



Efficient Revision – A Guide for Pupils

What is revision?

Revision is the process of preparing for exams. It has three aspects:

- Memorising content: for example, key facts and vocabulary
- Developing skills: for example, calculation, explanation and essay writing
- Refining understanding: normally when you uncover something when revising that you don't understand

You need to do a combination of all three aspects, and the mix will be different for each subject. The aspects feed into one another, something like this diagram.



This document explains the best way to undertake each of the three aspects, as well as giving some general revision tips. It also explains what revision help you should expect to receive from your teachers.

What is the best way to memorise content?

Research shows that the most effective way to memorise content is by practice testing. There are lots of ways you can do practice testing:

- Create flashcards with a question on one side and the answer on the other, then use these to self-test. Quizlet lets you do the same thing electronically.
- Work with a friend to ask one-another questions, make quizzes, or create 'fill the gap' exercises.
- Close your book and write everything you know on a topic, then check it.
- Use subject-specific websites to test yourself (e.g. Educake for science).
- Do past exam papers then mark against the mark scheme (this is also good for skills development, see below).

There are, of course, other approaches you can take to memorising content, for example, writing up summary notes. These are not wrong, but they are not the most efficient or effective way to memorise content because they are not active enough – it's too easy to do them without properly engaging your brain.

What is the best way to develop skills?

The best way to develop your exam skills is to answer practice questions. For structured questions (e.g. most science questions, short-answer questions in history, geography and RS) this is easy:

- Answer some questions (without your notes)
- Mark your answers using the mark scheme
- Try to understand why you got certain things wrong, and how you can fix this

For essay questions it is more difficult to practise, but it is possible:

- The best way is to write detailed essay plans in response to past questions
- Then mark these yourself or discuss them with your teacher
- Reading model essays, or those of a friend, can also be really valuable
- The key is to understand what makes a good essay in that subject (e.g. selection of evidence, depth of analysis, evaluation) and practise doing those things

What is the best way to refine my understanding?

You should understand most areas of the subject, but it is likely that as you revise you will find some areas you're less sure of. When this happens, you should:

- Look back at your notes and relevant marked work
- Look at your textbook, revision guide, or high-quality online content (your teacher may have recommended something)
- Go to a revision clinic or help club

Is there anything else I should do?

Make sure you eat well and get plenty of sleep. Revision is hard work and you need to give your brain the best treatment if you want it to perform. Staying physically active will also be a huge boost – even a 20-minute walk with your parents or the dog will help.

Remove distractions! A mobile phone, games console, or TV is just too tempting to have in your room when you're revising. Remove these or give them to a parent whilst you work. They need to be out of the room – putting your phone on silent simply doesn't work!

Is there any help for me?

Yes! Every subject issues revision guidance for pupils in Year 10 and below. Look out for this guidance and make sure you use it.

More generally, your teachers will always be happy to offer advice if you go and talk to them. And if you're worried or feeling overwhelmed, tell your form tutor or Head of Year as they will be able to help.

And finally...

Try not to worry! End of Year Exams are an important part of your learning, but they are only one part. If you follow this advice, revise well, and try your best then you will learn a lot from the process. Your final mark is much less important than what you learn along the way.