

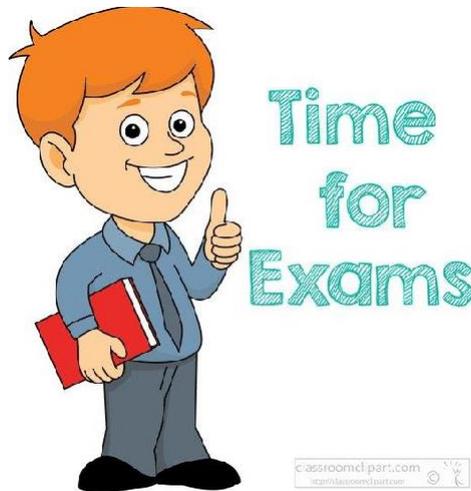


How to use the TWA Revision Guide

This is your specialist guide into effective revision based on TWA's Revision Policy and "10-Point Blue Print for Effective Revision".

How the guide will help with your revision

- This will include structured tips and techniques in how to revise more efficiently
- Taking out the stress and confusion out of the examination process
- To help boost your confidence



Our Revision Guide approach

- I) INTRODUCTION
- II) MANAGING YOUR REVISION
- III) ACTIVE REVISION
- IV) TESTING YOURSELF
- V) EXAMINATION TECHNIQUES
- VI) MANAGING

STRESS



I) INTRODUCTION

MOTIVATION

You will reap financial rewards from examination success
in years to come.

Evidence suggests that students who achieve **five A* to C iGCSE grades** will earn more in their first year of employment than someone with **four or less A* to C iGCSEs**. Over a lifetime of work, the difference can amount to nearly **\$200,000!**¹

At A level, nearly 75% of employers are reluctant to consider recruiting someone with less than two A-level grades A to C. The difference in earning power at this level amounts to over **\$400,000**², compared to someone with similar qualifications. Those who gain good A level grades and a good degree is likely to earn more.

What motivates you to do well?

- A more interesting job?
- Going to college or Uni of your choice?
- A sense of achievement
- Future opportunities- you never know where life might lead you!!

¹ Source: Learning and Skills Council, 2007

² Source: Learning and Skills Council, 2007



II. MANAGING YOUR REVISION

It is YOU that must revise- so find a technique that suits YOU- but have a go at several in order to select the ones which will work best.

To avoid stress building up, effective planning is crucial. This skill will help you cope with the limited time component of exams!

Back to basics

Although seemingly obvious, the basics are an essential starting point, the “nuts and bolts” of effective revision, including:

- ✓ Ensuring you have a secure place to revise
- ✓ Having appropriate textbooks to hand
- ✓ Having a plentiful supply of pens and paper, highlighters, blue tack and large sheets of paper for displays.
- ✓ To have a print out of your exam board syllabus
- ✓ Know your predicted and current working grades

This will help start your revision with a relaxed and positive attitude.

Some early thoughts when devising your revision plan

There are many factors you should consider when planning your revision schedule. Your revision should be “Smart”. Revision is most effective when you immerse yourself fully in the revision experience and is:

Strategic, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound



Strategic: What question do I need to ask? What do I need to know? What don't I already know!

Measurable: How do I know what I know? How can I test myself- i.e. past papers

Achievable: Can I do it? Have I set specific targets for the day or the revision session that I know I can achieve?
?

Realistic: Work in small chunks rather than assuming you can cover everything in one session

Time bound: Ensure sure you have a good revision timetable that works for you

Reserve time for thinking and reflection – and if that means less note taking, that's fine!

Planning what to revise- The Jigsaw

When you do a jigsaw you do not just start at one corner and carry on adding bit after bit in sequence you:

- Find all the corners, then the edges.
- Group the pieces in terms of colour
- Do the obvious bits first
- Then all the boring bits- the blue sky, green grass tend just to fit in.

Revision is like this!

Do **not** just read a book or your notes- look at chapter headings or highlighted bits- decide what is important. Look at conclusions of chapters or diagrams which may help clarify ideas. In other words, get a general outline or understanding of the subject area. Then fill in the difficult bits- the bits you don't yet know.

Brain-friendly time management

Revision Timetable

The best laid plans will never work effectively if you try and revise when your brain does not function at its best. Therefore try to:

- Revise in manageable chunks of let's say, up to 45 minutes, then take a break
- Do something entirely different: your brain needs downtime to process the information
- Identify your natural "body clock", known as your personal biorhythm, e.g. the time of the day when you are most alert

OR

Plan to do a certain amount of revision a day – use a chart to tick off the hours- if you do less then make up the time tomorrow. If you do more then give yourself a treat!



OR

Plan to achieve a certain thing- achieve this no matter how long (or short) a time it takes!

OR

Look at your diary and see what spare time you have –use that for revision- its not the best thing to do but it's a start at least!!

- Think in different places: take summary notes on cards with you, look at them anywhere and as often as possible.
- Think in different styles: experiment, reflect on ways to organise the information.
- ***Learn to use mark schemes and examiners reports for guidance and feedback – these are great for seeing how examiners actually mark exam papers and used effectively is a powerful strategy to improving grades.***
- Don't forget to use the internet, but do not browse without a strategy – don't waste **your** valuable time.

Tip 1: Plan your time to make sure you make the best use of what you have available.

- **List** all your exam subjects and the amount of time you might need for each one
- **Allocate** more time to the subject or topics you find the most difficult
- **Colour code** the table to get a quick visual reminder of what, how and when

TIP 2 : Take breaks in the middle of a topic or essay- it becomes much easier to pick up where you left off rather than mustering the enthusiasm to start something new!



Example of revision plan:

Monday, 9.00 to 11.00. Subject 1, Topic 1

- Download and listen to a podcast topic onto your phone
- Take short notes on the podcast
- Produce revision materials in your preferred learning styles
- Use examstutor test to check your knowledge of this topic
- Outline a plan for addressing your weak points.

The 3 Rs: revision and relaxation routines

Once your revision is progressing well, you must be careful not to be building up excessive stress! You might not notice it because you feel you are too busy learning, learning, learning.

Remember! Short, sharp bursts of effective, well planned revision are best – 45 minutes is what we recommend. Include some physical exercise or relaxation techniques into your routine.

III. ACTIVE LEARNING

Effective revision is **not**

- Reading notes
- Highlighting downloaded notes
- Reading a book

Make your revision Multi-sensory learning = Most likely to remember

- **See it** → Read it, map it, draw it, **visualise it**
- **Hear it** → I-Pod it, **listen to it**, "talk your way" through it
- **Do it** → Write it, shout it, **re-enact it**
- **Summarise it** → **Summarise it:** a paragraph in no more than 8-12 words
- **Personalise it** → Think of **real-life examples** to make it more personal
- **Question it** → Make up 10 **mini-questions**, then answer them



- **Teach it** → **Teach it** to someone else
- **Display it** → Make huge **wall charts** with **diagrams**

REVISION TOOLS

Memorisation, mnemonics and rhymes

Try using these techniques for organising your memory and enhancing it. Some facts just stay in the mind, others simply disappear. How and why do we remember some things better than others?

According to some scientists and researchers, it is a popular myth that we only use 10% of our brain. But most of us have a natural preference for the way in which we like to receive process and share information. Our memory (like our muscles) works on the “use it or lose it” format.

My - Very - Early - Morning - Jam - Sandwich - Usually - Nozzles - People -
for **Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto –**

Using rhymes:

This rhyme explains the rule to apply whenever you're faced with the confusing task of having to divide a whole number by a fraction.

“The number you're dividing by - Turn upside-down and multiply”

Thus $4 / (\frac{1}{2}) = 4 * (2/1) = 8$

Note taking

Have you got a preferred format? Do you know why and how to use your notes effectively? There are many styles to choose from: linear, patterned, nuclear... You may find that particular styles work better for different subjects.

Before taking notes, consider the following:

- Do I really need this information?
- Which bits do I need?
- Will I really use it? When and how?
- Have I already noted similar information?
- What questions do I want to answer with this?



Now ask yourself: what do my notes look like?

Have I collected and recorded information effectively? Do my notes make my thinking visible? Will they help me organise my ideas and arguments?

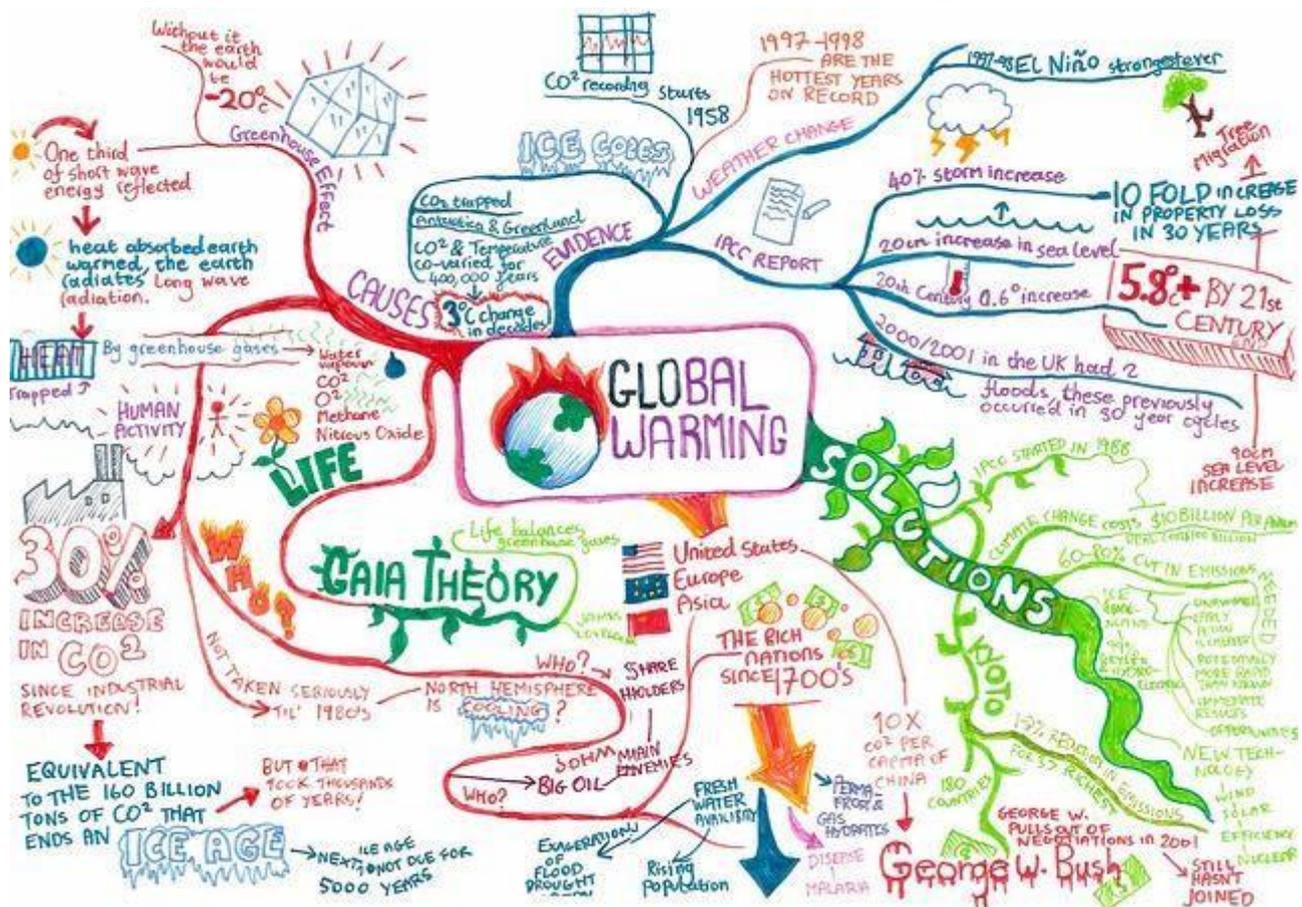
Once you are certain that you need and want to make notes, put your pen down so that you won't copy out everything and try this:

- Read in order to answer your own questions
- Identify and sum up the main ideas, jot down a few words to remind you
- Note exactly where the information comes from: title, author, page
- Note real names and quotations exactly as they are written
- Leave space to add details later

Concept maps

They are especially valuable if you have visual and spatial preference. They work from a central theme or concept. In spider diagrams the core theme is situated at the centre and the component ideas spread out from it.

In the mid map diagram, the central concept is quite literally at the centre of your map. If this time, we take Global Warming as the example, then a spider diagram could look something like the one below.





Note taking

Keep notes short and simple. This can be done in five main ways:

- Use a number strategy (and have an index)
- List the key information
- Do not write down every word
- Use abbreviations
- Use a margin to list key words and references

The advantage of notes over the concept map system is that you have more information, but of course they take up more space.

You can turn your concept map into linear notes and vice versa. There are three main stages to achieving this.

Want to know more?

- Write the key concept in the middle
- Branch off with ideas
- Write only key words or use symbols
- Begin to group and organise as ideas start to flow
- Use arrows and colours to connect ideas

This can be fun to do, as your mind keeps buzzing with new connections.

Creative action!

It can also be effective to make your own flashcards. A set of cards will fit into a pocket. Visual learners like to display post-its around as visual reminders. Posters, like flashcards, are there to gain immediate access. They can be used for really difficult things that are very hard to remember – such as the chemist's periodic table.

Essay writing: learn to “see what you think”

Use these techniques for complex or meaty essay question. Group your thoughts when exploring a dense topic and to show relations between points, e.g. cause and effect:

Try this to structure your essays using **any** of the following strategies:

- **PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting)** → A tool for considering new ideas
- **OPV (Other People's Views)** → A tool to consider how others see things
- **CAF - FIP (Consider All Factors, First Important Priorities)** → Tools for exploring and prioritising factors in a situation



How do you collect and record information?

- Write out questions to guide research, look for answers, jot down ideas
- Be aware of the different types of source material you can use
- Facts, theories, opinions, personal experience
- Books, articles, surveys, reports, class notes, data
- Be clear about whether you need the info and how you will use it
- Write down where you found your sources for the bibliography
- Be rigorous! Check the word limit

IV. TESTING YOURSELF

Now follow this up and **practise, absorb, review, reflect, discuss and respond.**

Practise- take away your books and notes- can you remember what you need to remember!

Absorb- revisit the topic

Review- check you have covered everything you need to

Reflect- do you understand it

Discuss- what you have learnt with someone else if you can

Respond- answer some past questions

Even after intensive revising, you will still forget some things. After a good night's sleep however, you should:

- Check what you know at the time of the day when you are most alert
- Consolidate it and use a strategy to remember those aspects you still find difficult

Some say that after you have spent up to 4 hours revising (say 4 lots of 45 minutes) and reviewing a topic, you will remember it for 24 hours, but if you review it again within another 24 hours you will remember it for 4 days. We recommend you revisit your topic revision after sleeping on it.

Have you learnt it?

Make sure the stuff makes sense to you-

- Try giving a lecture about it to yourself-
- Or teach it to a friend or parent-
- OR a teddy bear!
- Or imagine you are the teacher teaching your class about...???- how would you make it interesting?



TIP:- If you find stuff hard to remember

- Text it to yourself!
- Or imagine your favourite pop singer explaining it to you- imagine their voice and movements etc.
- Or use people in your class as characters or elements or countries or...
- Look at past papers- now make up your own questions – send them to friends!- this is what examiners do!!

V. EXAMINATION TECHNIQUES

Directives of the command words

No matter how good your memorisation and understanding appears to be, you may remain uncertain about some topics including how to most effectively answer examination questions. Feedback from examiners suggests many students know the facts but find it difficult to answer because they do not follow the **directives of the command words**. As a consequence, they fail to respond correctly in the context of the questions. Ensure you know how to maximise your marks on exam questions: check the exam board's examiners reports and mark schemes, which can be accessed via their websites.

Assessment Objectives

- **AO1** questions start with command words such as **state, define** and **identify**.
- **AO2** questions test **application of knowledge** and **understanding** and want you to **describe, explain** and **suggest**. You might also be presented with unfamiliar information.
- **AO3** questions are about experiments and investigations. In the theory papers you will be asked about them. The command words are **analyse** and **explain**.
- **AO4** questions have **synoptic (synthesis)** and **evaluative** elements. The synthesis requires you to write in prose: a report or an essay in which you draw on different aspects of a specification. In evaluation, you are required to make personal judgement.

The need for accuracy and relevance is **crucial**: present day examinations are set so that questions assess different levels of competence. Questions test specific **Assessment Objectives** and command words that direct you to answer questions at the appropriate levels. Make sure you know how to **demonstrate your understanding** in very precise ways, so that your answers fit precisely those of the mark schemes.



The 3 Rs: revision and relaxation routines

Now that your revision is progressing well, you must be careful not to be building up excessive stress! You might not notice it because you feel you are too busy learning, learning, learning.

Remember! Short, sharp bursts of effective, well planned revision are best – 45 minutes is what we recommend. Include some physical exercise or relaxation techniques into your routine.

B S Bloom devised these ideas about levels of knowledge way back in the 50s and they have come to dominate examination questions today.³

Essay Technique

Remember PEE

Point

Evidence/example

Explanation

BUT if you really want to do well then remember **PEER**

The 'R' stands for 'response'- yours- what do you think? What does someone else think? Is there an alternative point of view?

Words to think about when writing essays

- 1) ***Linking ideas together***- furthermore, moreover, besides, however, in reality it was found, my feeling is...
- 2) ***Time connectives***- Also, firstly, secondly, to begin, additionally, then, finally, to conclude
- 3) ***To give an alternative opinion***- To look at this a different way, in other words, in view of all this, while this may be true, however, although, by contrast, another way of viewing this, on the one hand, although,
- 4) ***To clarify your ideas*** - For example, that is to say, especially in, in particular the, mainly, mostly etc
- 5) ***To finish off your essay***- 'Therefore, so it can be seen that, the consequence is, it is evident from, because of this, that implies that, hence



VI. MANAGING STRESS

Good stress, bad stress

Exams deadlines, paid work, time management... Leaving things until the last possible moment, finding it difficult to get started... How can you manage the stress caused by all these factors? Can it motivate your actions rather than paralyse them?

Ever heard of “adaptive” stress? “Adaptive” stress is the response we activate when confronted with difficult situations. Most of the time, our body and emotions will cope quite well and the stress will “kick start” us into positive action. Remember how you felt and reacted when confronted with an unrealistic deadline!

However stress can also be a positive thing, but if it is not managed appropriately; it **will** build up so that initial motivation changes into worry, irritability or even panic! Worrying about things will only increase pressure. Taking action will free your mind and reduce your anxiety level. The strong advice here is to start early in order to maintain the sense of urgency that will trigger positive outcomes.

VIII. SUMMARY

Now that you are clearer on how best to revise effectively, you are well on the way to maximising your chance of obtaining the best possible grades.