

Lady Manners School

Revision Advice



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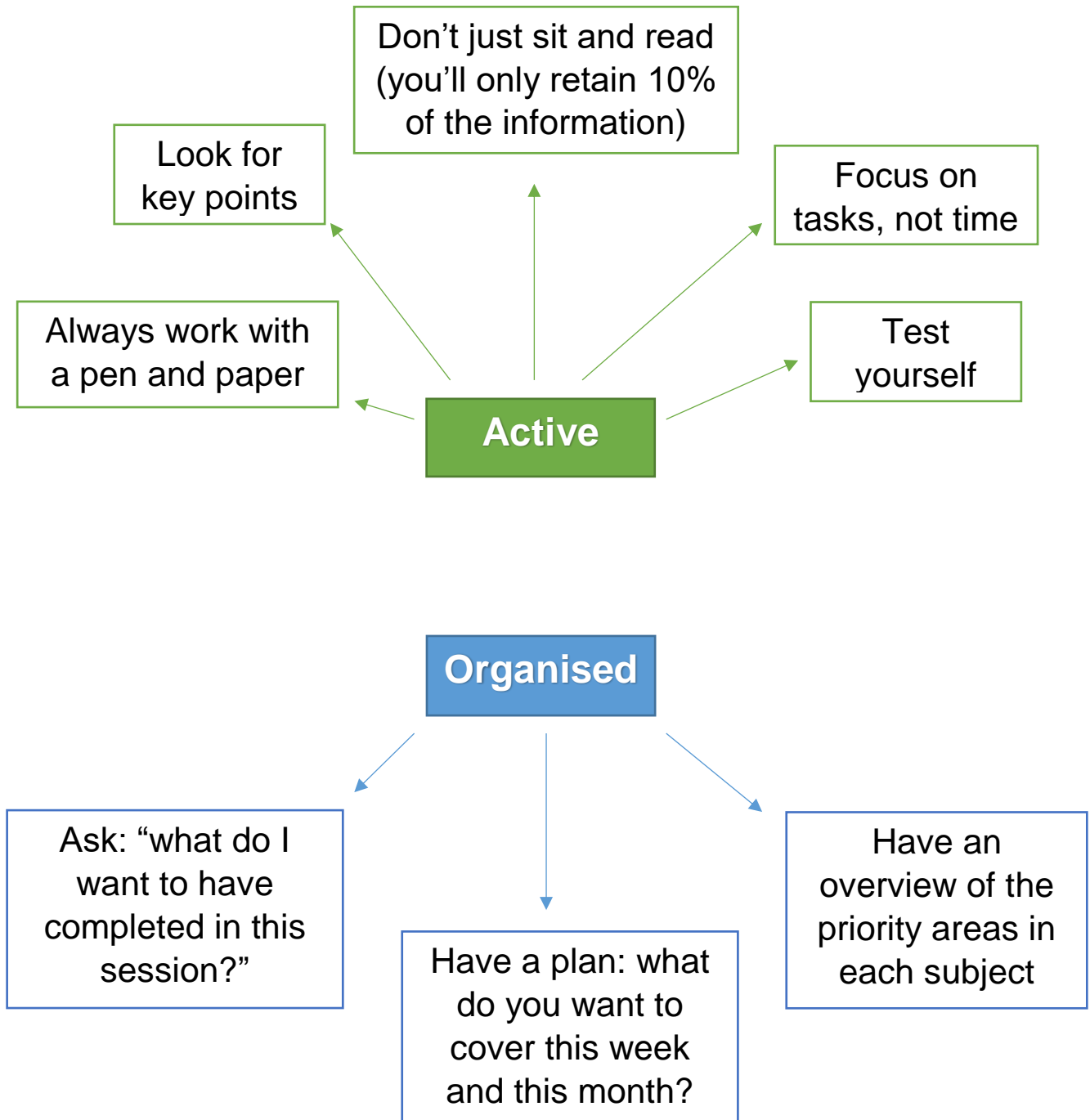
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Top Ten Tips

1. Short bursts of revision (30-40 minutes) are most effective. Your concentration lapses after about an hour and you need to take a short break (5-10 minutes).
2. Find a quiet place to revise - your bedroom, school, the library - and refuse to be interrupted or distracted.
3. Make sure you don't just revise the subjects and topics you like. Work on your weaker ones as well.
4. Read revision notes out loud to yourself. We remember more than twice as much of what we say aloud than of what we just read.
5. Use different techniques. Make your own learning maps, use post-it notes to write key words on, create flash cards. Record your notes and listen to them back. Ask friends and family to test you.
6. Practise on past exam papers or revision tests available on Myvle one section at a time and progress to doing an entire paper against the clock.
7. You will need help at some stage, ask parents, older brothers and sisters, teachers or friends. Use websites specifically designed for revision.
8. If listening to music helps you then that is good but be warned that research suggests that if we listen to our favourite music it actually distracts the brain from remembering what we are revising
9. **Don't get stressed out!** Eat properly, get lots of sleep, stay hydrated and do regular exercise!
10. **Believe in yourself and be positive.** If you think you can succeed you will; if you convince yourself that you will fail, that's what will probably happen.

Effective Revision

To be effective, revision must be:



Get Organised

Where?

Find a fixed place to study (a particular desk/room at home, a spot in the library, etc.) that becomes firmly associated in your mind with productive work. All the



equipment and materials you need should be within reach, and the room should be well lit and ventilated, but not too comfortable!

Turn your room into a positive learning environment. Keep books and notes on the desk to a minimum and decorate your walls with colourful notes and key facts. Music is fine as long as it helps you to study and blocks out distracting noises. The very best sound to study to is thought to be that of Baroque composers or Mozart. Experiments show that brains are positively stimulated and IQs boosted by such music.

What?

Remember that it's all about being active and focused on tasks, not time! Know at the start of a session what you want to have completed by the end of the period. Make the tasks specific and realistic, not vague and large.

How?

Always work with a pen and paper at the ready. Getting started is often the most difficult bit, so start by 'doing'. It usually helps to begin with a subject you like, move on to other less favoured areas, and then finish up with a favoured topic to maintain the interest.

When?

Try to schedule your study for times when you are more mentally alert. Most people find their ability to focus deteriorates towards the end of the day. Getting revision done earlier in the day aids efficiency and also offers the reward of having time to relax after the work is done.

Allow time to test your progress at the end of a study session.

Revision Dos and Don'ts

Do Make a list of all the topics you need to revise

Each subject that you are studying can be broken down into topics, with main sections, sub-topics and supporting details. A very useful start is to list out all the topics on the course according to this hierarchy and use this as a 'revision checklist' for the subject. Tick topics off as you've learnt them.

Do Create a realistic schedule

Block the waking part of each day into three portions. Allow yourself one portion a day off and allocate subjects and topics to the remaining two. Put the schedule on display so that your family can see when you are available. It will also reassure your parents that you are in control.

Do Plan ahead by working backwards

By using revision checklists in your various subjects, you should know what quantity of material has to be covered over the coming months. Start from the final date (day of the exam) and divide your revision up week by week, allowing some flexibility for unforeseen delays

Do Revise using the ideas on revision posters in school

Have you tried... mindmaps, flashcards, testing yourself, working through exam questions, timing yourself doing an exam etc....

Don't Just keep going

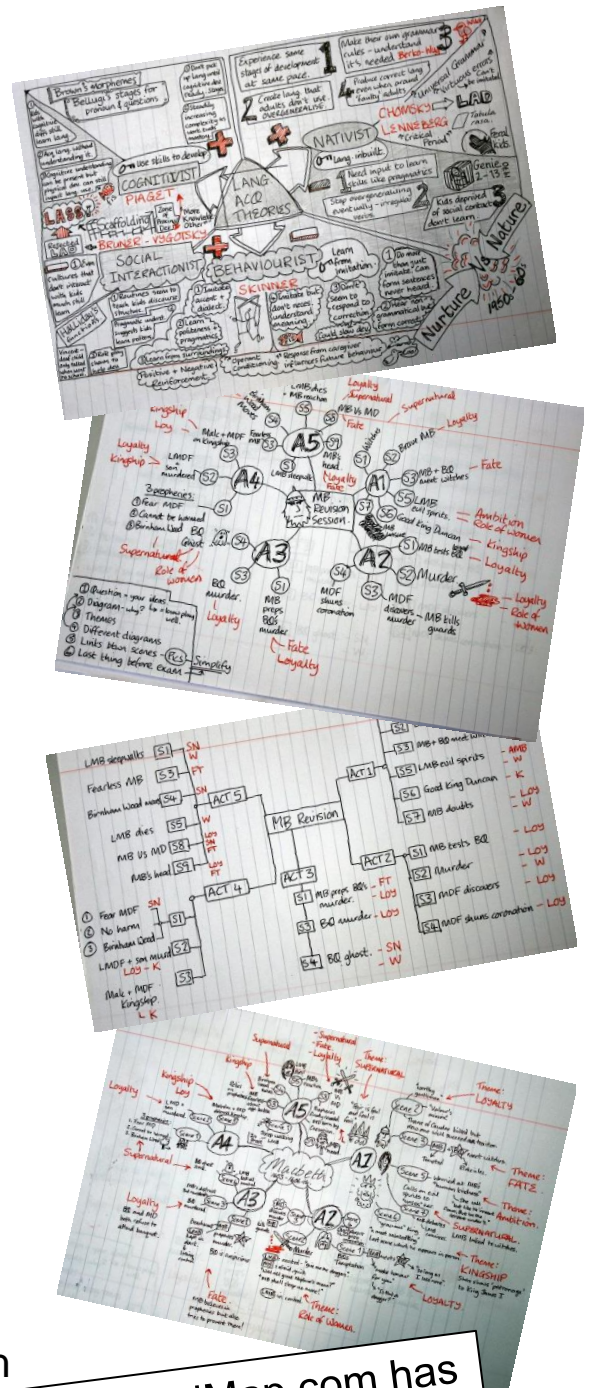
The body and the mind need regular 'time-outs'. When you're tired, concentration is more difficult, you get distracted much easier and learning and memorisation is less effective. There comes a point in an evening study session when it is counter-productive to stay at the desk - nothing is going in and you are only tiring yourself further. Use breaks effectively, particularly after completing a task.

Mind Maps

Make mind maps or association maps rather than taking linear notes. Mapping your notes by radiating key words out in a pattern of links from a central point will make best use of your memory. If you use colour and images on the maps, you'll be harnessing the power of both sides of your brain - creative and logical – making it much easier to remember.

How to mind map:

- Start with the theme in the middle of the page.
- Then develop your main idea.
- Each branch must relate to the branch before it.
- Use only key words and images.
- Key words must be written along the branches.
- Printing your key words makes them more memorable.
- Use colour to colour code branches that are linked.
- Make things stand out on the page so they stand out in your mind. (This doesn't show up well on a black and white photocopied booklet! You should use a different colour for each main branch and all its sub-branches)
- Brainstorm ideas. Be creative.
- Design images you can relate to which will help you remember key information.



bright idea!



iMindMap.com has tools so that you can create mindmaps on your computer or apps for your phone

Flash Cards

- Write questions on one side and answers on the other.
- Then get your family to test you.
- Merely creating the cards will help your recall.
- You can also use them to test yourself.



Read Intelligently

Most students, when faced with a textbook or chapter to study, will 'start at the beginning, read through at the same pace until the end, then stop and put the book away'. This passive approach is a very inefficient way to learn, as it can take longer and leave you bogged down in detail with little of it sticking in your memory.

By adopting a more active approach to reading, you can begin to read better and faster within a very short space of time. The **PQ2R** method has proved to be most successful in this regard. Try it and see the benefits.

1. Preview

Begin your reading task with a quick skim (2-3 minutes) of the text, trying to get an overview of the chapter or text. Look for section headings, illustrative charts and diagrams, signposts or key words.

2. Question

This is the key to active learning. Look for answers to the basic questions of "Who?", "What?", "Where?", "Why?" and "When?" Identify the main theme or learning point of the particular text.

3. Read

Now read the chapter carefully, with these questions in mind. Your mind will be actively looking for answers as you read. Work with a pen and paper, look for 'topic sentences' that summarise the most important point in a paragraph or section

4. Review

Always check your understanding of the material by reviewing and testing your recall before putting the text away.



Improving Memory

We often blame our memory for poor academic performance ("I'm no good at remembering names / dates / rules / verbs / characteristics") when really we should be addressing our faulty input and storage system. There is a big difference between short-term and long-term memory. If you study a topic one night and can recall most of it the next morning, don't be fooled into thinking that you will be able to remember it accurately in two months' time.

- **Interleaving**

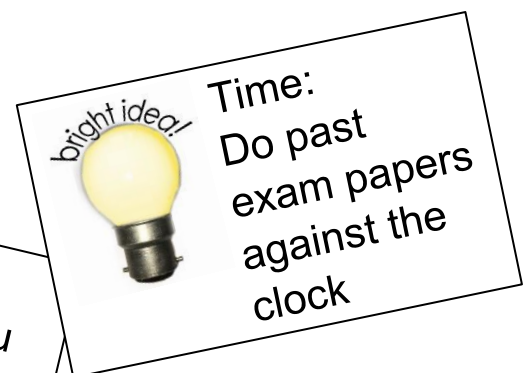
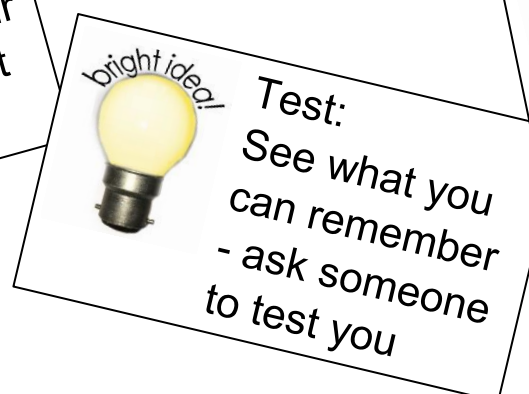
Research suggests that mixing topics for revision works better in terms of retaining important information in your long-term memory than just revising one topic at a time or revising things in blocks. The easiest way of finding questions that are interleaved is using past exam questions and the revision homeworks that you have done.

- **Repetition**

Studies indicate that 66% of material is forgotten within seven days if it is not reviewed or recited again by the student, and 88% is gone after six weeks. Don't make life harder for yourself - build in a brief daily and weekly review of material covered. It will save you having to re-learn material from scratch!

- **Application and association**

The best way to channel material to long-term memory is to organise it into meaningful associations. Link it to existing information and topics and create vivid personal examples which act as 'mental hooks' or links for recalling material in the future. If you learn a new formula / verb / rule, try to put it into practice immediately with a relevant example.



Making Your Notes Useful for Revision

The purpose of making summary notes on a topic or section is to aid your overall understanding of material, to help you distinguish between what is really important information (depth) and what is merely supporting detail. Reference to the main syllabus topics will help the process of discernment within each subject.

In addition, good summary notes make retrieval of information quicker and easier.

- **Sort out your filing system**

If you haven't already done so, get your subject folders and notes organised. Keep your exercise books for each subject together. Invest in some ring binders, dividers, plastic pockets, etc. Have a separate folder for each subject (a permanent reference point) and then keep a 'current folder' for managing notes in progress.

- **Less is always more**

When writing notes, remember they should contain a summary, not an extensive repetition of what is in the textbook or what the teacher said. Don't crowd the page. Stick to main headings and sub-headings. Use abbreviations where appropriate.

- **Beware of transcribing and highlighting!**

Merely re-writing the text from the book into your notes does not ensure you remember it. Try to put things in your own words and devise your own examples - this will make the material more meaningful.

- **'Save' your notes carefully**

Practise following the logic of your computer files, when storing information. Think - "Where does this material best fit (subject, section, topic, sub-topic, etc.)?" In this way, you will ensure that it is efficiently processed and easily retrieved both physically (during revision) and mentally (when you need it in an exam).

- **Make your notes visual**

Ensure your notes have a memorable appearance so that you can recall them easily. Use illustrations, diagrams, graphs, colours, and boxes ('a picture is worth a thousand words'). Arrange the material in a logical hierarchy (title, sub-point, explanation, example). Ideally, you should be able to close your eyes in an exam and visualise a particular page of notes.



Review

Looking over a topic every now and then will help to keep it in the memory, taking away the need to cram before exams and tests.

Understanding increases as time spent studying passes. However, the ability to recall things being memorised becomes progressively less efficient as time passes in a study session.

20 minutes is needed for the mind to get into the rhythm of and flow of the material. Any more than 40 minutes spent memorising means that memory declines to a point where it is no longer valuable.

So, the answer is...

1. 30 minute revision sessions
2. 5-minute stretch break
3. Then review the topic:
 - 10 minutes later for 10 minutes
 - 1 day later for 5 minutes
 - 1 week later for 2-5 minutes
 - 1 month later for 2-5 minutes
 - Before exams revise the topic as required



Each time knowledge is reinforced; it enters deeper into the long-term memory and becomes more stable.

Practise

To prepare for an exam, you must practise doing what the exam requires you to do; giving out information, not taking it in! This applies to regular class tests as well as the final exams.

Prior to your GCSEs, you will probably have had the benefit of many class tests and some mock exams where the GCSE conditions are simulated for your benefit – you can learn a lot by reflecting honestly on your performance in these tests. You also have the benefit of a wealth of freely available information about the exams. Make use of past exam papers, marking schemes, study guides and examiners' reports.

- **Make use of past papers**

These should be your constant companion in all revision tasks. For each topic you revise, consult the past questions on this subject and then attempt answers to them. Check your answers, fill in the 'knowledge gaps' where necessary, and file away the correct 'model answer' in your notes for future reference. You will also start to notice any trends in the questions asked.

- **Follow the marks**

Marking schemes are an invaluable aid to exam preparation. You can see how the marks are allocated for each question on the paper and what quantity or style of answer is required in each case.

- **Try a dress rehearsal**

Each exam paper contains its own particular structure and challenge, with varying emphasis on answering style and depth. While much of your ongoing revision will be based on individual topics and questions, it is a very useful exercise to tackle a full exam paper. It forces you to consider your strategy – the questions you will want to attempt or avoid, the issues of timing, the number of points you will need to make in each part of a question. Having performed this exercise a couple of times, your confidence levels rise as you fix on your strategy for the exam and realise that there can't be any major surprises for you in the real exam.

The Examiner's View

You can largely determine the end result by simply heeding the voice of experience. The job of examiners is to give you marks, not to take them away, but they are powerless to help you if you fall into the most common traps. These are the biggest pitfalls they have identified:

✗ Not reading the paper correctly

Examiners say that this is one of the most regular and fatal errors. They call it the 'triggered answer'. You have your pre-prepared answer ready but you don't look at the exact terms of the question and therefore supply the wrong information in your answer.

✗ Not finishing the paper

Mismanaging your time within the exam can easily cost you a full grade. The biggest exam 'crime' is to leave suitable questions unattempted. Remember: it is much easier to get the first 20% of the marks for any question than the last 5%. Therefore, if you find yourself stuck for time as you struggle through your third answer out of five, do not spend your remaining time extending and perfecting that answer. Instead, move on to questions four and five, even if your attempt is sketched or in point form. If you have answered only three questions instead of five, the highest mark you can get is 60%.

✗ Ignoring the marking scheme

You must take the marking scheme into account when you allocate time to each question or part of a question. If the marks allotted to a question clearly indicate that a few paragraphs are sufficient, do not write an essay on the subject. Avoid the temptation of writing everything you know about a topic – just give the appropriate amount of information.

☒ Repetition

Make the point once. There are no extra marks for restating facts, even if you phrase them differently. Examiners say repetition is a very common mistake. It is also a time-waster and an irritant.

☒ Missing part of a question

Sometimes, part of a question can be carried onto the next page and, in the pressure of the moment, you don't see it. As a consequence you might fail to do a compulsory part of a question or miss out on the chance to take an option that would have suited you better. Always take time to familiarise yourself with the whole paper before you start answering it.

☒ Not including rough work

Include your rough work with your exam script – you might get some credit for formulae or calculations or essay plans.

Performing on the Day

- **Get a good night's sleep**

It's tempting to stay up late doing last minute revision, but evidence suggests this approach is counter-productive. An extra night's last minute studying can make very little difference to your knowledge. However, having a mind that is refreshed, alert, and ready to respond to circumstances will obviously be of far greater benefit.

- **Arrive in plenty of time**

To perform well on the day, you need to be relaxed and to feel in control of the situation. This is difficult to achieve if you have missed breakfast. You will need about 15 minutes 'quiet time' to prepare mentally for your exam.

- **Have your equipment ready**

Each exam has its own requirements. Apart from properly functioning pens, pencils, rulers, etc, think whether you may need a calculator. Drawing pencils may be required for diagrams in some subjects. A lot of nervous energy can be expended on last-minute hassle if these items aren't checked in advance.



- **Have a 'Growth Mindset'**

On the day of the exam, remind yourself of the good things (material you know well, revision you have completed, past exam questions done, good grades achieved) rather than dwelling on areas of weakness. Having that self-belief will give you the confidence to trust your judgement.

- **Maintain your focus**

There can be a lot of tension, drama, and hysteria in the air on the days of an exam. You want to keep the balance between maintaining your focus and interacting normally with your friends. Try finding a quiet spot before each exam and afterwards. Surround yourself with people who will add to the calm rather than the hype.

- **Beware of post-exam analysis**

The more you participate in the exam post-mortem, the more confused and disheartened you are likely to become. You can't change what has happened, you can only focus on the present and this will need your full attention.

Top Tips on Exam Strategy

Success in exams involves two ingredients - having a thorough knowledge of the subject matter AND making the most of your knowledge in the exam through effective answering technique. Two students with identical knowledge and attainment levels can sit the same exam and their final grades can differ by as much as 25%. The difference is down to having an effective strategy and exam technique.

Here are four golden rules to apply to all exams:

1. Allow time to read the paper carefully

The importance of reading the paper carefully and choosing your questions wisely cannot be emphasised enough. The natural urge is always to start writing immediately and launch into a favoured topic. Resist the urge. Take your time. Be smart and size-up the paper before answering.

2. Stick to your game plan

An overall strategy should have emerged from your revision and exam preparation in each subject. This covers the areas you will tackle, the topics you will avoid if they appear on the paper, the sequence in which you will tackle the various sections, the style of answering you will use in each subject, the amount of time you will allocate to answering each section. In some cases, this plan will work like a dream but there will always be surprises to deal with in some papers. Don't get flustered. Stick to your game plan, trust your judgement, and move on.

3. Sweep up any mistakes

In the pressure of the exam hall, it is easy to make basic errors. These will sometimes have the potential to lose you a lot of valuable marks. Misreading the instruction on a question can make an entire answer invalid. You might have known the correct answer, but you didn't put it down. A simple miscalculation can lose you valuable time as you try to figure out what has gone wrong. Be disciplined with your time. Always leave a few minutes at the end to tidy-up errors. Simply changing a definition / formula / calculation at this stage could be the difference between a good and an average grade.

4. Attempt all questions

It is amazing how many exams are handed in unfinished. Every year, capable students who just didn't get time to finish the paper lose easy marks. Don't fall into this trap. Work on the basis that you will get an answer written for the required number of questions. Remember that it is much easier to get the first 20% of the marks for any question than the final 5%. You can always polish an answer further but, if there is no attempt made at part of a question, the examiner can't give you any marks. BUT if the instructions on the front of the paper tell you to answer a certain number of questions – stick to this - don't answer too many!

Answering Exam Questions

- Scan all the questions.
- Mark all the questions you could answer.
- Read these questions carefully.
- Choose the correct number of questions in each section.
- Decide on an order: best answers first.
- Divide up your time, allowing more time for the questions with the most marks.
- Underline the key words in the question.
- Plan your answer.
- Stick to the point of the question.
- Write your answer.
- Use the plan at every stage – e.g. every paragraph.
- Check your answer against the plan. Look out for mistakes.
- If you have time, re-read the questions and your answers and make any necessary corrections

Health and Wellbeing

Healthy Body = Healthy Mind

Food for thought

Eating a variety of healthy foods doesn't just give your body a boost, it also benefits your brain cells. Skipping meals may well give you extra revision time, but it can also leave you hungry and unable to concentrate. So, eat regularly and sensibly. Think wholemeal sandwiches and fruit, rather than cakes and biscuits!

Brain Fuel

- Bread, pasta, cereals and potatoes are filling and packed with starchy carbohydrates, which release energy slowly, meaning you can keep going for longer.
- Fruit and vegetables give you essential vitamins and minerals. Aim for at least five portions a day.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Dehydrated brains don't think clearly and water is healthier than sweet, fizzy drinks.
- Meat, fish, pulses, milk and dairy foods are good sources of protein. Moderate amounts are essential for a healthy diet.
- Make sure you eat breakfast on the day of an exam.
- If you're not getting enough iron then you'll damage your ability to concentrate for long periods of time and your energy levels will begin to drop. If hour long sessions of revision are proving too much, try eating more red meat, eggs and leafy green vegetables like spinach.



Exercise

Staying in your room can seem like the best option when revision time is short. But a bit of the great outdoors can blow the cobwebs away and help you relax. If you can't get out, at least get up and out of your chair for a stretch and a wander. Better still, go for a swim or put those footie boots on and give your mind and body a workout.

Stress Management

- Learn to relax: Take mini breaks throughout the day. Work on relaxation techniques, such as taking slow deep breaths.
- Exercise: Physical activity provides relief from stress. The brain uses 20% of oxygen in the blood so you need to think about your posture and exercise to make sure your body gets enough. 30 minutes of sport or a short walk will do the trick.
- Time: Recognise that you can only do so much in a given time. Try to pace, not race.
- Make a list: Make a list of the things that are worrying you and the possible things that could happen – then your brain will stop bringing them forward all the time.
- Sleep: Don't become overtired by forcing yourself to work late. Your brain needs time to sort out the information it has come across during the day. Your ideal sleep time is about 8 hours a night.
- Get organised: Have a realistic daily schedule including revision, sleep, eating, relationships and recreation.
- Be positive: Talk positively to yourself! Don't pay attention to that internal voice saying you can't do it; tell yourself you can do it and you will do it.
- Talk: Talking and meeting with friends and occasionally sharing deep feelings and thoughts can be helpful in reducing stress.
- Stay calm: Make sure you are in a calm, positive mood before you start studying.
- Be healthy: Watch your eating habits. Make sure you eat sensibly and have a balanced diet. Avoid too much chocolate, cola, caffeine and foods with lots of additives. Drink lots of water.



