



Supporting Revision at Bishop Wordsworth's School

There are two key aspects to successful performance in examinations:

- Effective Revision and
- Good examination technique

This booklet will try and provide suggestions and ideas that will help you perfect your performance in both these important areas.

Effective Revision

|| To be effective, revision must be:

|| **Active** - always work with a pen and paper, look for key points, test yourself.

|| Never just sit down and read for a set period. Focus on tasks, not time. If you just read notes you'll only retain about 10% of the information.

|| **Organised** - always ask yourself at the start of a study session "what do I want to have completed in this session?" Have a plan for what you want to cover this week and this month. Have an overview of the priority areas in each subject.

Getting Organised:

In order to revise successfully you need to first make sure you have answered the following questions:

- **Where?**

Find a fixed place to study (a particular desk/room at home, a spot in the library, etc.) that becomes firmly associated in your mind with productive work. All the equipment and materials you need should be within easy reach. Try and ensure that distracting objects - phones, computers, video games, TVs etc are not in easy reach!

- **What?**

Draw up a revision timetable that ensures you know exactly what you are going to revise and when. Remember that it's all about being active and *focused on tasks, not time!* Know at the start of a session what you want to have completed by the end of the period. Make the tasks specific and realistic, not vague and large.

- **How?**

Always work with a pen and paper at the ready. Getting started is often the most difficult bit, so start by 'doing'. It usually helps to begin with a subject you like and then move on to other less favoured areas.

- **Why?**

Test your progress at the end of a study session. Ask yourself "what have I just learned?" Review the material covered in your revision session. Merely recognising material isn't enough - you must be able to reproduce it without the aid of the book or notes.

Writing a Revision Timetable

w/b 4 Feb	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
4.00pm	Homework	Homework	Homework	Homework	Activity
5.00pm	Mathematics	English	French	Science	History
6.00pm	Eat/Leisure	Eat/Leisure	Eat/Leisure	Eat/Leisure	Eat/Leisure
7.00pm	Science	History	Mathematics	English	Geography
8.00pm	Activity	Geography	Activity	French	Activity

There is no set way of writing a revision timetable and how you do it will be down to you but in order for it to be successful you will need to ensure you do the following:

- Include all your subjects and spread them out giving equal importance to those that you find more difficult.
- Use the revision checklists for each subject to decide what you will revise in each of that subject's timetabled slots.
- Ensure that each revision slot is not too long 30-40 minutes and include a 5 minute break between each slot.
- Build in time for eating/regular leisure activities/exercise
- Plan your revision so that you have time to re-visit material you have learnt in a previous session - this will really help you to remember it in the future.
- Most importantly - try to stick to your timetable but don't be totally inflexible. If something unexpected happens one day and you are unable to complete all the revision slots, just make sure you catch up as soon as you can.

How should I revise?

Try one of these revision strategies.....



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)



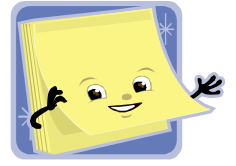
9. Brainstorm ideas. Be creative.

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



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

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



F: Record. Try recording important points, quotes and formulae on an MP3 player or an IPAD. If you hear them and read them, they're more likely to sink in.

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

H: 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?

I: Look/cover/write/check - Read a small section of notes, then cover it over and try and write out what you remember. Finally check how much you have got right.

J: Test: With a friend or family member - each create revision questions and answers and then test each other.

K: Post-its - Write keywords and concepts on post-its or posters and stick them around your room/house - When you see the post-its/poster test yourself to see if you remember their meaning.

L: Use online revision aids - eg BBC Bitesize - These are often good for testing already learnt material but beware of spending hours searching for good websites instead of revising.

Overall the most important thing to do is to try a variety of techniques - this will keep revision interesting and encourage you to keep going.

Help your Memory

Looking over a topic every now and then will help to keep it in the memory, taking away the need to cram before exams.

Make a summary of the work and look over it ten minutes later, the next day, the next week and then the next month for a few minutes each time. This reinforces the knowledge learned.

Understanding increases as time spent studying passes. However, the ability to recall things being memorised becomes progressively less efficient as time passes in a study session.

20 minutes is needed for the mind to get into the rhythm of and flow of the material. Any more than 40 minutes spent memorising means that memory declines to a point where it is no longer valuable.

The answer in revision lessons therefore is to do 30 minutes with a 5-minute stretch break and then review the topic.

After a one hour memorising session:

10 minutes later revise the topic for 10 minutes

1 day later revise the topic for 5 minutes

1 week later revise the topic for 2-5 minutes

1 month later revise the topic for 2-5 minutes

Before exams revise the topic as required.

Each time knowledge is reinforced; it enters deeper into the long-term memory and becomes more stable.

Summary - Top Ten Revision Tips

1. Short bursts of revision (30-40 minutes) are most effective. Your concentration lapses after about an hour and you need to take a short break (5-10 minutes).
2. Find a quiet place to revise - your bedroom, school, the library - and refuse to be interrupted or distracted.
3. Make sure you don't just revise the subjects and topics you like. Work on your weaker ones as well.
4. Make your own revision notes because you will remember what you have written down more easily. Stick key notes to cupboards or doors so you see them every day.
5. Re-write the key points of your revision notes; read them out loud to yourself. We remember more than twice as much of what we say aloud than of what we merely read.
6. Use different techniques. Make your own learning maps, use post-it notes to write key words on, create flash cards. Record your notes on an MP3 player and listen to them back. Ask friends and family to test you. Use highlighter pens to mark important points. Chant or make up a song.
7. Practise questions. Initially do one section at a time and progress to doing an entire paper against the clock.
8. You will need help at some stage, ask parents, siblings and teachers. Use websites specifically designed for revision.
9. **Don't get stressed out!** Eat properly and get lots of sleep!
10. **Believe in yourself and be positive.** If you think you can succeed you will; if you convince yourself that you will fail, that's what will probably happen.



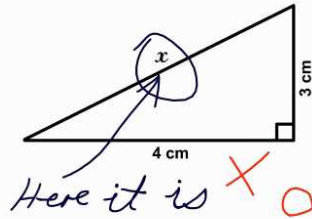
Good Examination Technique

These are the **biggest mistakes** that students have made in the past, you try and avoid these :

- **Not reading the paper correctly**

You have your pre-prepared answer ready for a question but you don't look at the exact terms of the question and therefore supply the wrong information in your answer.

3. Find x .



- **Not finishing the paper**

Mis-managing your time within the exam can easily cost you a full grade. The biggest exam 'crime' is to leave suitable questions unanswered. **Remember: it is much easier to get the first 20% of the marks for any question than the last 5%.** Therefore, if you find yourself stuck for time as you struggle through your third answer out of five, do not spend your remaining time extending and perfecting that answer. Instead, move on to questions four and five, even if your attempt is sketched or in point form. If you have answered only three questions instead of five, the highest mark you can get is 60%.

- **Ignoring the marking scheme**

You must take the marking scheme into account when you allocate time to each question or part of a question. If the marks allotted to a question clearly indicate that a few paragraphs are sufficient, do not write an essay on the subject. Avoid writing everything you know about a topic - just give the appropriate information.

- **Repetition**

Make the point once. There are no extra marks for restating facts, even if you phrase them differently. Examiners say repetition is a very common mistake.

- **Missing part of a question**

Sometimes, part of a question can be carried onto the next page and, in the pressure of the moment, you don't see it. Always take time to familiarise yourself with the whole paper before you start answering it.

- **Rough work**

Include your rough work with your exam script - you might get some credit for formulae or calculations contained therein.

Top Tips on Exam Strategy

- **Get a good night's sleep**

Having a mind that is refreshed, alert, and ready to respond to circumstances will be a great benefit.



- **Arrive in plenty of time:** To perform well on the day, you need to be relaxed and to feel in control of the situation.

- **Have your equipment ready**

Each exam has its own requirements. Apart from properly functioning pens, pencils, rulers, etc, you may need a calculator for the Maths or Science exam. Drawing pencils may be required for diagrams in some subjects. A lot of nervous energy can be expended on last-minute hassle if these items aren't checked in advance.



- **Think positively**

On the day of the exam, remind yourself of the material you know well, the revision you have completed, all the practice exam questions done, the good grades achieved rather than dwelling on areas of weakness.

- **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.

- **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. Be disciplined with your time. Always leave a few minutes at the end to check over your answers thoroughly.

- **Attempt all 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!

- **Beware of post-exam analysis**

The more you participate in the exam post-mortem, the more confused and disheartened you are likely to become. You can't change what has happened, you can only focus on the present and this will need your full attention.

Some key terms used in examination questions

<p>Account for Explain the process or reason for something being the way it is.</p>	<p>Conclude Decide after reasoning something out.</p>
<p>Analyse Explore the main ideas of the subject, show they are important and how they are related.</p>	<p>Distinguish Explain the difference.</p>
<p>Calculate Find out using mathematics.</p>	<p>Enumerate Make a list of the points under discussion.</p>
<p>Comment on Discuss the subject, explain it and give an opinion on it.</p>	<p>Estimate Guess the amount or value.</p>
<p>Compare Show the similarities (but you can also point out the differences).</p>	<p>Explain Describe, giving reasons and causes.</p>
<p>Complete Finish off.</p>	<p>Express Put the ideas into words.</p>
<p>Discuss Explore the subject by looking at its advantages and disadvantages (i.e. for and against). Attempt to come to some sort of judgement.</p>	<p>Evaluate Give an opinion by exploring the good and bad points. It's a bit like asking you to assess something. Attempt to support your argument with expert opinion.</p>
<p>Concise Short and brief.</p>	<p>Factors The fact or circumstances that contribute to a result.</p>
<p>Contrast Show the differences ~ compare and contrast questions are very common in exams – they want you to say how something is similar and how it may be different too.</p>	<p>Criticise Analyse and then make a judgement or give an opinion. You could show both the good and bad points. You could refer to an expert's opinion within this question.</p>
<p>Give an account of Describe.</p>	<p>Give reasons for Use words like <i>because</i> in your answer as you will be explaining how or why something is that way.</p>
<p>Define Give the meaning. This should be short.</p>	<p>Identify Recognise, prove something as being certain.</p>
<p>Describe Give a detailed account.</p>	<p>Illustrate Show by explaining and giving examples.</p>
<p>Differentiate Explore and explain the difference.</p>	<p>Indicate Point out, make something known.</p>

Interpret Explain the meaning by using examples and opinions.	Relate Show the connection between things.
Justify Give a good reason for offering an opinion.	State Write briefly the main points.
List An item-by-item record of relevant images. This would normally be in note form without any need to be descriptive.	Summarise Give the main points of an idea or argument. Leave out unnecessary details that could cloud the issue.
Outline Concentrate on the main bits of the topic or item. Ignore the minor detail.	Trace Show how something has developed from beginning to end.
Prove Give real evidence, not opinion, which proves an argument and shows it to be true.	

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. Check over your answers. Look out for mistakes.
12. At the end of the exam re-read the questions and your answers and make any necessary corrections.



Dealing With Distractions

"I just start daydreaming"

Become an active learner. Always work with a pen and paper. Focus on a specific task, not a specified time for your study.

"I can't focus because I'm anxious about the exams"

Try to limit yourself to your immediate concerns, the things you have some control over (preparation for the upcoming revision test) rather than the things you cannot determine (like what questions the examiners will choose for this year's Chemistry paper.)

"I often fall asleep when I'm supposed to be studying"

Try to get to bed on time over the coming weeks. A tired brain is very unproductive. Get some genuine rest at the weekend. Be sure to get regular exercise, even just a walk around the block at night to clear your head.

"I'm constantly interrupted by other people"

Study in the location most likely to offer peace and quiet. Ask for consideration from family members over the final run up to exams. Never have a TV, phone, computer game, or music system within arm's reach while you are trying to work. Make a rule of not taking phone calls within certain defined periods.

"I keep thinking of other things while I'm studying"

Divide the study session into smaller, short-range goals which demand your full attention e.g. vocabulary or poetry test. Keep a 'reminder pad' beside you, a little notebook to jot down something that strikes you (someone to call, a job to do, etc.) and deal with it after the study period. Having made a note of it, you can more easily re-focus on your work.