

# St Christopher's CE High School

## GCSE Revision and Examination Technique

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

- **Jeremiah 29:11**

## How to Revise

Excellent GCSE results are no accident. They do not depend on luck! Active and thorough revision is essential if you are to maximise your chance of achieving your targets in exams this summer.

- Regular attendance at school is essential
- Attend revision sessions after school and in the holidays
- Know your exam dates and the topics covered in each exam
- Before you start to revise and memorise, make sure you understand the topic
- If there are things you don't understand, ask for help from your teacher or parent/ friend
- If you come across a problem you cannot solve make a note of it and ask your teacher. Other students may be finding this topic difficult too.
- Find a good place to work. It should be quiet and uncluttered
- If you work, can you make alternative arrangements to allow you time to prepare for your exams
- Use your personal revision plan and reward yourself if you stick to it

## Creating your revision timetable

- Write in all the non-revision activities first – school, sleep, revision sessions and essential clubs
- Take each subject and break it down into specific topics. Try to cover the set topic in the assigned revision sessions. This will give you realistic and achievable targets
- Think about any subjects or topics that will need more revision time – perhaps they are more detailed or you found them more difficult when studying them
- Break up your revision up into short sessions interspersed with breaks
- Find a routine which suits you best – everyone revises differently. This could be alone or with a parent/ friend, early morning or later at night.
- When you are not revising, find ways to relax and unwind

## Making revision worthwhile

Where and how should you revise?

- In a quiet room, perhaps a bedroom, where you will not be disturbed and preferably where you can leave your revision things.
- Somewhere warm and well lit.
- Music is Ok but it needs to be quiet and without lyrics works best.
- No TV or computer games.
- Work at a table, in an upright position. Do not lie on your bed – your brain will switch off.
- With a clock for timing your sessions.
- Short 30-40 minute session, with a 10-20 minute break between each session.

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## How often should you revise?

A famous study on forgetting textbook materials compared the percentage of material remembered after different intervals of time. The results were as follows:

After 1 day	54% was remembered.
After 7 days	35% was remembered.
After 14 days	21% was remembered.
After 21 days	18% was remembered.
After 28 days	19% was remembered.
After 63 days	17% was remembered.

- Without review, most information will be lost from memory.
- The best time to review materials is within a day or two after the material has been read or presented in class.

The best way to study for an exam is to keep the memory fresh on an ongoing basis. If you wait to review the information until the night before the test (let's say after 28 days), you will have forgotten 81% of the material and will have to study a lot longer to be sufficiently prepared for the exam.

You can learn to remember more effectively if you learn and use the four keys described below. Each one helps you to enter information into your long term memory.

1. **Choose to remember.** Be interested. Pay attention. Want to learn and know. What you want is an important part of learning. When people are interested and want to learn, they learn and remember more effectively.
2. **Visualize or picture in your mind what you wish to remember.** For many people, a mental picture or visualization is clearer and easier to remember than words. For each major concept that you want to remember, create a mental picture and then look at it carefully for a few seconds. Once you've seen it clearly, you'll probably be able to recall it.
3. **Relate the ideas and information you wish to remember to each other and to ideas and information you already know.** When you relate information to other information, you create a chain of memories which lead to one another. When you label an information chain or group of ideas, you create a kind of "file" that makes it easy to locate and remember the information.
4. **Repeat what you wish to learn until you *overlearn* it.** Say it in your own words. Even though you've already learned something, go over it one more time. Research shows that the time you spend on overlearning and putting ideas into your own words will pay off by making recall easier and more complete.

*"We remember what we understand; we understand only what we pay attention to; we pay attention to what we want."* - Edward Bolles

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## Revision Techniques

- Go through your files and 'weed out' information which is unnecessary.
- Make summary notes, changing the format of your notes.
- Use post it notes to make comments on your notes to make them more useful.
- Use post it notes to write key words and phrases and stick them around the house where you will regularly see them.
- Highlight key words – use different colours.
- Put main points on index cards or paper and keep them for the night before the exam.
- Draw diagrams/ flow charts/ spider diagrams/ mind maps.
- Read your notes onto a media device and then play them often.
- Use LOOK / COVER / WRITE / CHECK to stick facts in your mind.
- Use mnemonics/ rhymes or word games to help you remember.
- Get someone to test you. Get in the habit of testing each other.

When using past exam papers / questions teachers have given you, practise the following:

- Underline key words and phrases in the questions (verbs). This will make sure you do exactly what the question asks.
- Apply appropriate evidence (case studies, quotes, etc.) to answers which require longer responses.
- Practise under timed conditions.

## Surviving the Exam

### Before

- Listen carefully to the instructions.
- Set out your equipment – make sure you have several BLACK pens, pencil, ruler, and calculator.
- It is worth having a watch to put on the desk to help you time your answers.
- Make sure you know how much time you have for each exam and how to split your time between questions.

### During

- Keep calm and don't panic! Take a deep breath to calm your nerves.
- Make sure your writing is legible. Avoid careless spelling mistakes.
- Ensure you answer ALL the questions.
- Leave a bit of space at the end of longer answers so that you can add additional comments or arguments.
- Leave time to Read and CHECK your answers.

### After

- Don't try to dissect the exam once it's over. There is little point in comparing with a friend.

## Understanding the Question

- **READ** the question carefully. Then read it again.
- Work out your timings.
- Check at the end that you have answered all the questions – look on the back page.
- Don't get stuck with a question you may struggle with – keep moving through the paper and revisit difficult questions at the end. Maintain a 'can do' approach to questions.

## The language of Examiners

**Describe** – give a detailed account. Tell the examiner in your own words what something is / how or why something happens. Use words precisely, particularly in Science where you must use scientific terms wherever possible.

**Explain** – Give reasons for how or why something happens, you must give examples. These questions often carry a lot of marks.

**Analyse** – Look closely at detail, give reasons why or how something is done and the effect of this. Back up your points with evidence and explain your thoughts.

**Identify** – pick out/ select/ find / highlight.

**State** – write, briefly, the main point.

**Compare** - looking closely at two or more things which have something in common or how they are different. You must address BOTH things to gain any marks.

**Evaluate** – Make a judgement about how good or bad/ successful/ unsuccessful something is. In Maths it means work out/ calculate.

## How to beat Stress

1. Talk to your friends about what's worrying you – you will probably find that you are not on your own
2. Get enough sleep.
3. Eat small, regular meals with plenty of water. A balanced diet will give you the fuel you need. Avoid fizzy, sugary drinks. Caffeine drinks only give a short term boost – in the long run you will feel worse.
4. Have regular breaks when studying.
5. Exercise helps.
6. Be prepared to say no to offers of evenings out, you will have earned the right to lots of leisure time once the exams are over.
7. Take a deep breath, it will make you feel more in control.
8. Plan your workload and don't let it pile up.
9. Make sure you create 'you' time to do something that cheers you up.

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Notes



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