

What's the best way to revise?

- Different students swear by different approaches, but in every case the best bet is to help your child to set out a revision plan.
- Establish how much time they have available between now and the exams, and then draw up a realistic timetable together. Let your child decide what they need to focus on, this timetable belongs to them.
- In working out how much time they should devote to each subject, encourage them to concentrate on their weaknesses without losing sight of their strong points.
- Revision timetables are useful and effective tools that can help your child to prepare for exams and achieve the grades they deserve. Some people prefer A4 sized daily or weekly timetables whilst others prefer larger wall sized charts that cover a month long period.

All students have been giving a username and password for a website call GetRevising. This website has the facility to produce quality revision timetables.

As part of their revision plan, your child should make a topic or subject tick list, this way they can see what they need to cover revision wise before the exam.

- Encourage and support your child to stick to it! That way you can help them to keep track of how much work they have done and what they have left to cover.
- Choose a place in the house to revise where they won't be distracted.
- Also make all of your family members aware of the fact that your child will need some peace and quiet during this time, so they know not to disturb them.
- Switching revision between subjects avoids them becoming bored of a single topic.
- Look for fresh sources of info other than class notes. The internet, for example, offers some innovative learning resources.
- You can offer small 'rewards' after every revision session. Nothing extravagant, just a small treat to help them to get back to their books.

So you have set a revision plan together, what next?

- Ensure that your child avoids last-minute revision the night before. Instead, support them to complete their revision plan early.
- Ensure your child attends every day if possible. Even one lesson missed means that key information could be missing regarding coursework/deadlines.
- The simplest things often get in the way of starting revision – days can be lost while pupils are 'going to get some folders soon.....'. Get around this by providing the files, dividers, wall charts etc. your child will need for the revision period.

- Support your child in choosing one good revision guide for each subject; It's the best investment you will make. There are lots around so check with the teacher yourself if you are not sure which is best.

What are the common problems students face?

- Putting off revision, finding excuses to do other things or leaving all the work until the last minute. The fact is the more you delay, the more likely you are to get into a stew and panic.



- Perhaps the biggest problem surrounding revision and exams is stress. It can make even the most ardent reviser think they can't remember anything, and even lead to panic attacks.

So how should I help my child to deal with exam stress?

- Encourage them not to be frightened of exam stress, but to see it as a positive force – after all, it keeps them on their toes mentally, and can help them to focus on the task in hand.
- Learn to recognise when they are stressing out, and understand its causes. Often, a break or a chat with someone who knows the pressure they are under will get things into perspective.
- Make sure that they get a good nights sleep before each exam – it will be much easier for them to concentrate during the exam if they are not feeling too tired.
- Encourage them to eat healthily during their revision and exams: Plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Bananas are brilliant for brains.
- Avoid caffeine, it makes stress worse and it dehydrates their brains.



Useful equipment

Making sure your child has all the right equipment so they can get ready for their exam is also something you could really help with. Some things that your child could find very useful during their revision.

Fine-point coloured pens
 Highlighters
 Table Lamp
 Watch
 Calculator (scientific)
 Pin-board

Post-it-notes
 Note or record cards
 Notebooks
 Alarm clock
 Calendar
 Access to a computer and printer

Folders and files
 Revision guides
 Post exam papers
 Textbooks

Revision Strategies

It is important that students use a variety of revision techniques. The information that follows is from a variety of sources on different proven strategies students can use. It is important that students revise in a manner which suits them, whilst also ensuring they use a variety of methods. Looking at the same information in different way allows students to make links to other learning, which helps develop better understanding.

Use this information to support your child if they are struggling to come up with interesting ways to revision. Also use this as an expectation of what other students will be doing.

Revision Strategies – Past Papers

- Going through past question papers is very helpful. Your child can familiarise themselves with the format of the paper and the wording of the questions.
- Past papers may also act as a guide to the types of topic which crop up in the exam, but your child should not rely on this too much!
- They should practise making brief plans to answer the questions. Your child should not need to answer the question in full, but by going through what they know, selecting the most relevant material and ordering it coherently, they are practising a technique which will be used in the exams.

Some of the main reasons why students fail to gain the marks they hope for:

- Failing to answer the questions set.
- Misinterpreting the question, perhaps because they misread the instruction words or specialist terms.
- Not reading the instructions carefully.
- Not writing the answers in the way they are required.
- Not referring sufficiently or selectively to the course material.
- Running out of time, so that the final question is not answered in sufficient depth.
- Not checking through the paper carefully to avoid obvious mistakes, such as dates or simple mathematical calculations.
- Writing long, complex sentences where the meaning gets lost.
- Illegible handwriting.

Discuss these with your child and keep an eye out for them when they are practising.

The following pages are extracts from guidance material from an exam board. It goes some way to help have a better idea of the language used in exams and what the examiner is looking for.

The question you should ask your child is whether they understand these terms or not.

What are exam techniques?

Put simply, understanding exam techniques is not about what your child knows, but how it's applied under exam conditions. Whilst revision is a vital part to getting good exam results, examination technique is also important.

Skills relating to exam technique include:

- following instructions and responding appropriately to command words (see next page)
- writing using academic language suitable to the task
- using knowledge from different parts of the syllabus to answer specific questions.

Before we look at each of these in turn, it's important to understand how Assessment Objectives (AO) are used.

Your child's teacher will most probably discussed these within class so your child will have a common appreciation of what the objectives are. Exams test both your child's knowledge of the subject and the skills that they've obtained in demonstrating this knowledge.

It's important to know the proportion of marks awarded for each Assessment Objective.

Three common Assessment Objectives used in OCR's qualifications are:

- **Recall, select and communicate**

The meaning of this objective is straightforward: it tests the information and learning your child has acquired and how well they can comprehend meanings and interpret information in written or graphic form.

- **Apply knowledge, understanding and skills**

This objective requires your child to be able to recognise when and where the knowledge they have might be useful in real life. Application is the skill of being able to apply their knowledge to different contexts and circumstances in order to understand why problems and issues arise.

- **Analyse and evaluate**

Analysis covers a range of areas. It can involve:

- looking at a piece of data, a table, chart or diagram and interpreting it
- identifying trends
- identifying the elements that make up the problem, issue or case that you are considering.

Evaluation involves judgement and opinion. When your child evaluates they will make some comment about how important, significant or valuable something is. To be successful, your child will need to demonstrate that they have the confidence to make judgements based on their knowledge.



What are command words?

'Command words' are the guides in the question which identify which Assessment Objective (AO) is being targeted by that question. They are used carefully and the word order is chosen to make it clear what the examiner is looking for.

All exam questions go through a rigorous process of scrutiny to ensure that they provide your child with the best chance to show their knowledge and understanding.

Certain command words are associated with certain Assessment Objectives so it pays to have some idea of what these mean to inform your child which skill they should be focussing on in the question.

It is important to read the whole question and to understand what the question is getting at, as the command word on its own may need reinforcing with the remainder of the

question. A useful hint would be to highlight the command words in each question.

Below is a table with a list of command words associated with the relevant Assessment Objectives.

Assessment objective - Recall, select and communicate

- Define
- Describe
- Explain
- Give
- Identify
- Name
- Outline
- State
- What is meant by

Assessment objective - Apply knowledge, understanding and skills

- Apply
- Calculate
- Demonstrate
- Describe
- Examine
- Explain
- Give
- Give an example
- Graph
- Identify
- Name
- How
- Show how
- Using
- Using examples
- What would be the benefits/costs of
- What trends
- Which
- Why

Assessment objective - Analyse and evaluate

- Advise
- Analyse
- Assess
- Assess the relative importance
- Calculate
- Compare and contrast
- Consider
- Critically assess
- Discuss
- Evaluate
- Examine
- Explain
- Explain why
- Identify
- Justify
- Organise
- Predict
- Show how
- What
- What factors
- Which
- Why

You will notice that **certain words appear in more than one category**. This is where the rest of the question is important in giving your child the full picture of what is required.



Hints and tips in the exam – advice for your child

To support your child to prepare for the exam, share with them these hints and tips when sitting the exam

The first few minutes....

When the invigilator utters the magic words, 'You may now turn over the page', avoid the temptation to rush in. Adopt a calm, methodological approach by doing the following:

- read the instructions and make sure you understand them (e.g. how many questions from how many parts, how many questions in total, do the questions attract the same proportion of the marks?)
- write out your personal details
- read the whole paper, checking both sides of the page, so that you don't miss anything
- plan how you are going to use your time – allocate time for each question relating to the number of marks it has. Make a note of this plan and stick to it.

Selecting questions

Look for questions that relate to those parts of the course that you have revised. Read the questions carefully before you attempt to answer – what exactly is it asking? Does the question have more than one part? Make sure that you underline key words in the question – looking for the command words. Having done all this, is the question about what you think it is and do you still want to answer it if you have a choice?

Writing essay style questions in exam conditions

Answering essay style questions is both about the knowledge you hold and the way in which you use that knowledge.

Writing extended response answers in examinations is similar to writing essays. Spend a few moments planning your answer before you write it.

Think about the following points:

- You need to have a **structure**, with a proper introduction and conclusion, and cover points in an organised way. It may be best to write less on each point and leave out some of the background.
- You need to include **analysis of the points** being raised and reflect upon them critically. Show understanding of **different, and possibly opposing, points of view**. Read the question carefully.
- You must **demonstrate relevant knowledge** by using terms, ideas and concepts from the course. Evidence and examples are important ways of supporting the points you make. Always ask yourself, is what I am including relevant to the question?
- It is possible to **use quotes** (especially in Humanities subjects) or **make reference** to key thinkers in the field as part of your evidence. In an examination, you do not need to include a bibliography and references.

- Use proper sentences and paragraphs rather than bullet points. Keep your **writing concise**, but always spell words out properly and **never use 'texting' abbreviations**.

Above all, don't fill your answer with names and facts just for the sake of it. Make sure that everything you include is relevant to the question.

If your mind goes blank

- **Don't panic**
- If you have a plan you're less likely to go blank in the middle of a question, but should this still happen, go on to the next question and come back later to the one you were tackling
- Another way of avoiding these blank moments is to jot down notes whenever ideas come into your head in somewhere else on the examination paper
- One idea is to use the **SHEEP** technique which can often kick start your mind into remembering key facts. SHEEP stands for **S**ocial, **H**istorical, **E**nvironmental, **E**conomic, and **P**olitical - often you can remember ideas concerning the topic in hand once your mind filters these categories.

The weeks leading up to exam time is a time when your child will need a great deal of support.

For hints and tips on revision, preparing for the exam and a count down to the day, please download 'Supporting you child at exam time'.

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Look, cover, write, check.

This is an old and trusted technique that still works for many people:

- Revise a section of work
- Cover it up or put it aside
- Write it down or record as much as you can remember
- Check against the original
- Highlight anything you got wrong or forgot
- Prioritise these areas for future revision

Condense. Fitting notes onto one side of paper makes them easier to stomach; they should rewrite and cut down as they go.

Highlight. Target key areas using colours and symbols. Visuals will help them to remember the facts.

Record. Try recording important points, quotes and formulae on CD or ipod. If your child hears them and reads the notes as well, they're more likely to sink in.

Video. Use You Tube and Khan Academy on the internet to find short videos on difficult concepts.

Talk. Encourage your child to read their notes aloud; Its one way of getting them to register,

Test. See what they can remember without notes, but they should avoid testing themselves on subjects where there are gaps in knowledge.

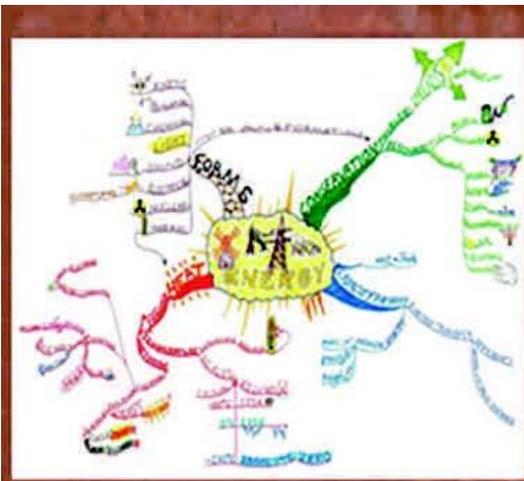
Time. Do past exam papers against the clock; it's an excellent way of getting up to speed and of checking where there are gaps in knowledge.

'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 stalactites (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



Mind Map It:

How does it work?

Mind maps help you to generate ideas and make associations. They can act as a powerful memory aid in an examination because they are visual. Mind maps are not spider diagrams.

- Use just key words, or wherever possible images.
- Start from the centre of the page and work out.
- Make the centre a clear and strong visual image of the general theme of the map. Be creative. Creativity aids memory
- Put key words on lines. This reinforces the structure of notes.
- Print rather than write in script. It makes them more readable and memorable.
- Use colour to depict themes, associations and to make things stand out.



Index cards

How does it work?

Index Cards: many students find these highly effective revision aids allowing them to break down information into smaller units under key headings. Some students write a key word or point on one side of the card and an explanation on the other side. This allows them to read through the key points using them to trigger memory before checking accuracy of recall on the other side. Index cards are useful as they allow sorting and grouping of ideas in different ways and make it easy for other people to test out your knowledge.

flashcard

A card used to aid rote memorization. One side of the card contains data of one kind, or a question, and the other side contains the associated response which one wants to memorize.

Draw It: Posters, Diagrams, Cartoons

How does it work?

Take a topic and turn your notes into a poster or annotated diagram, with lots of illustrations and colour. Alternatively, create a cartoon strip version of your subject. Add speech bubbles and comments to explain what is going on in each picture.

Your brain often remembers pictures and colours better than words, so you're only tapping in to part of your learning power if you rely on written methods. Display your posters in parts of your home where you're likely to see them. For example by your bed or next to a mirror!



Acrostic Method

How does it work?

The Acrostic Method works by linking words and concepts to sentences that will stick in your mind. Simply list the words you need to learn, then take the first letter of each and think of alternative words that begin with those letters. Choose words that link together to make a memorable sentence.

This method works particularly well when you have a list to learn. An extra advantage is that it helps you to remember things in order- which is sometimes important.

Take the time to invent sentences that you really won't forget- make them as funny and imaginative as you can!



Making mind maps

Mind maps are a way of organising ideas about a topic. A mind map usually starts with a central idea with a series of branches, each relating to one aspect of the main idea. These lead to other branches and so it goes on.

A mind map allows you to see the whole topic on one sheet of paper. And making the mind map helps you learn both the detail and the big picture of a topic.

There are some excellent software packages for creating mind maps – many of them free – but creating your own by hand is just as good.

→ What are mind maps and how can they be used for revision?

Five things to do with mind maps

1 Stick them up somewhere in your house where you sit and dream – maybe your bedroom walls or ceiling – even the toilet!

2 Illustrate some of the points on your mind map with some silly pictures – they will help you remember the point.

3 Spend some time learning the mind map, turn the paper the other way up and see if you can remember it well enough to copy.

4 Use mind maps to plan essays – put the title in the centre, then have one branch for each key point and use further branches to develop those points.

5 Get together with a friend and make mind maps together using lots of colour and pictures.

use the biggest sheet of paper you can get

Using different colours can make them easier to remember.

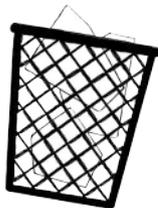
A mind map about revision has been started on the next page. Use your knowledge of revision to complete it.

Revision

catch up on notes
I've missed

throw away everything
I don't need

Get my notes organised



get old exam papers
and mark schemes

check specifications

Understand my exams

Make my own revision materials



Stay healthy during revision

drink lots of water



Making revision cards

Revision cards are among the most popular revision resources. The idea is that you summarise some information on a single blank postcard or note card (front and back if necessary). Several different types are available from stationers or you can make them online at www.getrevising.co.uk. You then use the card for revision.

→ What are revision cards and how can they be used?

Five things to do with revision cards

1

Write questions on one side and answers on the other – then test yourself or ask someone else to test you.

2

Write key names or terms on one side and a summary of what they wrote or the definition on the other side.

3

Write the advantages of something on one side and the disadvantages or criticisms on the other.

4

Write about something in reasonable detail on one side and use the other side to summarise its key points as a short list (no more than five points).

5

Discuss a subject with a few friends and decide what sort of cards would be most useful. Divide the subject up into sections and make each person responsible for making revision cards for one or more sections. Meet up when the cards are made and revise from the cards together, for example by testing each other.

ACTIVITY

Imagine you need to revise the following information.

The dance style primarily associated with hip hop is 'breaking', which appeared in New York City during the early 1970s. Funk styles, such as popping and locking, evolved separately in California in the 1960s-70s. In the late 1980s, as hip hop music took new forms, new dance styles began appearing. Most of them were danced in an upright manner in contrast to breaking (with has more ground moves), but overall they contributed a lot to later hip hop styles, and heavily influenced the development of house dancing. During the 1990s and 2000s, parallel with the evolution of hip hop music, hip hop dancing evolved into heavier and more aggressive forms. All hip hop styles from the 1980s and beyond are sometimes collectively called new school while the distinct styles from the 1960-70s, are considered old school. However, this classification is controversial.

Source: www.wikipedia.org

Complete this revision card (which has been started) following the advice provided.

A clear title for the card

Hip hop dance

1. Important dates

- 1960s - funk styles start in California
- early 1970s - breaking started in New York
- late 1980s - new upright styles
- 1990s/2000s - heavier forms emerge

2. Styles

3.

Information broken down into three chunks

Complete the information on 'styles' using sub-headings

Add the third sub-heading to cover some different information

The card can be improved by:

adding any relevant links to other topics

using colour

adding diagrams or pictures

checking understanding – for example, it may be necessary to find out why the old school/new school classification 'is controversial'