

# What can I do to help my child with revision in Key Stage 4?

The following is based on information from the BBC website ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)) and [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk) and other sources, and is intended as sensible advice for students and parents.

You can't do the revision, but there is plenty you can do to help your child to get organised, stay motivated and keep calm.

## Getting organised

1. Help your child to draw up a revision planner. This should list dates, details of the subject and topics (see Appendix 1) to revise, and what he/she'd like to finish by when. The timeline can have a checklist, so tasks can be ticked off as your child goes along.



2. Make sure that their social life/job is not interfering with their studying. They need rest and sleep to make sure that their brains are active and open to learning.

3. Work with your child. Set goals you both think are realistic in a particular time. Ticks on the timetable will show success. Do try to keep up to date with how he/she's getting on.



4. Offer to help with testing and any subjects they are finding too difficult to revise.

5. Make sure they read thoroughly past or mock exam papers.

6. If certain goals are not met, don't be negative with your child - try to figure out together what went wrong and help him/her to get back on track.

7. Encourage your child to attend revision classes.

8. Encourage your child to use a variety of appropriate revision methods and equipment e.g. highlighter pens, tape recordings, post-it notes. Discuss with them how these methods work, and help them choose the best one for their learning style.

9. Get your child to 'teach' you something, as research shows that, while we learn only 10% of what we read, we learn 95% of what we teach to someone else.

10. When your child is revising, encourage them to drink water, listen to (quiet) music and to take regular breaks.

11. When your child is on study leave expect at least 4 hours of productive, active revision but don't expect them to revise all day and all evening.

## Getting motivated

Getting started on a big job like revision is tough for many people, but you can help your child get motivated. Praise and rewards work well.

Use the revision planner to plan out small rewards when a certain number of targets have been met. These might include watching a favourite TV programme, calling a friend or having an afternoon off.

Help your child to see beyond the revision, too. Remind her/him how rewarding it will be to know she/he did her best. A bigger final reward, such as a pair of trainers, a holiday or a local visit somewhere exciting will give them something to look forward to when it's all over.

## Staying calm

As far as possible, try to make sure that revision time is quiet time in the house. A healthy diet and regular exercise are also especially important when your child is under pressure.

If your child is highly motivated, it's important to make sure that he/she doesn't overwork. Breaks are essential. Remind your child that even a short 5 minute break every 20 minutes or so will refresh her/his mind. Making a drink, playing some sport, listening to some music or watching a



TV programme, are all good ways to help relax before the next revision session.

Talk to your child about what the subjects and exams are about, what they have to do in them, what they feel confident/less confident about, etc. Talking to you about their learning will help them to think about their learning needs. If they have any worries, encourage them to see their teacher, or you can contact the teacher concerned.

Studying in a group can be helpful. Children can pick up new ideas, talk about exam stress and help each other with areas they're finding difficult.

# Help your child to reduce stress



## Stress - what is it?

Stress is the body's normal response to a challenge, threat or excitement. During revision and exams, anxiety and stress are common problems for pupils, even for those who appear confident and calm. While small stress levels can make pupils alert and focused, too much can reduce concentration and confidence.

Here are some tips for managing stress:

- Encourage your son or daughter to get enough sleep. Tiredness promotes anxiety.
- Remind them to avoid large doses of caffeine - it can cause tension and anxiety.
- Help them not to dwell on previous exams. This can also increase anxiety about later papers.
- Encourage them to try relaxation exercises. They can reduce anxiety levels and cope with panicky feelings.

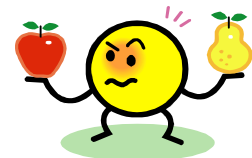
# Healthy Body = Healthy Mind

## Food for thought

Encourage your child to eat regular, healthy meals.

### **Brain Fuel** (Advice for students)

- Bread, pasta, cereals and potatoes are filling and packed with starchy carbohydrates, which release energy slowly, meaning you can keep going for longer.
- Fruit and vegetables give you essential vitamins and minerals. Aim for at least five portions a day.
- Food like pasties, chips and crisps are high in fat.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Dehydrated brains don't think clearly and water is healthier than sweet, fizzy drinks.
- Meat, fish, pulses, milk and dairy foods are good sources of protein. Moderate amounts are essential for a healthy diet.
- Make sure you eat breakfast on the day of an exam.
- If you're not getting enough iron then you'll damage your ability to concentrate for long periods of time and your energy levels will begin to drop. If hour long sessions of revision are proving too much, try eating more red meat, eggs and leafy green vegetables like spinach.



## Exercise

Although it is essential to use revision time effectively, a bit of the great outdoors can blow the cobwebs away and help your child relax. If they can't get out, at least encourage them to get up and out of their chair for a stretch and a wander whilst revising.



# On exam days

You can do a lot to help your child prepare for exam days.

- Make sure the alarm is set so they're not rushing and have time to eat breakfast.
- Encourage them to take five minutes to check they have everything they need, like extra pens and pencils, calculators and maths equipment. If they have a mobile phone, remind them not to take it with them into the exam room.
- Say: "Don't panic, don't worry - just do your best." Tell them to say it to themselves during an exam.
- In the exam, students should read through the paper and first do the questions they can answer.
- Students should make a quick plan or brief notes for their answers.
- Students should write as much as possible on each question. Short, clear answers get more marks than answers that waffle just to fill the page.
- It is worth checking what the questions are worth, and to write more for those questions with higher marks.
- Students should spend the last few minutes checking what they have written. The check is for mistakes in facts and figures, names of people and places, and grammar and punctuation.
- There will not be any hidden traps in exam questions. Exam success is a mixture of work, preparation and clear thinking.
- Look out for the key words and instruction terms – see Appendix 3.





## Appendix 2

### Revision Planner

Day	School	Subject	Topic(s)
M	Lunch		
O			
N	Evening		
T	Lunch		
U			
E	Evening		
W	Lunch		
E			
D	Evening		
T	Lunch		
H			
U	Evening		
F	Lunch		
R			
I	Evening		

S	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
A			
T			
S	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
U			
N			

## Appendix 3

Look out for the key terms and the instruction terms. Underline them – or highlight them. This will help you to keep them in mind. Questions are not set to catch you out or to be especially difficult. Some might be written in a way you have not seen before. Your job may then be to 'understand' the question. Always think carefully about what questions mean.

### **Instruction Terms**

Instruction terms are often used in exam questions. They tell you what to do with the subject of the question. The exact meaning of these terms depends on the subject. The list below shows you what they normally mean. Try to understand what an instruction is asking you to do – but be reasonable. Don't look for problems where they might not exist.

#### **account for**

Explain the *reasons* for something. This is not the same as 'Give an account of' – which asks for a detailed description.

#### **analyse**

Study something in depth – identifying, describing, and criticising in detail its main features.

#### **argue**

Put forward an idea, then give an example, discuss what it means, and defend it against possible counter-arguments.

#### **assess**

Examine something closely. Consider in a balanced way its strengths and weaknesses. Discuss the points for and against something. Finally, give your clear opinion.

#### **calculate**

Reckon or compute something using maths.

#### **clarify**

Simplify something and make it clear.

#### **comment**

State clearly your options on something. Support your views with evidence or explanations.

#### **compare**

Look for similarities **and** differences between two or more things.

#### **consider**

Express your thoughts and observations about something.

#### **contrast**

Single out and emphasise the **differences** between two or more things.

**criticise**

Give your judgment about something. Explore what it means, discussing all the evidence which is available.

**define**

Write down the precise meaning of something.

**demonstrate**

Show how something works or operates, and prove it by giving examples.

**describe**

Give a detailed and full account of something.

**develop**

Expand on something, taking it further.

**distinguish**

Explain the difference between two or more things.

**discuss**

Examine something by careful argument. Explore the advantages or disadvantages. Debate something and possibly consider any other ways of seeing it. This is probably the most common instruction term. It is inviting you to say something interesting in response to the subject. You can choose your own approach.

**elaborate**

Add further details to something.

**enumerate**

Make an ordered list, giving the main features of something – and omitting details.

**examine**

Enquire into something, investigate, or look closely into it.

**expand**

Go into more detail.

**explain**

Make something clear. Account for it. Clarify, interpret, and spell out a subject, giving reasons for its features.

**explore**

Approach something in a questioning manner, and consider it from a number of viewpoints.

**give an account of**

Describe something in detail, and explain it fully.

**how**

In what way, by what means or method, or to what extent does something happen, exist, or work.

**how far ...**

Similar to questions which begin '*To what extent ...*'. You should discuss the subject, and show any of its strengths or weaknesses.

**identify**

Pick out the main features or the important points of something.

**illustrate**

Make something clear by discussing examples of it.

**interpret**

Explain the meaning of something. Make it clear – using your own judgment, experience, or opinion.

**justify**

Show the reasons or the best arguments for something. Answer any objections likely to be made against it.

**list**

Make a list or catalogue of things.

**outline**

Give the main features or the general principles of a subject. You can leave out minor details. Emphasise the structure or arrangements of its parts.

**prove**

Show the truth or falsity of something, by presenting evidence.

**relate**

Show how things are connected. Show how they possible affect, cause, or resemble each other.

**review**

Make a survey of something. Examine the subject critically.

**show**

Reveal something – in some form of logical sequence.

**state**

Present the main points of a subject – in a brief, clear form.

**summarise**

Give an account of the main points of a subject, leaving out any details and examples.

**to what extent**

Similar to questions which begin '*How far ...*'. You are expected to discuss something, and show any of its strengths and weaknesses.

**trace**

Follow the development or history of a subject from some point of origin. Explain stage by stage.

**translate**

Express something in a different way, or convert from one language to another.

**verify**

Show something to be true, or confirm it.

**The main issue**

All questions contain a subject, a topic, or a main issue. This is what you have to write about, deal with, or solve (if it is a problem). You need to understand the question to work out what you should write about. Do this when you are looking at the instructions and key terms.

**Example 1**

"What were the causes of the Russian revolution of 1917?"

This question asks you to discuss the conditions and problems in Russia which **led up to** the revolution. It does **not** ask about the events of the revolution itself. The word **causes** is a key term here. This is the main idea of the question. You could easily lose marks by describing the revolution, rather than the **causes** of it.

**Example 2**

"The Victorians thought 'Children should be seen but not heard.' Is this still true today?"

This quote comes from the nineteenth century. Lots of people at that time thought that children should be kept in the background. The question is asking you to consider this idea – and to compare it with modern ideas. The main issue here is changes in the way children are brought up and treated. The instruction term is 'Discuss' – but it is not stated directly.

**Example 3**

"Examine the significance of Iago's role in **Othello**."

This question asks you to write about one character in a play. It is asking you to concentrate on this **one person** and his importance in the drama. This is the main idea in the question. You would also need to keep in mind issues of the play, and Iago's relationship to them. The instruction term here is 'Examine'.

Most problems are caused by not reading the question carefully enough.

This often means that you –

- don't answer the question set
- don't understand the main point
- don't spot the main emphasis
- don't follow the instructions

The solution is simple – ***read the question carefully!***