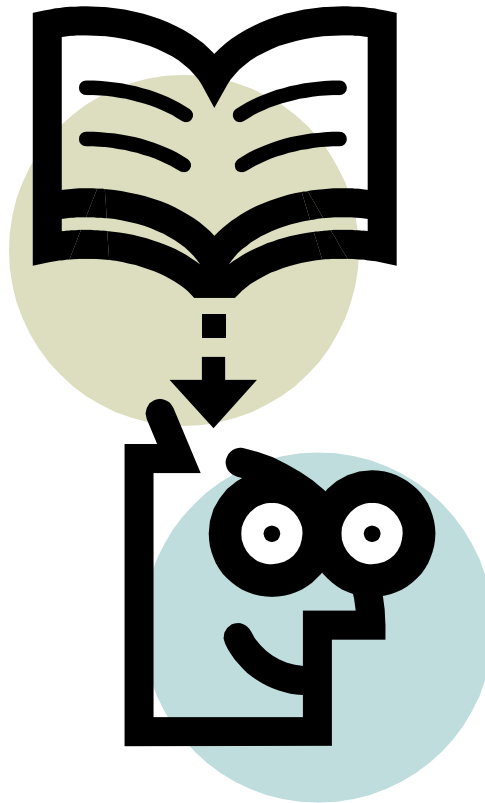


REVISION

TIPS FOR

PARENTS



## APPENDIX A

This leaflet is designed to guide and inform parents (and pupils) on some of the key aspects of revising for external examinations. Here we will look at:

- How to prepare for revision
- Different methods of revision
- How a parent can assist the revision process

Many of the tips and advice given are from personal and professional experience as well as research into relevant and current literature on the matter.

All topics covered may be further discussed by contacting Miss McManus (Head of Year 11) at Bishop Walsh on 0121 351 3215.

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

### Designing a Revision Timetable

One of the first activities your child should do before they start revision is to highlight the topics for each subject that they will sit an exam in. It would then be useful to put these topics in some form of rank order, putting those areas that they find hardest and least interesting first.

This will then give them an idea as to how much revision they have. At this point they should draw up a revision timetable. During half terms and study leave they should be planning to use full days, whilst at school however, they should designate evenings slots only.

Firstly design a template that will be used with time slots of one hour maximum (see appendix A for a blank example during half term). Each subject must be divided up equally allowing equal amount of revision to all subjects. An exception to this occurs when your child demonstrates exceptionally good understanding in one subject and poor in another. Here extra time will be allocated to the weaker area.

Once the timetable has been designed, it is important to then refer back to the rank order of topics within each subject. Those topics that were put at the top of the list, i.e. those that are more difficult, should be revised first. If these are left until last then the pupil will find it very difficult to then motivate themselves to revise it thoroughly.

## Where to Revise

Now that the revision timetable and plan of action are in place it is important to create a space and environment to revise. It is strongly suggested that your child has ONE designated area where they will revise. Here they can store all their books and equipment so that everything is always at hand.

The space needs to be away from all other forms of entertainment including television, radio, mobile 'phones and computers. A desk that is big enough for a few books and paper is essential and it would be very beneficial if this space could be left when a revision session ends, i.e. a dining room table that needs to be constantly cleared for meals will cause constant inconvenience to all.

Finally the location of the desk is just as important as the conditions surrounding the desk. It is important that the area is well lit and aired, with a constant or at least regular fresh air supply. Some pupils might find it beneficial to have posters or motivational quotes dotted around. These are designed to re-focus them when they feel they are struggling or losing concentration.

## Final Preparations.

Now you have a working area and a positive learning environment the final stage is to ensure that your child has all the necessary books with plenty of plain and lined paper at hand as well as an extensive range of stationary. The last thing they need to be worrying about from this point in is finding a pen that works!!

SO..... NOW WE ARE ORGANISED AND PREPARED.....

**LET THE REVISION BEGIN!!!!**

## HOW TO REVISE

Everyone has their own way of revising. There are many different ways to re-cover previously learned information and each individual will respond differently to each style. Throughout year 10 and 11 mocks and in the run up to the final GCSE examinations it is imperative that your child tries as many different methods of retaining and applying the information as possible. Eventually they will find a method that suits them best but it is suggested that a variety is best as it keeps it fun and interesting.

Here I will highlight some of the main methods of revising. Where possible all should be applied to each topic in order to secure a deeper understanding.

As mentioned earlier each subject should now have a rank order of the topics to be covered, starting with the hardest first. For each topic it is essential that your child makes a full set of notes on the key areas, highlighting key terms, definitions and theories. Doing this from the start will allow them to identify any concepts that they do not understand which then gives them time to contact their teacher to ask for clarification on the matter.

These notes should be kept in a folder safe until a complete set has been made for that subject. Nearer the exams these notes can then be condensed further and further again until they are brief enough to put on cue cards which can then be used as a final refresher nearer the exam.

Note making does not always need to take the form of written words or constant streams of words. Bullet points, pictures, spider and flow diagrams offer alternative ways of re-covering the information and often in a more detailed and interesting way.

This process is the most common and an excellent pre-cursor to all other types. It is important for the pupil to realise that whilst note making usually starts from looking at classwork and textbooks, it is also beneficial to use research on the internet. There are many different

educational websites available which take directive from the examination board as to what information they publish. One good example of this is GCSE Bitesize. They cover all exam boards, all subjects and all topics. They use different and interactive methods of helping pupils revise by explaining the information, offering tests and also by having educational games.

There are also several subject specific sites (e.g. [www.schoolshistory.org.uk](http://www.schoolshistory.org.uk)) which follow a similar pattern. Again, although they may cover the same information, it allows your child to experience an alternative way of revising the topic.

Towards the end of their revision it would be extremely beneficial for your child to practise some exam questions. These are available on some subject examination websites (e.g. [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)) as well as from their teachers at school. All they have to do is ask! It would also help if they had a copy of the mark scheme so that they could mark their paper/questions afterwards and see where they went wrong.

Finally, once they have tried a variety of the above methods they may find paired work useful. Either with a peer, sibling or parent they should be asked questions relating to a variety of topics. When doing this with a peer it often sparks a discussion or debate that will highlight any areas that they do not understand or areas that need further revision.

Pupils may find they will use a variety of these methods and some of their own. The aim is to cover all relevant information and have a practice at applying this to different scenarios and ensuring they feel confident of their understanding of the topics.

## WHEN AND WHERE TO REVISE

In the first section of this booklet I have described in detail about the location and surroundings of the revision station. It is also imperative to remember that whilst it is important that they are somewhere quiet and isolated, it also needs to be somewhere where you, as the parent, can access and monitor without disrupting them.

The revision timetable should already be divided into one hour slots, this automatically lends itself to allowing regular intervals and breaks. It is important to encourage the pupil that after one hour of work they should take some time out before starting the next topic (see the next chapter for more details on how you can supervise this).

The timing of revision is also important. If a pupil is revising late before an exam then it has a negative effect. This scenario applies extra stress, reduces relaxing and sleeping time; and often overloads the brains capabilities meaning that much of the information studied will be lost. At the same time getting up very early in the morning to do last minute revision is of no use. This is not to say that a quick read over brief notes before an exam is a bad idea, as this will actually be a good practice for them to refresh themselves.

## SO WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT TO HELP?

The role of the parent in revision is an important one and it's all about the quality of support as oppose to the quantity. Too much involvement will cause distraction and may increase pressure levels and too little involvement may allow panic to set in as well as the your child feeling very stranded and in need of help.

Below are some key suggestions and ideas of ways that you as a parent can support your child.

- 1) Always appear interested in their revision; ask them questions about the topic they are doing; ask them how they are getting on with specific subjects that you know they struggle with and any other general questions about them as well as the subjects.
- 2) Supply them with all their stationary needs, checking that they have enough pens, pencils, colours, highlighters etc.
- 3) Monitor they are following their revision timetable to ensure that subject areas are not missed out.
- 4) Monitor that they are taking regular breaks; this can be done by visiting their study area every hour with a drink and snack. This will increase motivation as it gives them something to work towards. It also offers a reminder that an hour has gone by and that they may need a temporary break and perhaps a change of subject...as stated in their revision timetable.
- 5) Monitor that they are eating healthily by providing regular and nutritious meals and monitor that they are getting enough sleep. One way of doing this is to ban revision from a set time onwards.
- 6) During scheduled breaks of an hour or more, offer them the opportunity to get out of the house for a while. It may be to go the shops, walk the dog or visit a friend or family member. You may



choose over the weekend to design a family fun activity that completely shifts the focus off exams, i.e. going swimming, ice skating or visit a local fair etc. The more physical the activity is the better, as exercise will reduce stress levels and make them feel better about themselves. It will also give them more energy.

- 7) Use praise regularly but only when it is deserved. Tell them that they are doing well and why they are doing well. Give them regular rewards but do not go over board as this will have a negative effect as they will learn to expect the reward, even when it is not deserved.
- 8) Your child will need guidance on how to revise but it is likely that they will find a method that suits them best. Avoid criticising them or telling them what to do as this may lead to unnecessary confrontation during a stressful time.

AND FINALLY.....

If you or your child needs further help then DO NOT PANIC, there are plenty of places or people to turn to for help. Teachers at school are available all week and are willing to answer any question, no matter how big or how small!!!!

Now, good luck to everyone!! Remember early revision is the first step to success and if in doubt...ASK!!!!

N. McManus

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