

General Tips for GCSE Revision

Extra subject specific advice can be found at the end of this information, arranged alphabetically by course.

When revising for your GCSEs, there are some common approaches that can be applied to most (if not all) subjects. There are three main steps:

1. **Understanding** the concepts & skills
2. **Learning** the processes and content off by heart
3. **Practising** applying your knowledge in different contexts

Firstly, you must **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:

- Attending a teacher-led revision session/asking for clarification outside of lessons
- Reading the information in a different format (such as a revision guide/BBC Bitesize/Seneca)
- Watching a YouTube video or listening to a podcast
- Making revision cards/mind maps/notes from these resources to organise your thoughts

Next 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. Examples of activities that can help here include:

- Completing retrieval quizzes (either online or self-made)
- Making a mind map from scratch then checking against a previously made exemplar
- Using flashcards/Quizlet to test your knowledge
- Covering over notes and trying to summarise them from memory
- Dual coding – turning written information into diagrams or vice versa

Notice how this does not include rereading/highlighting/writing notes – this is not an efficient way of learning content, as it doesn't make you think. This step should feel 'hard' – the process of retrieving information from your long-term memory has been proven to help you remember it. A great resource about the psychology behind this can be found here: [The Learning Scientists](#). More ideas can also be found on our 'learning to learn' page on the school website: [Urmston Grammar School - Learning to Learn](#).

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:

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.

It is important that you don't focus too heavily on just one or two of these three areas – all are required if you are to achieve the best that you can. The weighting of how much to focus on each step will be different for each subject and each student, but they must all be considered. Below you can find more specific tips and advice for each subject.

Art

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.

Biology

In lessons:

- Prepare in advance by reading over the work from the previous lesson and the relevant 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.
- When completing Biology classwork, 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.

When revising:

- Complete past-paper questions, then review and mark the answers by checking with mark schemes.

In exams:

- Carefully read and think about each question before beginning to write an answer. The focus of the question and the information provided must be clearly understood before attempting the answer.
- When completing written questions, ensure that you highlight key terms that are expected by the examiner and must be included in your answers.
- 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

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 using Seneca Learning.
- Add depth to your notes to aid future revision.
- 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:

- 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

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).

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.

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

- The differences between ionic, covalent and metallic bonding and structures.
- 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?
- The changes that Mendeleev made to his Periodic Table and why scientists didn't trust his ideas at the time.
- How changes in conditions affect the rate of a reaction, including information about collision theory.

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

Computer Science

In lessons:

- Maintain focus & always complete key tasks.
- Ensure your work area is organised.
- 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.

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

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.
- Please ensure that you are embedding written paper reflection and revision into your homework planning
- Following your trip to see 'Woman in Black', aim to make detailed notes as soon as possible and whilst the production is fresh in your mind. Whilst watching the performance, aim to be objective and analytical.

When practicing your scripted extracts, consider the following:

- Continue to explore ideas for the staging on the text & 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!
- Be organised in your preparations for any performance support you are hoping to use, this can mean rehearsing with props and costume items to ensure that you feel comfortable in the final performance.
- 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?

D+T

To further improve in D+T you could:

- Attend extra D+T sessions at lunchtimes on Monday and Wednesday at lunchtime and after school for help finishing folder-work and to realise fully the detailed elements of your final prototype design through 121 discussion and making practical details with Mr Barber.
- Ensure all the written elements of A3 sheets are annotated with explanatory notes including introduction and conclusion to achieve the higher grades.
- Complete any A3 sheets and revision homework set.

English

Generally:

- Focus in lessons and complete all class work tasks to the best of your ability.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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:

- Produce essay plans for a range of different characters, themes and ideas to be checked by your teacher.
- 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, both language and structural, for the unseen poetry questions of Paper 2.
- Practise constructing an overall argument to give your responses 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.
- Complete practice paper questions in timed conditions to be marked by your teacher.

French

Generally:

- Attend all French revision sessions you can.
- 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 FRÉJALAMBiPS 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 réponses' are up to date and that you have improved the ones you wrote in Year 10 where possible. Set aside regular slots of 30-40 minutes in which you practise 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.

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:

- 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.
- Include 3+ examples of each tense in your writing.
- Make sure you can say something in the past, present and future and give a justified opinion about every topic we have studied.
- 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.

FPN

In lessons:

- Remain focussed and self-motivated asking questions to clarify and improve your subject knowledge.
- Ensure you come prepared, with your revision work booklet and homework/past paper questions completed on time.
- Make sure you stay on top of your NEA. If you need help with this, attend after school support on a Tuesday and Thursday; remember, this is worth 50% of your final GCSE grade.

When revising:

- Know the UK based dietary guidelines. Refer to the tips and advice page in your revision work booklet. Try and learn the key facts from memory.
- Use your class booklets and end of unit revision notes from Year 10 to check your knowledge and understanding.
- Create knowledge organisers on weaker topics and test yourself by learning key facts and definitions from memory.
- Complete past-paper questions, then review and mark the answers by checking with mark schemes.
- Continue using Seneca Learning to improve your subject knowledge and recall.

When answering exam questions:

- Practice exam timings; remember approximately 1 minute per mark.
- Complete past paper short questions circling the key points and clarifying the structure of the response. Review and mark by checking with the mark schemes.
- Practise writing short plans before completing extended questions.
- 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.

Geography

In lessons:

- Stay focused throughout each lesson - maximum effort is now 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.

Outside of lessons:

- Get organised! Put topics in Paper 1 And Paper 2 folders.
- 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.
- Complete exam questions to test your understanding (OCR website has multiple past papers).
- Come to the weekly revision sessions for help with anything you are struggling with.
- Make full use of support that is offered.
- Make sure you know your case study PSD.

German

Generally:

- Attend German revision sessions as often as possible. Take careful notes from these sessions and try to include the new structures you have learnt in all future pieces of writing.
- Pay attention at all times during lessons, avoiding the temptation to chat quietly. You must be 100% focussed to avoid making careless errors, particularly when writing in German.
- For anything you don't know the answer for/don't get right in class, make sure you annotate your notes carefully and highlight what you didn't know, so it stands out to learn, ready for the next time this language/structure occurs.
- Make three (voluntary) contributions to class discussion per lesson.
- Tackle extension/bonus tasks at every opportunity.

When revising:

- You have access to two GCSE textbooks v Go back to the beginning of the online textbook and re-visit year 10 topics, completing reading/listening activities. Also, use the "resources" section to access the transcripts to accompany the listening activities.
- Using the "Quizlet" links that have been created for all the GCSE topic areas, spend time each day working through the vocabulary lists, so you know every word on every list and can translate it into English. Build this into your daily routine - 15 minutes every day, for example. This will really boost your scores in the Listening/Reading exams.
- Practice listening questions from past exams that require you to answer in German, checking mark schemes and transcripts carefully to resolve any misconceptions.
- Complete reading questions from past exam papers and your AQA textbook to boost your confidence in this area.
- Ensure thorough preparation for the upcoming speaking examination by ensuring you have higher-level conversation answers for our current theme and by regularly revising earlier ones.
- Aim to master the accurate formation of the three main tenses and a variety of higher-level structures, in order to be able to communicate clearly in the writing examination.
- Re-learn past participles of frequently used verbs.
- Learn a list of interesting adjectives that you could use to produce varied opinions in the speaking and writing exams.
- Learn ten activities in past, present and future tenses that you could use in a range of topic areas.

Exam tips:

- Write a plan to ensure you answer all bullet points.
- Use the time phrases/key words from the bullet points to ensure you answer them fully.
- Include 3+ examples of each tense in your writing.
- Check that the verbs you have used match the subject of sentences.
- Translate your work to check it makes sense.
- In photo card tasks, try to develop your answers clearly and simply, whilst leaving time to answer all five questions comfortably.
- Always use German that you know is correct, as it is impossible to "think in English" and translate directly. Think about what it is you want to say, and work out how you can convey the message in German that you know is accurate. Never make it up "as you go along"!

History

Outside of lessons:

- Attend revision classes as often as possible.
- Complete additional past paper questions for marking and feedback.
- Organise files and make sure all notes are up to date.
- Carry out wider reading - use the articles for Nazi Germany.
- Prepare for Paper 3 by recapping on the exam technique for the source utility and 'explain why' questions.

Exam tips:

- Focus on answering the question directly and consistently - especially the 12- and 16-mark questions.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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

In lessons:

- Make sure you are ready to begin lessons promptly by having your books and other equipment open.
- Hand in homework set so that you can act on the personalised feedback given on each task.
- Make sure you complete an appropriate amount of work each lesson.
- Ensure that you catch up with any work missed through absence
- Ask for help if you are struggling!

When revising:

- 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.

Music

To improve in Music you could:

- 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.

Physics

When revising:

- To prepare for your summer 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.
- Learn definitions of key words for each of the GCSE Physics topics - flashcards can help with this.
- Make sure you know how to rearrange all the equations and have learned the units for all quantities.
- 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.

Exam tips:

- Read exam questions carefully and 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

To improve in PE you could:

- 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.
- 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

To 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.
- 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.

RE

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 during lessons.
- Make verbal contributions and ensure you show empathy and understanding during class discussions.

When revising:

- Stick to a revision strategy & timetable.
- Use the tracker you have been given as well as the online resources.
- Ensure you commit knowledge to your long-term memory.
- 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:

- 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 you regularly make references to valid sources of authority.
- Use the PEEL structure when answering the 15-mark exam question, and ensure you add two/three different religious perspectives; do not simply write your opinion.