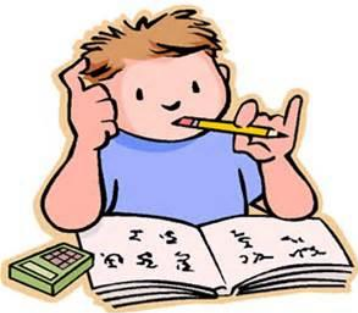


Thrybergh Academy
& Foljambe Campus

A 3-16 Through School



EXAMS



Exam Preparation and Revision

A guide for Parents and Students

Top Ten Revision Tips



1. **Short bursts of revision** (30-40 minutes) are most effective. Concentration lapses after about an hour and your child will need to take a short break (5-10 minutes).
2. **A quiet place to revise is important** - a bedroom, school, the library can work and encourage your child to avoid being interrupted or distracted.
3. **Make sure** that your child doesn't just revise the subjects and topics that they like. Work on weaker ones as well!



4. **Make** revision notes with your child this will enable them to remember what they have written down more easily. Stick key notes to cupboards or doors so they can see them everyday and frequently ask questions.
5. Encourage your child to **rewrite the key points of revision notes**; read them out loud to themselves. We remember more than twice as much of what we say aloud than of what we merely read.
6. **Use different techniques.** Make learning maps, use post-it notes to write key words on, create flash cards. Record notes on your phone or MP3 and listen to them back. Use highlighter pens to mark important points. Chant or make up a rap song.
7. Encourage your child to **practise past exam papers**. Initially do one section at a time and progress to doing an entire paper against the clock. You can help by timing them!
8. **Your child will need help at some stage!** The web has some amazing websites that can help with revision and point your child in the direction of their classroom teacher!
9. **All of the family should** eat properly and get lots of sleep!
10. **Keep positive!** Heap on the praise and try and offer small rewards for successful revision.



How should I revise?

Try one of these.....

A: 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.

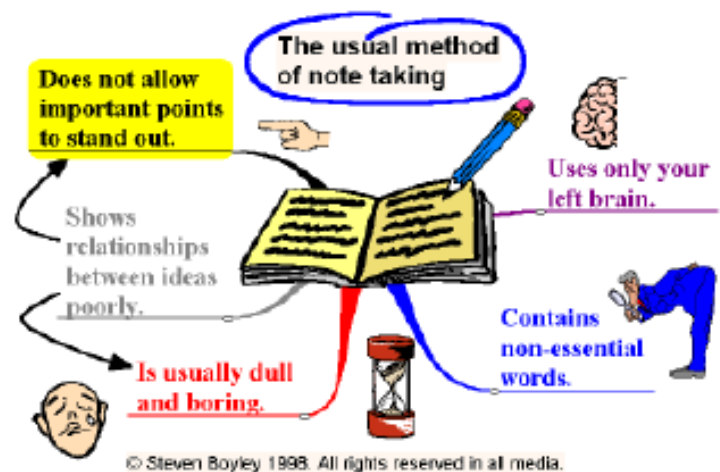
How to mind map:

1. Start with the theme in the middle of the page.

2. Then develop your main idea.

3. Each branch must relate to the branch before it.

4. Use only key words and images.



5. Key words must be written along the branches.

6. Printing your key words makes them more memorable.

7. Use highlighters and coloured markers to colour code branches.



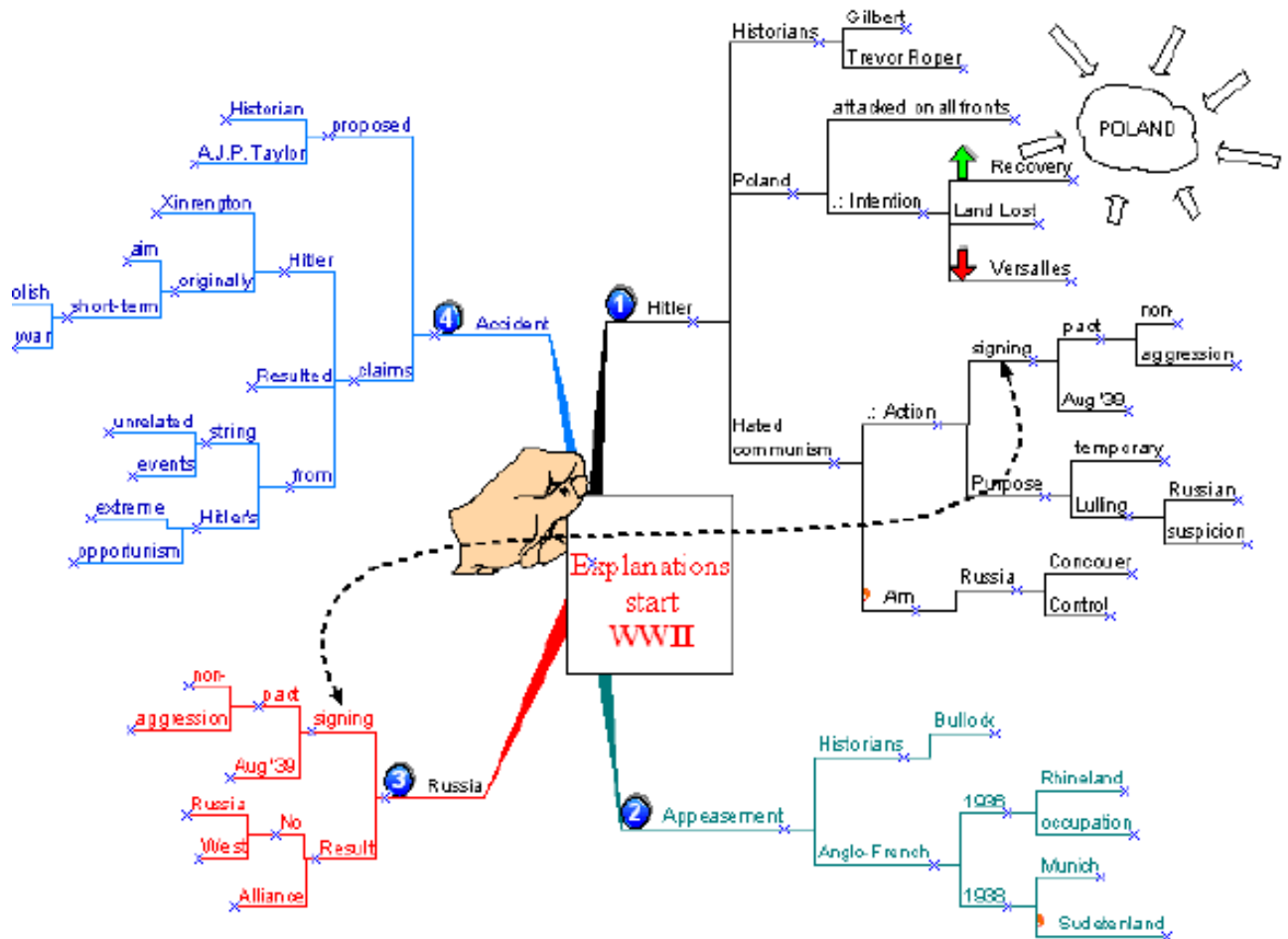
8. Make things stand out on the page so they stand out in your mind. (This doesn't show up well on a black and white photocopied booklet! You should use a different colour for each main branch and all its sub-branches)

9. Brainstorm ideas. Be creative.

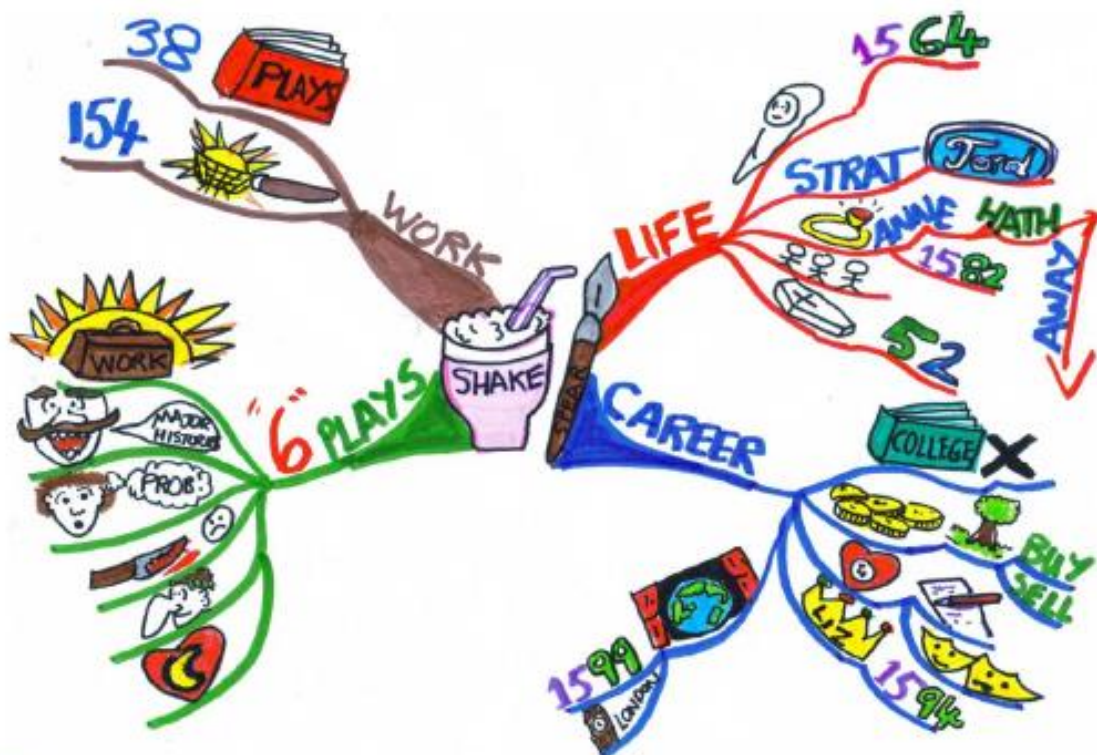


10. Design images you can relate to which will help you remember key information.

Mindmaps can be mostly text...



Or they can include more images (much easier to remember!) Look at this one summarising William Shakespeare's life..... (again – much better in colour!)



B: Read intelligently. Spend five minutes flipping through a book or your notes looking at headings and summaries. Then attempt to mind map what you have spotted and what you can remember.

C: Use 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 when faced with 'dead' time at bus stops or waiting for someone.



D: Physical learning: **Use the environment** Use a different room for each subject.

- ❖ Notice aspects of the environment such as the light or feel of the room - how do you feel in that place?
- ❖ Attach your notes to the furniture. Notice their location.
- ❖ Associate a different location with each subject. Associate furniture, windows, plants and ornaments with particular topics.

Using your clothes

- ❖ Associate items of clothing with topics in your learning - a shoe could represent one aspect of foreign policy; each button on a shirt could

represent a quotation. Clothes with patterns, pockets and buttons are especially useful.

Using the parts of your body

- ❖ Parts of your body are especially helpful as triggers to memory, as your body will be there in the exam room! For example, each hand could represent an essay plan - each finger one major topic; each segment of each finger a principal reference you would use. The fingernails could represent counterarguments; the knuckles could be associated with relevant quotations.

Use motor memory

- ❖ Study on the move. If you exercise, associate each movement with something you wish to remember. To refresh the memory, go through the exercise in your mind.
- ❖ Writing, drawing and speaking also use motor memory: the fine-muscle sequence is recorded by the brain.

Condense. Fitting notes onto one side of paper makes them easier to stomach, so rewrite and cut down as you go.

Highlight. Target key areas using colours and symbols. Visuals help you remember the facts.

Record. Try putting important points, quotes and formulae on tape. If you hear them and read them, they're more likely to sink in.



Talk. Read your notes out loud, it's one way of getting them to register.

Test. See what you can remember without notes, but avoid testing yourself on subjects you know already. Why not ask someone else to test you?

Time. Do past exam papers against the clock; it's an excellent way of getting up to speed and of checking where there are gaps in your knowledge.

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.



If the goal is to improve your long-term memory, then the key to success is based on the efficiency of input (the 'mental filing system' we employ). Reducing the burden on the limited short-term memory, and channelling information into long-term storage, is based on the creation of patterns and the avoidance of randomness.

- **'Chunking'**: as the average person can only hold seven 'items' in short-term memory, grouping items together into 'chunks' can increase capacity. This is generally used for remembering numbers (think of how you remember phone numbers by grouping the seven digits into 2 or 3 chunks) but can be applied to other listings in various subjects.
- **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 'cues' for recalling material in the future. Thus, new items are put in context. If you learn a new formula / verb / rule, try to put it into practice immediately with a relevant example.
- **Use of mnemonics**: these are various word games which can act as memory aids and which allow personalisation and creativity. Think of *stalagmites* (come down from the ceiling) and *stalagmites* (go up from the ground); the colours of the rainbow - **Roy G. Biv** ('Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain' to remember red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet); the seven characteristics of living organisms - **Mr. Grief** (**M**ovement, **R**eproduction, **G**rowth, **R**espiration, **I**rritability, **E**xcretion, **F**eeding). You can devise many more of these to aid your personalised recall of items in your subjects.



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 your GCSE papers:



1. Allow time to read the paper carefully

The importance of reading the paper carefully and choosing your questions wisely cannot be emphasised enough at this stage. The natural inclination 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 employ 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 elementary errors. These will sometimes have the potential to lose you a lot of valuable marks. Misreading the instruction on a question can render 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 the balancing item.

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 exam scripts are handed up 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

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



OTHER BITS!

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 cramming 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.
 - Food like pasties, chips and crisps are high in fat...keep them for treats.
- 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.



