



Achieving your Potential

Key Stage 4

The first step to succeeding at Key Stage 4 and in your GCSE exams is by making sure you are doing everything you should be during and for your lessons.

Make sure you can answer yes to the following questions for **all** your subjects.

If you can't, that's your first target for improvement!

- *When you enter the classroom, do you get settled and started straight away?*
- *Do you always have the equipment you need for your lessons with you?*
- *During the lesson, are you focussed 100% of the time?*
- *Are you an active (rather than passive) learner?*
- *Do you contribute during whole class discussions/group and pair work?*
- *Do you always try your best, even if it's difficult?*
- *Does your behaviour allow everyone in the class to learn?*
- *Do you ensure you self-assess work when you can, using green pen to make corrections?*
- *Do you respond to all teacher feedback (either verbal or written) as fully as possible?*
- *Do you always complete your homework on time and to the best of your ability?*
- *Do you seek clarification if you don't understand something?*

However, just doing the above doesn't guarantee that you will achieve the highest grades/the grades that you want in your GCSEs. **You also need to study independently.** The rest of this document is dedicated to helping you do this as effectively and as efficiently as possible.

Also, don't forget that it's really important to have a healthy school-life balance!

Make sure you take time to:

- Get enough sleep
- Eat well and drink lots of water
- Exercise regularly
- Spend time with family and friends
- Partake in some extra-curricular activities
- Take some time for yourself!

Independent Study at Key Stage 4

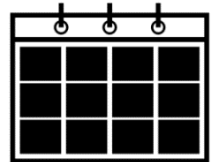
For many students, studying for their GCSEs is the first time that they've really had to buckle down and do some serious systematic work to achieve the best that they can.

Luckily, cognitive science and general experience has shown that there are some common approaches that can be applied to most (if not all) subjects.

There are four main steps to an excellent study strategy:

1. Plan

Work out what you need to revise and when you need to revise it by. Organise yourself and get your revision resources ready.



2. Understand

Strengthen your understanding of content by reviewing skills and content. Capture what you know in a way you can use to help you learn later.



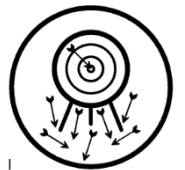
3. Learn

This is the hardest part. Learn the key facts and information off by heart, so you can recall it with ease in the exam. This will free up space in your working memory, allowing you to tackle questions that are more complex.



4. Practise

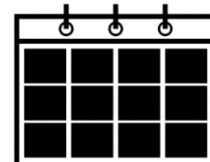
Apply what you know to exam style questions. Solidify your knowledge and master your skills through using the concepts that you have learned both familiar and unfamiliar contexts.



To achieve the best grade that you can, you need to complete all four of these steps – there are no short cuts! However, each subject will require different levels of each step; for example, Maths may require more practise, whilst English Language might need more of a focus on understanding and Biology may need more time spent on learning off by heart.

This document aims to help you study for your GCSE exams across Key Stage 4; the first part will run through some common tips and tricks for all GCSE subjects for the four sections listed above, before delving into subject specific hints and tips (including links to recommended websites and resources) in the second part.

Step 1: Plan



The first thing you need to do is make a plan of action! This could be for general revision across multiple courses in the lead up to a set of exams or could be a more specific plan to improve in a certain subject.

1. Prepare to F.A.I.L. (First Attempt In Learning)

Failure is a vital part of learning. While in some subjects you may thrive and understand everything with ease, there will undoubtedly be some subjects where this is not the case. There is absolutely no shame in this! The hardest step is the first step, and remember you can always talk to your teachers, form tutor, head of year and any other adult in school, as well as your friends and family! More info on this can be found here: [Learning to Learn – Prepare to F.A.I.L.](#)

2. Prepare your study space & study time

Make sure you have somewhere to work with minimal distractions. This could be at home, but could also be elsewhere, e.g., the LRC. Also set out when you will study – little and often is better than cramming everything into one long session! More info on this can be found here: [Learning to Learn – Working at Home](#).

3. Know your timescales

When does this studying need to be done by? E.g., when are the mocks that you are studying for, or when is the end of unit test that this skill will be tested in? If there is no specific timescale to work to, make one for yourself – you are much more likely to study if you have a deadline.

4. Make sure you know what you need to know

Ensure you have a copy of the specification/topic list/ key vocabulary/whatever it is that you need to learn ready, so you can organise your revision.

5. Work out what you need to work on

An excellent way of doing this is through traffic lighting – code the specification (or similar) using red, orange & green pens to highlight what areas you feel most and least comfortable with. More info on how to do this can be found here: [Learning to Learn – Traffic Lights](#).

6. Make a plan, making sure to prioritise the most difficult topics first

We all know that it's tempting to study and revise the things we find easy! However, to make the biggest gains, you need to give work on the things you find the hardest. Look at your red topics first and review them more often than those you find easier (although

don't completely ignore the green areas!). Using the Pomodoro technique can be really useful if you find it tricky to concentrate for longer periods - more info on how to do this can be found here: [Learning to Learn – Pomodoro](#) .

7. Get your resources ready

It can be tempting to spend most of your study session finding the things you need. If you have them all to hand beforehand, it will be much harder to procrastinate! This could be your folder/exercise book, a textbook/revision guide or online resources. A list of useful general resources can be found below, with **other subject specific websites listed on the subject specific pages at the end of this document.**

Useful Online Revision Resources

- Exam Boards:
 - [AQA – education charity providing GCSEs, A-levels and support](#)
 - [Edexcel | About Edexcel | Pearson qualifications](#)
 - [OCR - awarding body for A Levels, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals and other qualifications](#)
 - [Eduqas | Exam Board UK](#)
- General Revision:
 - [GCSE - BBC Bitesize](#)
 - [Free Homework & Revision for A Level, GCSE, KS3 & KS2 \(senecalearning.com\)](#)
 - [Revision Notes, Past Papers & Topic Questions | Save My Exams](#)
 - [Revision World - Free GCSE & A-Level Revision Resources](#)
- Past Papers
 - Exam board websites above
 - [GCSE Exam Past Papers - Revision World](#)
 - [Past Papers - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#) (not just Physics & Maths!)
- Quizzing
 - [Learning tools, flashcards, and textbook solutions | Quizlet](#)
 - [Educake | Hassle-free homework](#) (Sciences)
 - [Anki - powerful, intelligent flashcards \(ankiweb.net\)](#)
- Online textbooks:
 - [Kerboodle](#)
 - [The UK's Favourite Educational Books | CGP Books](#)
(many of these are available at cost price on ParentPay)

Step 2: Understand



Before learning the content off by heart, it's important to **understand** the concepts that you will be examined in. The majority of this will happen in your lessons, but for those topics and subtopics that need a little more work the following might help:

- **Ask a teacher for clarification**

This could be during or after a lesson or could be via email. They may be able to arrange a time to go through the topic with you or might be able to point you to extra resources that could help your independent study.

- **Read the information in a different format**

Sometimes, reading a different explanation of a topic can help it click. Reading a different textbook/revision guide or finding the information on websites such as BBC Bitesize or Seneca Learning could help here.

- **Watch a video explanation**

YouTube can be a great resource, as sometimes hearing a different explanation or seeing live animations/graphics can help solidify your understanding. There's also the benefit that you can pause/rewatch. Take care though – don't get distracted by other videos, and don't fall into the trap of thinking that watching YouTube videos is helping you learn the information; it can be an easy way of tricking yourself into thinking you're doing effective revision!

- **Organise your thoughts in some way:**

Making revision cards/mind maps/notes from your resources to organise your thoughts can help make links between topics and can form connections. However, beware of simply copying notes down verbatim – you need to be doing something new with the information!

- **Attend a revision session**

This is a great option if one is available, as you get your teacher's expertise!

Step 3: Learn



This is the step that is the most boring (and potentially the most difficult), so it is the one that many students try to ‘skip’... you need to **learn** content off by heart! This is where **active revision** is important – the act of trying to remember something without looking it up and then checking your answers.

[Retrieval Practice](#) (i.e. the process of actively trying to remember something) is scientifically proven to be an excellent learning tool. Some examples of activities that can help include:

- **Quizzes**

Quizzing yourself is a great way to learn – it utilises the ‘testing effect’. Lots of quizzes can be found online, or you can make and then use them yourself!

- **Using flashcards**

Similar to quizzing, this is a great way to strengthen core knowledge. Either use flashcards you’ve made yourself (although don’t fall into the trap of spending hours making them then not using them!) or find ready-made cards online. You can also use apps such as Anki or Quizlet to help with this – these have the added bonus of automatically repeating the questions you found difficult more often than the ones you found easy, although you can do this for yourself if you combine your flashcards with a traffic light system! More info on this can be found here: [Learning to Learn - Flashcards](#).

- **Mind maps/brain dumps**

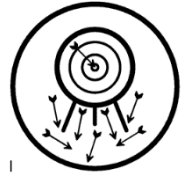
Make a mind map from scratch, or simply write everything you can remember about a topic down on a piece of paper. Then, check what you’ve remembered against a previously made exemplar or a revision resource. Another example of this is a read-write-review – more info on this can be found here: [Learning to Learn – Read/Write/Review](#).

Other well-researched methods of improving learning include:

- [Dual Coding — The Learning Scientists](#)
- [Concrete Examples — The Learning Scientists](#)
- [Elaboration — The Learning Scientists](#)
- [Interleaving — The Learning Scientists](#)
- [Spaced Practice — The Learning Scientists](#)

Notice how this list does **not** include rereading/highlighting/writing notes – this is not an efficient way of learning content, as it doesn’t make you think! A good general rule of thumb here is as follows: **if it feels easy, it’s probably not working!**

Step 4: Practise



The final step is to **practise** applying the knowledge that you've learned. The easiest way to do this at GCSE and beyond is through the use of **past paper questions**, either individually or in whole papers. These can be found in a variety of places, including the exam board websites.

When using past papers, we recommend the following plan of action to make the most of them as you can:

1. **Answer as much as you can from memory to start with**, without looking back at notes. Sometimes, it will be appropriate to complete this in timed conditions, as you need to get used to that!
2. Once you are sure you have done all you can, **allow yourself the use of your revision resources** and go back through the paper with a **different colour pen**, adding in anything that you can now answer with that support. This will show you the difference between what you simply understand versus the content you know and understand.
3. Now find the mark scheme for the questions. Go through with a third colour, **marking and correcting your answers**. Make a note of any hints and tips you pick up.
4. Make sure you **savour your mistakes** – they are great opportunities to learn! More info on how you can do this can be found here: [Learning to Learn – Managing Mistakes](#).

A link to the specific past papers for each course can be found at the top of each subject page at the end of this document. There is also a folder on the Student SharePoint which contains all of the past papers published for the current specifications so far (along with lots of other revision materials): [Y11 GCSE Revision](#).

Independent Study at Key Stage 4

Subject Specific Advice

Apart from the general advice & resources listed above, the following pages detail some extra subject specific hints and tips for succeeding at GCSE.

They are listed alphabetically.

Also included are the details of the exam board followed, plus a link to the specification and past papers for this subject.

A reminder than all of this and more resources can be found on the Student SharePoint in the [Y11 GCSE Revision](#) folder.

Remember, if in doubt ask your teacher - they are the best resource you have!

Don't forget to follow the advice/act on the learning targets your teachers give you for any formally assessed work as your first step in improving in that subject!

These are usually found on yellow paper.

Art

Exam board & link to specification: [AQA](#)

Find past papers easily here: N/A

Other useful online resources:

- [Pinterest](#)
- [The Tate](#)
- [National Portrait Gallery](#)
- [ArtNet](#)
- [BBC Bitesize – GCSE Art & Design / AQA](#)

To further improve in Art you could:

- Plan for next steps using a mind map and mood board and identify areas for further research for new project.
- Take a wide selection of creative and imaginative photos that clearly link to the chosen theme so you are able to draw from primary sources.
- Identify and explain why a certain artist's work has been selected as an influence and how you intend to use this within your new project.
- Use artists as inspiration and create imaginative pieces that are in a similar style, or use similar working methods, and combine this with your primary sourced images.
- Develop your use of presentation within your sketchbook making sure each page is as visual as possible.
- Develop your use of written annotation within your sketchbook.
- Evaluate projects in detail and highlight areas of success and areas for improvement in preparation for your next project.
- Utilise all of your development and preparation work so you can create a highly individual and personal final piece.

Biology

Exam board & link to specification:

- Separate Science – [AQA](#)
- Combined Science - [AQA](#)

Find past papers easily here:

- Separate Science – [GCSE / IGCSE Biology Past Papers - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#)
- Combined Science - [GCSE / IGCSE Science Past Papers - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [Kerboodle](#)
- [Educake | Hassle-free homework](#)

To further improve in Biology you could:

In lessons:

- Prepare in advance by reading over the work from the previous lesson and the relevant upcoming section of the online textbook.
- Make summary notes to aid your understanding, highlighting the key terms that are expected by the examiner and must be included in your answers.
- Attempt all tasks in as much detail as possible (even if only part of the answer can be completed) and seek further help if needed.
- Carefully read and carry out practical instructions to complete work in a safe and organised way. Remember that practical work will be assessed in the exam and you must be able to describe how practical activities are carried out.

When revising:

- Complete past-paper questions, then review and mark the answers by checking with mark schemes.
- Focus on the use of key terminology when answering questions verbally or in writing. This will allow you to consolidate your understanding of key concepts.

In exams:

- Carefully read and think about each question before beginning to write an answer. Use highlighter / underlining / shapes to indicate keywords or important information in the question
- When completing calculations, show all the stages of working clearly. Then check if the answer is a 'sensible' one (in the right order of magnitude) and ensure you add a unit.
- When representing data, check that all columns in tables have headings (including units of measurement). Similarly, all graphs must have a heading that describe what is shown and ensure that axes are labelled, units of measurement are clear and scales are appropriate.

Business Studies

Exam board & link to specification: [Edexcel](#)

Find past papers easily here: [Edexcel GCSE Business Studies Past Papers - Revision World](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [Free Homework & Revision for A Level, GCSE, KS3 & KS2 \(senecalearning.com\)](#)
- [businesscasestudies.co.uk](#)
- [Business - BBC News](#)

To further improve in Business Studies you could:

In lessons:

- Ensure you come prepared, with the equipment you need and any homework due in completed.
- Be engaged throughout the lesson.
- Take sufficient high-quality notes to enable you revise effectively.
- Be focussed and self-motivated when given time and independence to complete a task.
- Ask questions to clarify and improve your subject knowledge.
- Seek feedback on exam answers - both those completed in lessons and those done for extra practice at home.

Outside of lessons:

- Revise key terms - this can be achieved through the use of Seneca Learning.
- Add depth to your subject reading through websites such as BBC Business and [businesscasestudies.co.uk](#). Use this to add depth to your notes to aid future revision.
- Create a set of flashcards or revision notes on the key topics across the Business Studies specification.
- Complete past paper questions, especially those from section B and C of the exam; focus on the quality and depth of application to the case studies provided.

When answering exam questions:

- Make sure you understand the requirement of each of the different types of question in the exam. Practice past paper questions to build your experience of different question types. If aiming for the top grades, focus on the 9- and 12-mark essay questions. These are all available on the student share point.
- Plan out written answers before you start to refine the quality of your answers.
- Ensure you use the correct number of connectives to achieve the maximum marks available.

Chemistry

Exam board & link to specification:

- Separate Science – [AQA](#)
- Combined Science - [AQA](#)

Find past papers easily here:

- Separate Science – [GCSE / IGCSE Chemistry Papers - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#)
- Combined Science - [GCSE / IGCSE Science Past Papers - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [Kerboodle](#)
- [Educake | Hassle-free homework](#)

To further improve in Chemistry you could:

When planning your revision:

- Break your revision time down to individual topics so that you can ensure you have factored enough time to visit and revisit all sections.
- Look back at your most recent assessments to determine which areas are in greatest need of focus.
- When scheduling, put the topics you are least confident on as priorities; these offer a far greater opportunity to capture extra marks and move you through to the higher grades.

Your early revision should be fact based - you need to focus on learning the content and being able to regurgitate that knowledge. You could:

- Review key facts, challenging yourself to recite the answers from memory.
- Focus on learning key words, definitions & formulae by heart through making a set of flashcards.
- Practice balancing both simple and complex symbol equations.
- Answer the questions in the practical skills mastery booklet.
- Create tables or charts comparing topics (e.g., showing the difference between ionic and covalent bonding).
- Create a mind map for each topic (e.g. how the structure and bonding of chemical compounds relate to their properties).
- Create a glossary for your folder which you can refer to, and add to, throughout the course.

- Make a note of links between scientific subjects, e.g. catalysts in Chemistry with enzymes in Biology. Make a note of these connections as they appear throughout the course.

As you gain confidence, try to apply this knowledge to past paper questions. When doing this think about focussing on:

- Extended response (4/6 marks) questions - be very strict with timings (roughly one mark per minute).
- Questions from a particular topic - this will help you to see the similarities and common themes that come up each year. There are question walkthroughs on YouTube that you have been directed to that will allow you to pick topic specific playlists.
- Always check the number of marks given for an exam question if the question is worth 3 marks you should be aiming to give 3 distinct points or use 3 key pieces of terminology for that question.
- Always double check exam questions to see if they are asking you to describe or explain a point. If you have to "explain" an idea, you must always aim to write a few sentences. State a fact and then give more detail. Describe questions will just want you to state the fact with no extra detail.

Some common questions that you should ensure you are confident with include:

- Recalling the key facts (terms, products & half equations) for electrolysis.
- Explaining the differences between ionic, covalent and metallic bonding and structures.
- Explaining how the structure and bonding of chemical elements and compounds relate to their properties, e.g., why can a substance conduct electricity? Why does a substance have a high/low melting point? Why might one element be more reactive than another?
- Explaining the changes that Mendeleev made to his Periodic Table and why scientists didn't trust his ideas at the time.
- Explaining how changes in conditions affect the rate of a reaction, including information about collision theory.
- Describing process of completing a titration.
- Carrying out the range of mathematical calculations in the amount of substance topic
- Explaining the steps involved in the production of aluminium, using key terms such as oxidation and reduction.

If you struggle, don't be hesitant to ask for help. You could also attend after school support sessions.

Computer Science

Exam board & link to specification: [OCR](#)

Find past papers easily here:

[GCSE Computer Science Past Papers - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [GCSE topics — Isaac Computer Science](#)

To further improve in Computer Science you could:

In lessons:

- Maintain focus & always complete key tasks.
- Ensure your work area is organised including your folders and class notebook.
- Pay particular attention to sessions on exam technique and question interpretation.
- Ask for help and additional explanation when necessary.

When revising:

- Maintain consistency.
- Look at the feedback from previous assessments, especially with regards to where you dropped marks.
- Revisit weaker units so you can be confident of performing consistently.
- Utilise the past paper pack you have been given, ensuring you mark any papers attempted using the mark schemes.
- Spend quality time on your programming skills as this will help his paper 2 and future endeavours.
- Attend revision sessions.
- Use the OCR Exam Reference Language Cheat Sheet for Paper 2 Pseudocode
- Complete end of unit questions in the textbook & answer questions from the zigzag guides

When answering exam questions:

- Pay particular attention to exam technique and wording.
- Structure your answers concisely so you don't lose time or talk yourself out of a correct line.

Drama

Exam board & link to specification: [Edexcel](#)

Find past papers easily here: [Edexcel GCSE Drama past papers - Revision World](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [GCSE Drama - Edexcel - BBC Bitesize](#)

To further improve in Drama you could:

Generally:

- Make sure your attendance is as high as possible, so you don't miss any Drama lessons.

When preparing for the written papers:

- Be consistent in your approach in preparations both in lessons and when revising at home. This will help to improve the amount of detail and depth in response to the written paper.
- Ensure all notes are prepared in detail to provide a solid resource for the written paper - they should cover all aspects of the set text and live performance.
- Attempt practice questions frequently to improve your ability to communicate understanding and ideas more thoroughly and efficiently.
- Aim to respond to the set text questions in detail, with well-supported examples given.

When practicing your monologue, consider the following:

- Continue to explore the monologue & develop the character with a specific awareness of desired audience effect, intention and connection. Build emotion throughout to create maximum impact during the performance.
- Be brave when exploring ideas - enjoy the character!
- Fully explore the range of emotion; you must maintain clear audience intention and structure your performance to ensure you are able to successfully demonstrate changes in thoughts and feelings.
- Finally, explore the more subtle aspects of the characterisation. Is a moment of stillness possible and/or appropriate?

When working on your portfolio, consider the following:

- Maintain detailed, well organised notes throughout the devising process in preparation for the completion of the written portfolio.

D+T

Exam board & link to specification: [Edexcel](#)

For DT, the optional module taken is D. Systems

Find past papers easily here:

[Edexcel GCSE Design and Technology Past Papers - Revision World](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [GCSE DT Edexcel BBC Bitesize](#)
- [Technologystudent.com](#)

To further improve in D+T you could:

The NEA

- Use a format of your own design to present each sheet of NEA folder-work professionally and consistently (font sizes and style for headings, subheadings etc)
- Attend extra D+T sessions at lunchtimes, after school and during the holidays for help finishing folder-work, models and to realise fully the detailed elements of your final prototype design.
- Ensure all the written elements required in A3 sheets are completed in detail to achieve the higher grades. Ensure the red text sections are completed (self-reflection, introduction, conclusions etc) to access grades 7-9. You should spend a **minimum** 2 hours per A3 sheet.
- Complete all revision homework set.

The exam

Learn in detail especially the following topics which appear regularly in long-written answers (6 and 9 marks) and in both sections of the exam paper (A+B)

- Eco, social, cultural and Ethical footprints
- New and emerging technologies
- System Inputs, processes and outputs

Always add one (or two) **linked justification(s)** to a reason to gain both (or all three) marks for example 'fire retardant clothing is heavy to wear (1) which will sap energy and slow down the user (1) so restricts mobility and length of time it can be worn (1)'

Know how to describe every material property **discretely** (words specific only to that material) and therefore its use in products including Metals, Woods, Papers and boards, Textiles, Smart Materials, modern materials, composite Materials and Technical Textiles.

You have 1 minute to gain each mark (100 marks in 105 mins), use all the time available spending most time planning long-written answers and with thinking time needed for the design and drawing questions.

English

Exam board & link to specification:

- English Literature – [AQA](#)
- English Language - [AQA](#)

Find past papers easily here:

- English Literature – [GCSE / IGCSE English Literature Past Papers - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#)
- English Language - [GCSE / IGCSE English Language Past Papers - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [The British Library](#): this is your go-to site in terms of really good, challenging content for English Literature.
- BBC Bitesize: There's lots here to consolidate your knowledge. There are separate areas for both English Literature and English Language. All aspects of the qualifications are covered.
 - [GCSE English Literature - AQA - BBC Bitesize](#)
 - [GCSE English Language - AQA - BBC Bitesize](#)
- [Sparknotes](#): You'll find notes on most of the English Literature texts, plus quizzes to test your knowledge.
- [Cliffs Notes](#): There's plenty here to help you revise the core English Literature texts – chapter summaries, character overviews, quizzes and essay questions.
- [Universal Teacher](#): Comprehensive notes on most of the English Literature texts, and there's also relevant information that you can use to help revise for English Language.
- [The Stable Oyster Blog](#): This website contains some excellent blogs on the poems. Click on the website link and then type the name of the poem you want to revise into the search bar.
- [Learning From My Mistakes Blog](#): This contains links to more resources on the poems.
- [The Guardian](#): It's worth typing the name of the text (or area) you want to study into the search bar

To further improve in English you could:

Generally:

- Focus in lessons and complete all class work tasks to the best of your ability.
- Create a bank of ambitious synonyms for common adjectives/verbs to build your vocabulary.
- Develop your vocabulary through reading quality fiction and non-fiction. Also read widely in and around the topics studied in lesson to enhance the depth and quality of your thesis statements.
- Memorise different sentence starters and question scaffolds to help you to complete assessed questions in the level of detail needed.
- Complete plenty of practice exam questions and papers, ensuring some are done in timed conditions.

- Leave time to check work for avoidable errors, including mistakes in spelling and punctuation. Amend accordingly.
- Ensure you name devices (e.g. similes, adjectives metaphors etc.) when doing English Literature and Language reading assessments.
- Support your ideas with examples from the text and be sure to identify language devices and explore their effects in detail.
- Ensure that in your answers you are analysing the effects of the writer's choices of language and are considering different interpretations and viewpoints.
- Practise comparing different methods writers use to convey their attitudes.
- Examine mark schemes and ensure you can confidently recall the Assessment Objectives for each question. Also ensure you are familiar with the top band skills descriptors of each exam mark scheme so that you are consciously producing work adhering to them.

For English Literature specifically:

- Challenge yourself to read around the literature texts that we study, so that you can confidently incorporate wider ideas into your essays.
- Ensure you have a complete set of notes for the previously studied literature texts, covering both characters and themes.
- Remember that constructing a clear argument in answer to the question set in the examination is essential: the literature essay should be a clear step by step argument, showing that your interpretation of the novel is a convincing one.
- It is essential that all examination answers explicitly and clearly engage with the author, explaining in each quotation what the author is doing to the reader's or audience's feelings or thinking. Keep asking yourself: What is the author up to? How is the author manipulating the reader's thinking?
- Also in literature essays: consider alternative interpretations where appropriate; link ideas together into a cohesive whole; make comments that are consistently relevant to the steer of the task; consider covering less ground but in greater depth and explain all points clearly, justifying them fully, not just making unsupported assertions.
- Specifically focus on developing AO2 skills by producing a selection of annotated key quotes for each literature text, focusing on meaning, effect and language devices.
- Revise complex poetic devices (language & structural) for unseen poetry in Paper 2.
- Practise constructing an overall argument to give your responses to Paper 2 a cohesive and conceptualised approach.

For English Language specifically:

- For the writing question of Paper 1, revise complex punctuation and ensure you include a range of punctuation types in your writing for effect.
- Practise using complex structural features such as flashback, foreshadowing and cyclical structures to increase the quality of responses to question 5 of Paper 1.
- Maintain consistency of tense in creative writing.

French

Exam board & link to specification: [AQA](#)

- Find past papers easily here: Student SharePoint > Languages > French

Other useful online resources:

- [Kerboodle](#)
- [Quizlet vocabulary flashcards](#)
- [BBC Bitesize](#)
- [Languages Online: Grammar practice exercises](#)

To further improve in French you could:

Generally:

- Attend all French revision sessions you can.
- Regularly complete reading and listening past papers from Student SharePoint.
- Learn all the High Frequency Words on the mbridge Quizlet list.
- Practise learning or re-learning to say and write 100% accurately from memory all the FRÉJALAMBViPS expressions on the landscape sheet here: Student SharePoint/Student Shared Documents - Quick Access/Languages/French/Verbs (learner friendly). To check the English, see the 'je and nous' table in the same folder.
- Being able to answer the questions in your Mes Réponses booklet will cover at least 50% of your oral exam and is also likely to help you score higher marks on the photo card and in your writing exam. Therefore, check your 'mes reponses' are up to date and that you have improved the ones you wrote in Year 10 where possible.
- Further improve your pronunciation and range of language by practising speaking using the audio files here: Student SharePoint/Student Shared Documents - Quick Access/Languages French/Mes Réponses/Model answers - audio. Also here is the document 'Mes Réponses Transcript'. This explains how to use the folder contents for maximum benefit.
- Further extend your command of GCSE French by using spare moments between lesson activities to study in more depth the grammatical explanations in your textbook.

When revising:

- Go back over previously attempted 90-word and 150-word exam tasks and learn your corrections.
- Once you have completed a past listening paper, re-listen to tricky questions while following along with the transcript.

- Re-attempt the questions from reading/listening papers that require you to answer in French.
- Read French articles online and make note of structures that could be of use in your own writing/speaking.
- Complete extension exercises from the 'Reaching For a Nine' folder on Student SharePoint.

Exam tips

- Attempt all questions; don't leave any blanks!
- For speaking exam questions, carefully listen out for all words (e.g., 'récemment') to be sure of answering only the question being asked and of answering in the correct tense.
- In the writing exam, be sure to express and justify opinions.
- Plan to avoid mundane language (super, le foot, etc.) in your answers by learning more sophisticated synonyms/alternatives.
- Wherever possible, avoid shorter sentences by developing and linking with a range of connectives such as 'car' and 'alors'.
- Avoid using English in response to writing and speaking exam questions.
- Memorise at least 5 impressive phrases/structures (avant d'aller, bien que je sois, etc.) that you know you will be able to use in any writing tasks.
- Translate your French written answers back into English very slowly to spot any missing words and to ensure they make complete sense.
- In your reading exam, use both the meaning of the sentence and the grammatical context of the words before deciding which word to choose from a list. Decide whether you need a verb, a noun or an adjective. Once you're sure, check the options and pick the most appropriate word for the sentence to make sense.
- In your writing exam, carefully adapt words you re-use from the bullet points. Ensure your response to each bullet point is fully relevant.

FPN

Exam board & link to specification: [Eduqas](#)

Find past papers easily here:

[Eduqas GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition Past Papers - Revision World](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [Seneca](#)

Lessons:

- Be organised! Remember your booklet and ensure that it is up to date and completed to a high standard.
- Arrive with enthusiasm and ready to learn. For practical lessons, ensure you are fully prepared, ready to make.
- Make sure you stay on top of your NEA. If you need help with this, attend after school support; remember, this is worth 50% of your final GCSE grade.

Outside of lessons

- Use your existing class-notes to create knowledge organisers and revision notes.
- Stay up to date with your Seneca Learning assignments set by your subject teacher. You can further explore Seneca Learning and set your own topics for additional revision.
- Struggling with topics? See your subject teacher for additional support.
- In preparation for your NEA timed practical exam, practise skills at home to improve your time management. Ideally, make a couple of family meals a week if possible.
- Become competent with your practical technical skills and food styling. Practise high level skills undertaken in school.
- Keep up to date with current trends regarding food styling and diet and health by listening to podcasts e.g. The Food Programme, Zoe Science and Nutrition.

Exam tips:

- Read exam questions carefully and annotate key information by circling/underlining the points and clarifying the structure of the response.
- Before completing the question, allow thinking time for extended questions. Practise short plans, taking time to link key words from the question to your answer.
- Focus on the structure of extended questions by using the PEEL technique. Complete past paper extended questions, review, and mark by checking with the mark schemes.
- Refer to your exam question assessments and ensure you go through your fix its and exam wrappers.

Geography

Exam board & link to specification: [OCR](#)

Find past papers easily here:

[GCSE / IGCSE Geography Past Papers - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [BBC Bitesize](#)
- [KS4 \(adageogjoe.com\)](#)
- [Home - Internet Geography](#)

To further improve in Geography you could:

In lessons:

- Stay focused throughout each lesson - maximum effort is consistently required.
- Make sure you fully participate in revision lessons and ask for clarification where you need it.
- Ensure you are making thorough class notes as it is these that you will revise from.
- Complete recommended extension and proactive tasks.
- Participate in class discussions, sharing your ideas to check understanding.

Outside of lessons:

- Get organised! Ensure your folders are up to date in order to effectively revise topics.
- Carefully work through your previous topics. For the topics you are finding most difficult, revisit your class notes & make sure they are thorough enough.
- Look back at your assessments and ensure that you understand your fix its.
- Read around the topics studied to develop your geographical understanding.
- Complete exam questions to test your understanding.
- Come to the weekly revision sessions to for help with anything you are struggling with.
- Make full use of support that is offered, such as the lunch time drop ins or extra tuition.
- Use SharePoint regularly.

Exam tips:

- Ensure you follow the questions instructions and address the key themes.
- Aim to fully develop each idea in order to gain maximum marks.
- Consistently use the 3 developed ideas structure in your 6 markers.
- Ensure you focus on the key themes for the 6 markers, integrating PSD in each idea.
- Practise skills questions to ensure your marks stay high across the whole paper.
- Increase your use of PSD to reach L3 on longer answers.
- Practise 6 markers under timed conditions (no longer than 8 minutes) so that you can answer every question on the exam paper.
- Practise lower tariff questions, including skills and graphical question styles.

German

Exam board & link to specification: [AQA](#)

Find past papers easily here: [AQA GCSE German Past Papers - Revision World](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [Learning tools, flashcards, and textbook solutions | Quizlet](#)
- [Linguascope*](#) (Vocabulary Practice)
- [Kerboodle*](#) (Echt textbooks, used at KS3)
- [Verbix](#) (Online verb conjugator)
- [WordReference](#) (Online dictionary)

To further improve in German you could:

- Regularly revisit and revise the key verbs **haben**, **sein** and **werden**. These are crucial in their own right, but also essential when accurately forming other tenses, a key aspect of higher attainment.
- Make sure you annotate texts and transcripts, highlighting meanings of new vocabulary, so it stands out for future revision.
- Consistently check back through your work for accuracy such as spelling, verb endings and capital letters for nouns, using available reference materials. This prevents avoidable communication errors
- Incorporate 'complex structures' in your speaking and writing, for example: *weil/obwohl; um ... zu ...; entweder ... oder ...; ich glaube, dass ...*
- Reinforce your knowledge by regularly revising core vocabulary and structures at home.
- Work hard to master key word order rules and ensure the verbs in a sentence are in the correct position.
- When completing writing and speaking tasks, make sure every verb you are using is conjugated correctly, so it matches the subject of the sentence.
- Ensure you have a thorough knowledge of high-frequency, irregular verbs in the main tenses. (Irregular verbs are those which do not follow the regular patterns).
- Rote learn the key expressions which help you simply describe what you can see in a given photo; this supports your progress in 'photo card' speaking tasks.
- Work on your pronunciation of key sounds / letters in German (e.g. v/w/z/sp).
- When you have received feedback on your work, make sure you complete all 'green pen' corrections, asking your teacher for clarification if needed.

Exam tips:

- The writing tasks are relatively short and you are aiming to show the equality of your written German. Ensure you use German that you **know** is correct and do not guess vocabulary, as it is likely not to communicate effectively.
- It is impossible to "think in English" and translate directly; focus on the variety of structures you know how to use and think where you can use them for the required question.
- When giving opinions, try to use a variety of structure, in order to avoid repeating the same opinion phrase.
- Always include an accurate variety of tense in writing tasks and the General Conversation, as this is a key aspect of higher attainment.
- For listening exams, use the 5 minutes' reading time wisely, by focusing on: the Section B questions in German; large grids of choices (e.g. A-G) where you will hear the whole information in one go and select a number of choices; annotating key themes / questions with predicted answers/vocabulary.
- In reading and listening papers, avoid leaving gaps! If you genuinely don't know an answer, have an intelligent guess based on the question, especially if it's multiple choice!
- In reading and listening papers, make sure you include any information you know is correct (e.g. an adjective describing a noun, a time phrase, adverbial showing frequency), as this avoids you not being awarded a mark for a good answer due to a minor lack of detail
- In role plays, answer as simply and accurately as possible and give no information that isn't required; there is no credit in these tasks for 'fancy vocabulary' or complex structures.
- In photo card tasks, keep responses simple and clear; maintain the pace of your answer, so there is time to respond to all five questions.

History

Exam board & link to specification: [Edexcel](#)

The following options have been taken:

- 11: *Medicine in Britain, c1250–present and The British sector of the Western Front, 1914–18: injuries, treatment and the trenches.*
- B1: *Anglo-Saxon and Norman England, c1060–88*
- P4: *Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91*
- 31: *Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39*

Find past papers easily here:

[GCSE / IGCSE History Past Papers - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [BBC History Magazine, BBC History Revealed & BBC World Histories - HistoryExtra](#)
- [History Hit](#)

To further improve in History you could:

Outside of lessons

- Attend revision classes as often as possible.
- Complete additional past paper questions for marking and feedback.
- Organise your files in chronological order and make sure all notes are complete and detailed. Use the course booklet to tick off what you have and find out what might be missing.
- Carry out preliminary/wider reading e.g. on the rise of Hitler and the Nazis and the Cold War. Watch the Rise of the Nazis on BBC iPlayer or the Dawn of the Nazis on Disney+!
- Prepare for Paper 3 by recapping on the exam technique for the source utility and 'explain why' questions.
- Listen to history podcasts to extend and deepen your knowledge and understanding e.g. from BBC History Extra, History Hit etc.

Exam tips

- Focus on answering the question directly and consistently - especially the 12- and 16-mark questions. In these, start each paragraph with a statement related to the question to avoid description and narrative storytelling.
- Use the SEA technique and support each paragraph with 3-4 relevant and precise facts.
- Avoid description and narrative in writing answers and focus instead on explanation and analysis - answer the question directly.

- Make sure judgements are well-supported and analytical, and that knowledge is specific, relevant and accurate.
- Pay close attention to the theme in the question and don't include developments that are related to a different theme
- Support all explanations and analyses with factual knowledge. Use at least 3 dates, names, key terms, organisations, statistics etc. in every paragraph for 12- and 16-mark questions.
- Always try to write 3 paragraphs for a 12-mark answer.
- For the 16-mark questions try to construct an argument that runs consistently through the essay and make sure you argue why one factor is more important than another.
- Always write a concluding paragraph for the 16 markers. This should summarise your argument in relation to the question.
- When evaluating sources always refer to the value of the content and the provenance. Only write about the limitations of a source if you have specific knowledge to show that the source is unreliable in some way due to its nature, origin and/or purpose.

Maths

Exam board & link to specification: [Edexcel](#)

Find past papers easily here:

[GCSE / IGCSE Maths Past Papers - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [DrFrostMaths.com](#)
- [Maths Genie - Free Online GCSE and A Level Maths Revision](#)
- [Bicen Maths - YouTube](#)
- [Corbett Maths](#)
- [On Maths - Predicted Past Papers and Exam Practice](#)
- [Physics and Maths Tutor](#)

To further improve in Maths you could:

In lessons

- Make sure you are ready to begin lessons promptly by having your books and other equipment open.
- Aim to complete as many maths questions as possible during lessons.
- Set out your work as shown in the worked examples, with full working-out.
- Always read the question carefully and check your answers make sense to ensure you are scoring the most marks you can on each question.
- Correct your work in green pen so you can learn from your mistakes.
- Hand in homework set so that you can act on the personalised feedback given on each task.
- Ensure that you catch up with any work missed through absence
- Ask for help if you are struggling!

When revising

- Allocate time to practicing exam style questions on different topics in the same session, e.g. in 20 minutes, complete one algebra question, one angles question etc. so that you are confident with using different techniques.
- Complete one page a day from your 'Aiming for Grade' booklets, trying out work from the full range of booklets.
- Go over the yellow unit assessment review sheets in your exercise book to remind yourself of which topics you personally found challenging, then complete a mixture of exam questions on these topics which can be found on Dr Frost or Maths Genie.

- Learn thoroughly all the techniques you have been taught. Practise these by using past papers and DFM exam practice questions.
- Use Dr Frost to complete mixed practice questions (use "Tasks Practice Exam Questions") with the difficulty level set to an appropriate level.
- Work through at least one complete past exam paper per week.
- Use the courses page on DFM to focus on specific skills you find challenging, then answer past paper questions on these topics.
- Engage in further practice of your mental arithmetic techniques using DFM; this will increase your confidence and enable you to tackle challenging questions more easily.
- Set out your work logically, including all of the intermediate steps, especially on a calculator paper, and ensure that it supports any conclusions made.
- Take your time when reading questions. Underlining key words and refer back to these when you have completed your working.

Music

Exam board & link to specification: [OCR](#)

Find past papers easily here: [Wrotham School Music - Practice Questions & Practice Papers](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [teoria: Music Theory Web](#)
- [Ms Langham's YouTube](#)
- [Rhinegold Music Education YouTube](#)

To further improve in Music, you could:

- Create a daily practice routine for your main instrument and focus on building technical skill
- Attend music ensembles in or outside of school
- Sign up for solo performance opportunities
- Attend the music studio in lunchtimes/after-school to work on your composition
- Listen to as many examples as possible from the genre you are composing in, to build ideas of style
- Make sure your revision includes retrieval practice when testing yourself on terminology - only making or reading notes does not embed knowledge
- Use teoria.com to improve dictation skills
- Watch YouTube videos of orchestral recordings to improve instrumental recognition
- Keep up with listening activities through Ms Langham's YouTube channel and recommended playlists
- Test yourself (with correct spellings) of key terminology

Physics

Exam board & link to specification:

- Separate Science – [AQA](#)
- Combined Science - [AQA](#)

Find past papers easily here:

- Separate Science – [GCSE / IGCSE Physics Past Papers - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#)
- Combined Science - [GCSE / IGCSE Science Past Papers - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#)

Other useful resources:

- [Kerboodle](#)
- [Educake | Hassle-free homework](#)
- [Isaac Physics](#)
- [Free Homework & Revision for A Level, GCSE, KS3 & KS2 \(senecalearning.com\)](#)
- [GCSE Physics \(Single Science\) - AQA - BBC Bitesize](#)
- [MissLowePhysics - YouTube](#)

To further improve in Physics you could:

When revising:

- To prepare for your exams, organise your time so that your revision is not left to the last minute. Create a revision timetable and break the Physics specification into weekly chunks.
- Make the most out of the resources that are available; remember you can use Educake, Kerboodle, BBC Bitesize, the CGP revision guides, Isaac Physics and Seneca learning to revise topics in preparation for the exams. Use these to add to your class notes.
- Learn definitions of key words for each of the GCSE Physics topics - flashcards can help with this.
- Make sure you know and can rearrange all the equations.
- Make sure you can recall standard units and interpret prefixes correctly.
- When examining investigations always identify the independent, dependent and control variables as well as possible sources of errors. Be careful to include a detailed scientific analysis that links theory with the results obtained.
- Following your assessments always act on SKREAM analysis and complete your SMART targets.
- Complete past papers that match the AQA specification, then compare your answers to the mark scheme carefully.

- After completing revision, identify any problems that you found, then ask in lessons for help or for clarification.
- Use your green pen effectively when adding to and improving classwork, homework, and tests (so that it becomes a revision tool for future tests) to help you to fix, familiarise and feed forward before the next test (also more resources on the Physics 'Student SharePoint').

Exam tips

- Read exam questions carefully and learn to annotate key information within questions by underlining key information or circling it before you start to answer the question.
- Allow yourself thinking time to process the question before answering.
- Annotate diagrams to help you fully understand the question before you begin to write your answer.
- For calculation questions, write out equations and show all working/rearranging before calculating correctly and give the appropriate units in the final answer.
- Take care when stating your final calculated values to the correct number of significant figures.
- Read through your final answers carefully as a final check to gain any extra marks.

PE

Exam board & link to specification: [Edexcel](#) (note – this is different to previous years)

Find past papers easily here: [Edexcel GCSE PE Past Papers - Revision World](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [GCSE Physical Education - Edexcel - BBC Bitesize](#)

To further improve in PE you could:

- Ensure that you meet deadlines for submitting practical work by regularly checking Show My Homework and responding to teachers' reminders.
- Develop strategies to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of subject content, by first studying related YouTube videos.
- Practise writing about key topic areas from the specification; ensure that you write about a range of activities.
- Re-learn to write from the GCSE specification the key definitions stated for each topic area.
- Using past paper questions, develop your ability to apply your knowledge and understanding of factors that strengthen performance in sport.
- Use specific subject knowledge to analyse and evaluate available evidence in order to provide a comprehensive answer to the higher level 6- and 9-mark questions on Paper 1 and 2.

Photography

Exam board & link to specification: [AQA](#)

Find past papers easily here: N/A

Other useful online resources:

- [Pinterest](#)
- [The Tate](#)
- [National Portrait Gallery](#)
- [ArtNet](#)
- [BBC Bitesize – GCSE Art & Design / AQA](#)

To further improve in Photography you could:

- Create a wide range of plans for your final piece(s) using sketches, annotations and mini experiment pieces. It is important to include 3-5 examples.
- Ensure all gaps in your portfolio are completed in full.
- Take a wide selection (25-30 images per series) of creative and imaginative photographs that clearly link to each theme. This is especially important in the ESA unit.
- Experiment with a wide selection of different ideas for photography shoots and ensure these are fully planned. Make at least five effective and creative edits to photographs, per technique, using hand and/or computer methods to improve the overall visual appeal.
- Add detailed notes and screenshots/photographs of any edits made, within this it should state the next steps forward.
- Develop clear and informed opinions of other photographers/designers/artist's work. Identify and explain why certain photographers/designers/artist's work was selected as an influence and how you intend to use this within your own work.
- Critically evaluate each project in detail and highlight areas of success and areas for improvement.
- Plan for next steps using a mind map/notes, identifying areas for further research and influences that will be used.

RE

Exam board & link to specification: [AQA](#)

For RS, the key focus is on Christianity and Islam

Find past papers easily here: [AQA GCSE RS Past Papers - Revision World](#)

Other useful online resources:

- [GCSE Religious Studies - AQA - BBC Bitesize](#)

To further improve in RE you could:

In lessons

- Keep focused throughout the lesson; getting distracted or distracting others can lead to a lower quality of written work and a poorer understanding of the topic. Show determination and energy.
- Make verbal contributions and ensure you show empathy and understanding during class discussions.
- Ensure that you keep your booklet up to date and completed to a high standard.
- Keep in mind your feedback targets on written pieces of work to ensure you continue to improve.

When revising

- Be sure you are strategic in your revision. Use your PLC at the start of each booklet to diagnose your strengths and areas of difficulty. Start with areas you find more difficult first. Stick to a revision strategy & timetable.
- Use the tracker you have been given as well as the online resources.
- Ensure you commit knowledge (such as key sources of authority) to your long-term memory. Be sure to apply your revision to specific exam questions as part of your independent learning.
- Apply your revision to specific exam questions as part of your independent learning.
- Practice exam timings; remember approximately 1 minute per mark
- Attend the additional RE classes put on by the department.

In exams

- Focus carefully on applying the exam technique you have been taught for each type of question.
- Read the question and ensure you refer to sources of authority when justifying your views.
- Apply your RE specific knowledge (sources of authority and denominational differences) accurately, thoroughly and consistently.

- Write enough to get full marks. Be sure to fully develop your points to meet the demands of the question.
- Ensure you include evaluation and reasoning in your written work; evaluate different religious ideas by providing strengths and weaknesses of different views as well as justification to your opinion.
- Ensure that you consistently and clearly link your points back to exactly what the question is asking.
- Ensure you regularly make references to valid sources of authority.
- Use the PEEL structure when answering the 12-mark exam question, and ensure you add two/three different religious perspectives; do not simply write your opinion.
- Ensure you write enough to reach the highest marking band, as too brief an answer won't gain the top marks.
- Try to incorporate different denominational perspectives to highlight your exceptional subject knowledge to examiners.