to test you. / Do past exam papers!
- Revise in the morning – Do not go to bed late. Sleep in important!
- Make spider diagrams – use colourful pens.
- Make revision notes and rewrite them to embed information.

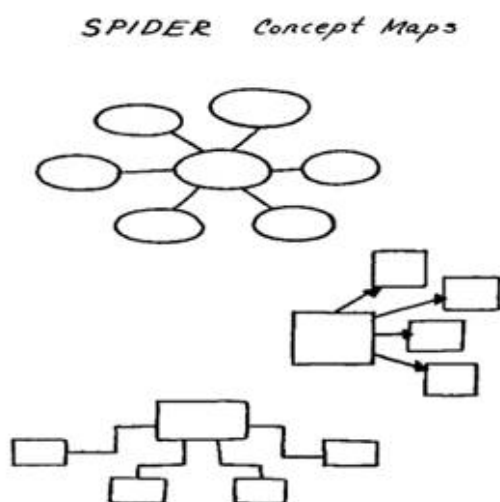
Appendix 4

Mindmap example



Appendix 5

Spider chart - main idea in circle in the centre, lines drawn to other ideas that emerge from this



Based on ideas from "The Exam Skills Handbook, by Stella Cottrell. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007