

Planning your revision

Few subjects cause so much stress as revision. The key to success in exams and revision often lies in the right planning. Knowing what you need to do and when you need to do it is your best path to a stress-free experience. The following tips will help you to ensure that you are as prepared as you can be.

Tip 1: Get yourself organised

Before you can start to work out what you need to revise, it is wise to first get all your materials together. It is useful to check that they are complete and organised in the right order that might be by topic, unit or the order in which you learnt them in class.

Tip 2: Identify your strengths and weaknesses

It is important that you are aware of your own strengths and weaknesses. Maybe you missed certain sessions during the year. Maybe you always find a specific topic quite difficult. Maybe the material you covered back in September is just a distant memory now. It is obvious that you should spend more time on the bits that you find difficult than on the bits that you find easy. Unfortunately, most of us are tempted to do the exact opposite!

To clearly identify your strengths and weaknesses you can do the following things:

- For each topic that you have studied, take the relevant multiple-choice question test in 'Know Zone'. If you get a question wrong, go back and look at the relevant section of your Student Book. Make a note of these areas as this is a weakness area that you will need to spend time on.
- Work through the end-of-topic checklists in your Student Book. Remember that you must be honest with yourself. If you don't fully understand an area, then highlight it as a weakness that you need to spend time on.
- Use your mock examination results and/or any further tests that are available to you.
- Make sure you do not just identify strengths and weaknesses in your knowledge of the content but also in terms of exam technique and skills – what aspects of the assessment objectives are you weakest on, for example? Make sure that you build coverage of these into your revision plan.

Tip 3: Set your goals

All of the above tasks will help you to plan your personal revision effectively by putting a little more time into your weaker areas. Once you have identified your strengths and weaknesses then you are ready to set your goals.

Use your 'Handy revision planner' to highlight any areas that you have identified as a weakness. It is now your goal to actively get to grips with this material!

Tip 4: Divide up your time and plan ahead

The sessions in the revision planner can be as long as you want them to be. In general, a series of 30-minute or 40-minute sessions followed by 10-minute or 15-minute breaks is advisable. You can also 'sit' your sessions when it suits you. Some people work better in the morning; in this case you would want most of your sessions to be sat before lunch.

Be realistic in how much time you can devote to your revision, but also make sure you put in enough time. Give yourself regular breaks or different activities to give you some variety. Revision need not be a prison sentence! Make sure you have one weekend/day when you don't do revision or think about exams – you'll come back to it refreshed.

Now, you need to plot on the revision planner the exact date that you will start your revision and also the date of your exam. To find out the date of your exam, follow these simple steps:

1. Go to www.edexcel.com
2. Select 'I am a...' from the top menu bar
3. Choose Student
4. Choose Timetables
5. Choose UK GCSE

Also note any dates that you will be unable to revise so that you can get an exact picture of how much revision you will be able to do before you sit the exam.

Tip 5: Know what you are doing

Get to grips with the course content and skills by doing the following:

- Make sure you know what the assessment objectives against which you will be measured are and what they mean. For more information on this, study the 'Guidance on answering exam questions' in the Exam Zone.
- Get to know the command words that will give you a guide as to what assessment objective/s you are expected to demonstrate.
- Make time for considering how topics interrelate.

You can use the Know Zone revision sections to kick-start your revision.

Tip 6: Be honest

The first step in organising your revision is to make yourself a promise to be honest with yourself about how much time you have spent actually revising and how much time you have spent organising your files, looking at Facebook and doodling in the margin of your file.

There is no time target here. 'How long do I need to revise for?' is a meaningless question, to which the irritating but correct answer is 'As long as it takes you to secure the appropriate knowledge and understanding'.

Tip 7: Concentrate on what you are doing

Concentration levels vary from person to person and from time to time. Some of us revise more effectively early in the morning, when there are fewer distractions. Few of us concentrate well when everyone else is out having fun or when we are tired, hungry and emotional. It is important to understand what is best for you, and stick to it.

Remember, too, that to fully concentrate on the task at hand, it is wise to ensure that the location that you choose to work helps your learning. For example, can you concentrate with the television blaring and your brother or sister constantly interrupting you? If not, then remove yourself from the lounge and go to your bedroom, or the dining room, perhaps, where you can sit more comfortably at a table.

Make sure that you get the most out of each revision session by keeping distractions to a minimum. Tell your family about your revision time – and ask them for help if you need it. They can help keep distractions to a minimum.

Tip 8: Revise actively

Have a pen in your hand, jot down notes on revision cards, make concept maps or fact-files, or make comments in the margins of your marked work. It doesn't really matter which way you approach your revision, just so long as you are taking an active part in the process. This will stop you 'switching off' mentally. Some of us learn best by watching material, and YouTube and other providers have a lot of very useful 5-minute clips. If you use them, bookmark them for future reference, and note down the key dates, times and impacts.

If you use previous answers to revise from – either your own or 'model' answers – please remember that although you can learn a good deal from reviewing this material it is very unlikely that you will be asked identical questions in the examination – similar, perhaps, but not identical. Try to make a list of related questions, and think how you might adjust your answer accordingly. Make a note of any doubts that you have about this process to follow up in class.

Tip 9: Check your own progress

Throughout the revision process make sure that you are actually making progress by testing yourself from time to time. If it is just facts and figures that you need to test then get someone to help you by testing you as you go along. If it is processes and key ideas that you need to test then write down your points and cross-check with the textbook and other written materials.

Make sure you allow time for assessing progress against your initial self-assessment. Measuring progress will allow you to see and celebrate your improvement, and these little victories will build your confidence for the final exam. At the end of every revision day look at the goals that you set and assess how far you have achieved that goal. If you haven't learnt all of material that you had wanted, then you will need to update your revision planner by moving content across to the next day. You must ensure that moving revision content from one day to the next doesn't become a habit otherwise you will end up with all of your course content in the day before your exam! Finally, if you have achieved your revision session's objective, make sure that you give yourself a tick in the given box – this is the best bit!

Tip 10: Follow the plan

Finally, follow the plan. Good Luck!