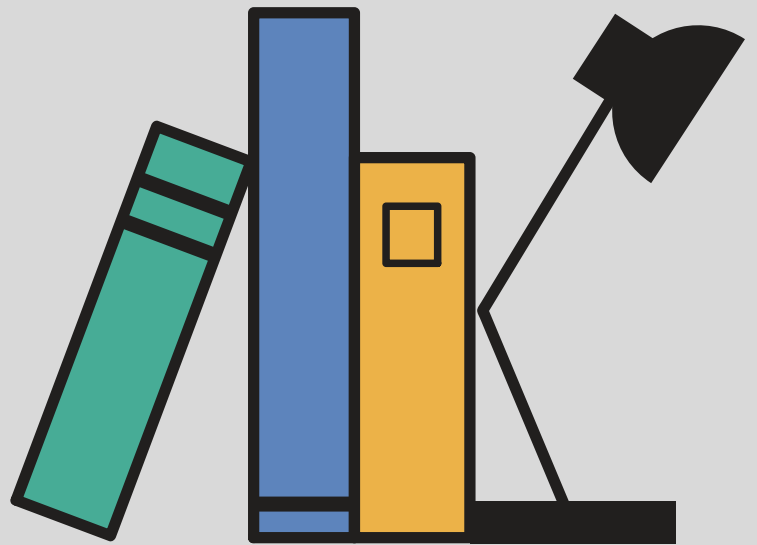


The Priory Academy LSST GCSE Revision Support Pack for Parents



Welcome:

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am sure that for you, like me, the last few years have flown by and now we find ourselves at the threshold of an incredibly important moment in your child's life. Obviously at this point there is a raft of information available to you and I am sure you have questions about how best to ensure that maximum progress is achieved in each subject. The purpose of this pack is to offer guidance, suggest pathways and answer some questions that you may have. Obviously the contents of this pack are not exhaustive but I do feel they are a good jumping off point and using them as a basis to move will result in some positive outcomes. I hope it is useful to you and if you have any further questions do not not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards,

Mr Smith
Head of Year 11

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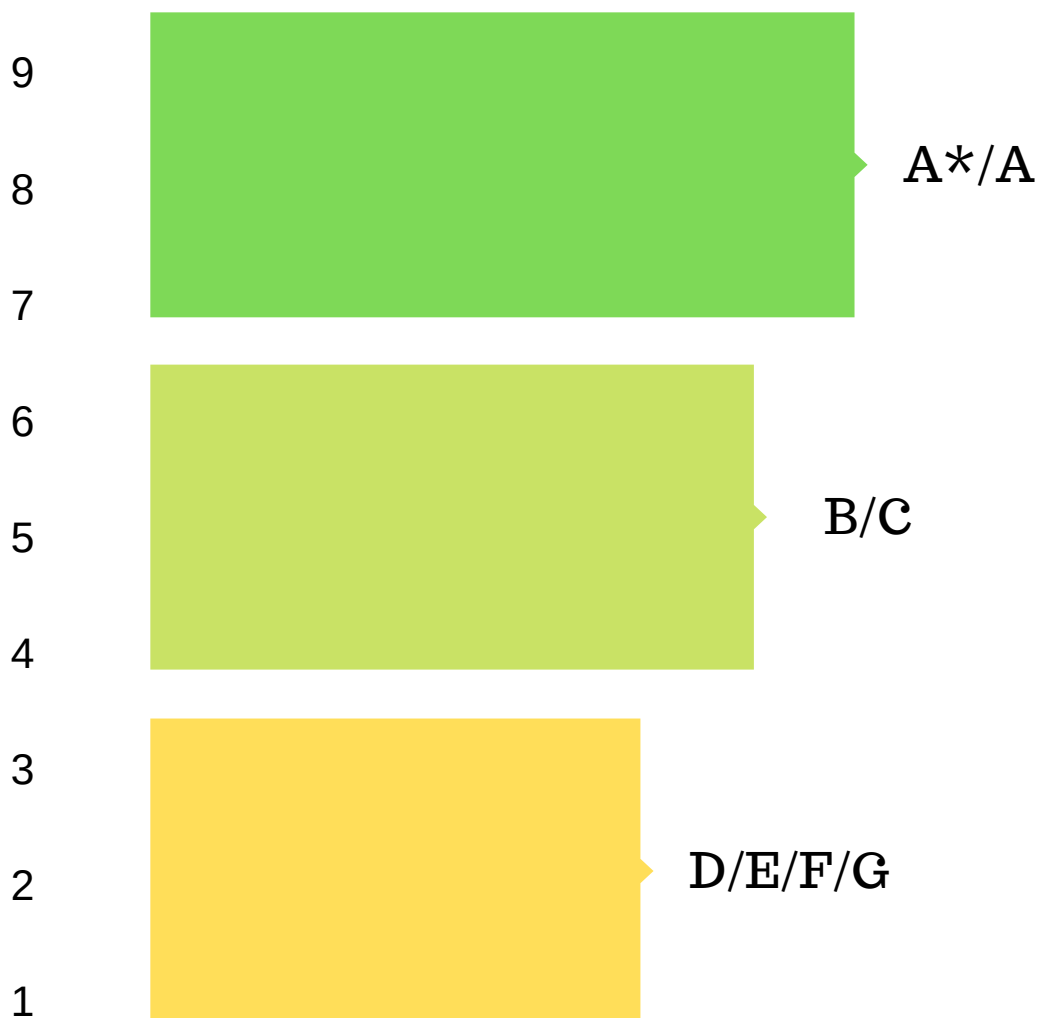
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GCSE Examination Boards

| AQA | OCR | EDEXCEL PEARSON | EDUQAS |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Art | Psychology | Mathematics | Drama |
| Business | D/T Food and Nutrition | Textiles | Media Studies |
| Computing | Engineering | | Music |
| Dance | <u>Creative iMedia</u> | | |
| French | | | |
| German | | | |
| Geography | | | |
| English Language | | | |
| English Literature | | | |
| History | | | |
| Physical Education | | | |
| Religious Studies | | | |
| Design and Tech | | | |
| Science | | | |

What do the new 9-1 grades equate to?

Recently the government changed the system of grading GCSE's from traditional letter based grading to a number based system. This has caused some confusion so for the sake of clarity what the new grades equate to in old terms is written below.



Ofqual advice for students taking exams:

"stress is not necessarily a bad thing"

people react to stress in different ways...

Stress can be a great motivator for some students, giving them the 'get up and go' that they need to succeed

Other students are **indifferent to stress**; they can float along without getting affected by stress in a good or bad way

Stress can be a bad thing for some students, when exam pressures become overwhelming

The **key things to remember** are that:

- stress is nothing to be scared of
- anxiety is not inevitable
- you can learn how to cope more effectively

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the signs of high exam anxiety

Cognitive signs (thoughts)

- going blank in an exam
- difficulty concentrating
- negative thoughts about past performance or consequences of failure

Affective signs (emotions)

- feeling excessive tension
- feeling panic
- feeling overwhelmed
- feeling not in control

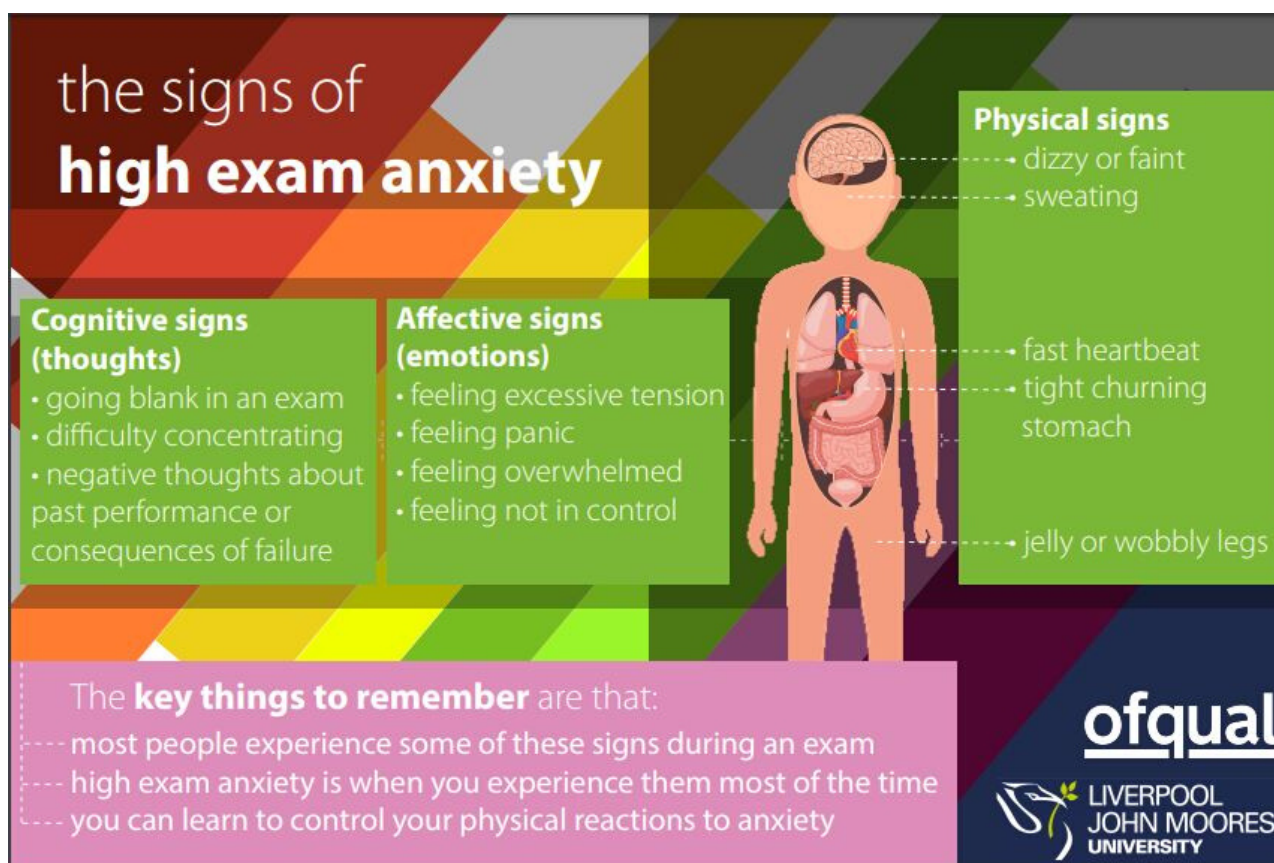
Physical signs

- dizzy or faint
- sweating
- fast heartbeat
- tight churning stomach
- jelly or wobbly legs

The **key things to remember** are that:

- most people experience some of these signs during an exam
- high exam anxiety is when you experience them most of the time
- you can learn to control your physical reactions to anxiety

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how to control physical reactions to anxiety

Deep breathing

When you become anxious your breathing becomes shallow and fast.

Breathing slowly and deeply will help you calm down and feel in control.



How do I do it?

- sit comfortably with a straight back
- place your left hand on your chest, and right hand below it, on your diaphragm
- inhale deeply through your nose for 5 seconds
- hold your breath for 2 seconds
- exhale slowly through your mouth
- feel the expansion in your diaphragm
- repeat for 1 or 2 minutes until you feel calm

The **key things to remember** are that:

- you can learn to control anxiety with deep breathing
- many people find it easier to learn with an instructor
- yoga or mindfulness classes can also be helpful

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how to feel more confident about exams

What are negative beliefs?

Many people with high exam anxiety can't stop worrying about failing or the consequences of failing.

For instance, 'If I fail my GCSEs my whole life will be a failure'.

These types of beliefs focus on what you can't do rather than what you can.

Replacing negative beliefs with positive beliefs

Find a positive, realistic belief that can replace the negative belief.

For instance, if your negative belief is 'I am rubbish at maths' a positive, realistic alternative could be:

'Even if I will never be the best at maths, I will do better if I have a revision plan and stick to it'.

The **key things to remember** are that:

- if you suffer from anxiety, replacing negative beliefs can help
- some people find it helpful to keep a record of their beliefs
- you can become a more confident person with a 'can do' attitude

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how to **best plan your revision**

For many students, **starting revision is the biggest hurdle** to overcome

1. Create a plan

Break down everything you need to revise into small topics and just revise one topic at a time. By creating a plan you are taking control.

2. Set targets

Identify when you are going to revise each topic. Give yourself a time limit for when to complete each topic.

3. Check progress

Check your progress and set yourself a new time limit if necessary. Once you've met a target, set yourself a new one.

The **key things to remember** are that:

- targets should be achievable and manageable
- targets must be short-term and include a time-limit
- review your targets, and when complete, set new ones



Ofqual answer further questions about exams and the process here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ask-ofqual-common-questions-answered>



The time has arrived and revising must get underway.....but what do I do? The next few pages should give you some ideas.

Some basic tips...

1. Help your child find to make a revision timetable

There is no set amount of time that your child should be revising because every child learns and retains information at different rates.

Of course, it's only natural that you want your child to reach their full potential. This is why it is important that you're aware of how your child is performing at school at regular intervals, to see if there are any notable changes that signify more work revision is necessary for their **own** benefit. (That last part is important to keep in mind - remember they aren't revising to please *you*.)

In fact, [research](#) shows that revision is better little and often so remember to encourage a focus on the quality vs. the quantity of revision.

The key to helping your child revise more often (*and be happier doing it*), is by breaking big tasks into small, manageable chunks to incorporate into a timetable. Life coach Lynn Scott offers us an awesome snippet of advice that I'm sure both parents and students can relate to:

|| Stop pretending you 'don't have time' for things and admit that these are the things that are actually too hard or too scary to tackle right now. Once you can admit that to yourself, you can break the task down into small steps and ask for help if you need it."



2. Suggest useful revision and anti-procrastination tools

Mobile phones can seem like your worst enemy when you think your child should be revising. Instead of banning technology in the house - be proactive and encourage ways they can incorporate their mobile phone into their studies.

For example, a student can use a phone as a timer to test how quickly they can get through a set of flashcards. There are even apps you can download that give you rewards if you don't pick up your phone for a set amount of time.

3. Buy a Whiteboard (or blackboard paint)

Lack of space can sometimes hinder a student's ability to express all their wild and wonderful ideas. Invest in a whiteboard and some wacky coloured whiteboard pens so they can get the most out of their revision. Some students take up to 10 subjects for GCSE - that's a whole lotta information - give them an outlet to express their knowledge and make brightly coloured mind maps!

[Blackboard paint](#) is a whiteboard alternative that will provide a similar solution. It's also pretty awesome for teenagers all year round as it can be used to express creativity when they're feeling particularly unmotivated.

4. Encourage contextual learning

Try sitting down with your teenager to think about ways they could apply what they are revising to real-life situations. For this to be even more beneficial, try being subtle about how you approach it.

Take a teenager who is studying Shakespeare in GCSE English. Over dinner, you could discuss cool ways you could adapt a Shakespeare play for a movie in the 21st century that you'd both actually watch.

If it's science they're struggling with, find some awesome [science websites](#) that you could browse together, that'll peak their motivation for learning the subject. This relies on you being super proactive - but we promise it will be worth it.

5. Explore plenty of revision techniques

We spoke to experts for this one, as you may well be wondering what is the best (and proven) way to revise.

Dr. Jennifer McGahan, Lecturer in Psychology at [Manchester Metropolitan University](#), offers her best advice to give to your child when they're knuckling down with revision:

|| My top tip for revision is to test yourself. Studies show that most students choose to revise by making notes and repeatedly studying them. Revising in this way makes the content feel more and more familiar each time they are read, giving you a false sense of 'knowing' the information. Remember, exams require you to recall information not read it!

A more effective form of revision involves testing yourself. A test can take many forms, such as completing a past exam paper, creating a mind map or perhaps telling your cat some interesting facts about Freud! As long as you are recalling information from your memory without relying on books or notes, you are testing yourself.

Testing can feel counterintuitive because it takes more effort than note reading and you may not recall much information to start with. Do not let this put you off, the harder your brain works during the test the better your memory will be in the end.

Henry Roediger at Washington University named this phenomenon the 'testing effect'. Many studies have demonstrated the long lasting benefits of the testing effect in undergraduates, schoolchildren and adults. All participants retained information for longer when information was repeatedly tested compared to repeatedly studied.

My top tips for testing yourself are:

- Create elaborate links between new information and existing knowledge, this will make it easier to cue yourself during tests.
- Make sure that you do not learn any mistakes during testing. This is especially important if using multiple-choice tests as the right and wrong answers can be very similar.
- Try to space out testing sessions to give your brain a chance to catch up with all your new learning!

Things you should do....

1. Establish healthy daily habits

A healthy routine is vital for a child to be successful at school and in their GCSE exams. Encouraging positive daily habits helps children break bad habits and encourages an achievement-driven mentality.

Some simple habits to incorporate into a child's daily routine to improve school success include:

- **Keeping a bottle of water by their bedside.**
- **Vitamin D (from sunlight) has been proven to have a significant effect on school attainment. Try to encourage walking to school vs. other transport methods.**
- **Encourage your children to breathe deeply for at least two minutes, 3 times a day, focusing on each breath to help regain focus and clarity.**

Fabulous is a science-based app that will help your child to build healthy rituals into their lives, just like an elite athlete.

2. Encourage optimum levels of sleep

Students are some of the most sleep-deprived demographics of our population. It'll probably come as no surprise that sleep deprivation in young people has been linked to lower attainment in school due to the detrimental effect it has on memory, concentration, and the ability to learn.

Here are some easy steps you can take to help a student sleep better:

- **Ensure your teenager has a good sleeping environment – ideally a room that is dark, cool, quiet, and comfortable.**
- **It might be worth investing in thicker curtains or a blackout blind to help block out early summer mornings and light evenings.**
- **There are many myths floating around the internet about how much sleep you should be getting. The National Sleep Foundation conducted a 2-year study to decipher the optimum amount of sleep advisable for different age groups:**

3. Pack the Ultimate Success Lunchbox

Healthy eating habits are especially beneficial for students taking exams or are under heightened pressure. To excel, children need to endure mentally tough challenges and maintain their positivity.

Some healthy eating habits you could incorporate into your daily routine include:

- **Make breakfast a necessity. This critical meal will help keep your child's brain sharp and focused throughout the day. Eggs are always a good choice to boost protein intake, or wholegrain cereal with milk if you're short on time.**
- **Eat more fish at meal times. Omega-3 fatty acids are essential for a healthy mind, and therefore success. These healthy fats help repair and support brain cell membranes.**
- **Startlingly, only around 1 in 100 packed lunches in the UK meet the nutritional needs of a child. We've popped together our essential ingredients for the ultimate lunchbox, containing all the nutrients needed to function at your best throughout the day:**

4. Find a way technology can work with (not against) your child

In his insightful article [Growing Up Digital: Wired for Distraction](#), Matt Richtel discovers how the digital age is affecting our children's ability to learn.

He summarises that young people's minds are rewarded more readily in this digital age for the ability to switch quickly between tasks, as opposed to sticking on one task for a prolonged period of time. The latter is necessary for learning, so finding a balance is integral.

Instead of limiting use of technology, encourage ways students can use their laptops and mobile phones to benefit their grades. There are [many apps](#) you can download that can help your child organise their studies and block unnecessary distractions.

If your child should be revising, send them links to engaging educational channels on YouTube so you are taking an active interest in what they're learning whilst encouraging meaningful uses for technology.

5. Maintain high attendance levels

According to the UK's Department for Education (DfE), "missing the equivalent of just one week a year from school can mean a child is significantly less likely to achieve good GCSE grades".

When issued, this statement prompted parents across the UK to rethink term-time holidays, but there are still steps you can take to ensure your child has great attendance levels:

- **When your child is ill, make sure they get plenty of rest and vitamin C to ensure a prompt return to school.**
- **If your child doesn't show any obvious signs of illness, explore other reasons why they could be reluctant to go. From friendship problems to anxiety, the best way to encourage your child to speak to you about other circumstances affecting attendance is to maintain an open and honest relationship. If you think your child is experiencing anxiety, we've got a [guide](#) to help.**

6. Keep in regular contact with teachers

The key to being able to offer the best support to help your child succeed is being clued up on their academic performance throughout the year.

If your child is on track to hit their predicted grades, that's a sure fire way to know you're doing something right. To make sure you know exactly how your child is performing, make sure you do the following:

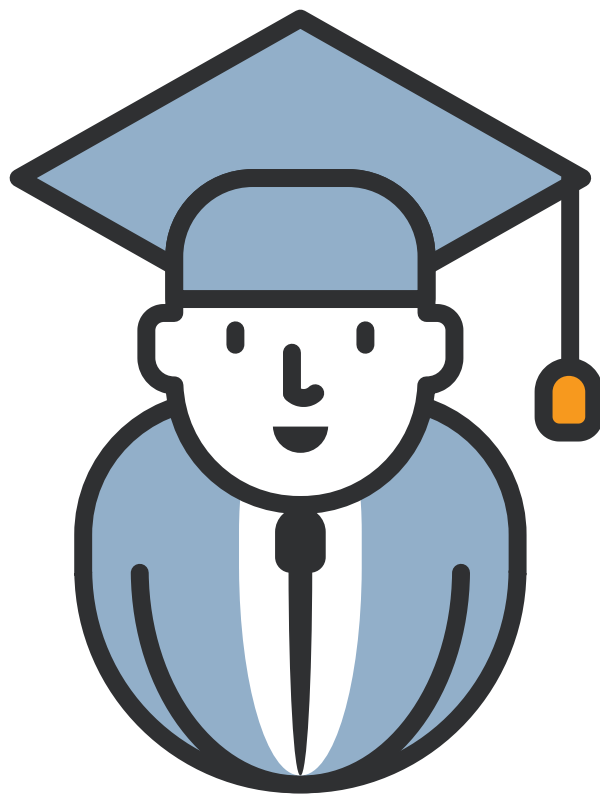
- **Attend all parents and GCSE options evenings. This [article](#) is full of great questions to ask at parents evening - whatever your child's age.**
- **Email is an excellent way to keep in touch with teachers with busy schedules. Schools usually have useful email contacts on their websites. Look out for an email for your child's head of year who can forward you to the person best-placed to answer your question.**

7. Champion extra-curricular activities

From archery to football to pottery, many schools offer extra-curricular clubs that you might be oblivious to.

There are many studies that show the positive relationship between extracurricular activities and [academic performance](#). They all conclusively show that students who participate in after-school activities achieve higher-grades, aspirations and positive feelings towards the environment.

Dinner time is your perfect moment to discuss if there are any activities your child be interested in taking up. Talk about any extra-curricular activities you took as a child, and how they have benefitted you in your life so far.



Stress is going to happen...what do I do?



It's Okay to Not Be Okay: Supporting a Stressed and Anxious Teenager

Around intense revision periods and exam times, it is inevitable that students will feel a certain degree of stress.

The unfortunate fact of the matter is that children are unlikely to want to talk about the way they are feeling, how it is truly affecting them, or why they feel that way. For the most part they may not even realise that they are feeling a certain way.

Here are some symptoms to look out for if you think your child might be suffering:

- **Sleep issues**
- **Difficulty concentrating (or revising)**
- **Negative behaviour changes, e.g increased anger**
- **Increased irritability**

Rachel Dodge, an expert in well-being and the Psychology Subject Officer for GCSE exam board **WJEC** warns about other potential signs of stress:

|| You might find that your child is behaving differently from usual. Signs could include lack of concentration, avoiding people, being more sensitive, changes in eating habits, changes in sleep patterns. Get to know your child's stress signs and try to take action when they appear.

Parental support is one of the most important factors in a child's success. You don't have to become a 'super parent' you just need to be supportive.

During this stressful time try to make home life as calm and pleasant as possible. It helps if other members of the household are aware that your child may be under pressure and that allowances should be made for this.

When a teenager shows any of these symptoms, it's important you work with them to help them. This isn't an interrogation, good cop bad cop is never a good look on a parent. Of course, you won't get total transparency straight away. Being forceful for an explanation is the last thing you want to do."

A great place to start is a hug and the assurance that it is okay to not be okay...

Once you've done this, you can help get to the bottom of what it is making them feel anxious. A way to help a child stuck in a stressful rut is by making **key alterations** that will allow them to deal with their feelings more effectively.

Alter the routine

If you've noticed your teenager comes home and does one particularly unhelpful habit (e.g. turns on the TV without getting changed.) Prompt that they switch up the day by making one positive change (e.g. getting some comfy clean clothes on so they can relax.)

If your child is on their phone between certain hours in the day, offer an alternative activity that they can do with you instead.

During exam times, instead of panicking before an exam, psychotherapist [Geraldine Joaquim](#) offers some great techniques your children can do instead:

|| Use positive visualisation to help prepare for the test (rather like top athletes do when preparing for races/matches), walk through the process of entering the class room, laying out pencils/pens, opening the exam paper and the feelings of finishing the tests successfully. This prepares the brain for the physical test and helps to reduce the fight/flight response."

Alter your home environment

Clutter and mess around the house can cause unnecessary **stress** on the brain. If your living areas are messy, this could be making your teenager even more anxious. It's worth keeping clutter tidied away into cupboards and drawers to keep mental distractions around exam times to a minimum. Here are other super awesome things you can do to your living space to make it that little more relaxing:

- **Bring the outdoors in: studies have shown that indoor plants can improve concentration and boost productivity by a staggering 15%!**
- **Natural lighting does wonders to your mood, make sure you allow as much light into your living spaces as possible.**
- **Keep fresh fruit bowls regularly topped up with your teenager's favourite fruit, to limit the temptation to reach for sugary or processed foods.**

Alter the way you act

For this guide, we collaborated with the [NSPCC](#), who issued this advice for how parents can support their children during exam season:

|| Have a chat with your child about how you could make studying a little easier for them. It's also important to encourage them to take regular breaks, eat snacks, and to exercise! Taking some time to still do the things they enjoy will help them to focus better when they are revising.

As well as providing practical support, emotional support during the build-up and exam period itself is really important. Let your child know you are there to listen to any worries or concerns they may have. Whilst you will want your child to do their absolute best, it's also important to not place unnecessary pressure on them to gain a certain grade.

Remind them that there is life beyond exam results and that if things don't go exactly to plan, there will be lots of other opportunities to express themselves and succeed later on in life."



Student stress statistics

One in four students suffers with mental health problems



The number of pupils worrying about exam results has increased by **9%** since 2015



Research commissioned by UniHealth revealed that

82% of university aged students suffer from **anxiety**



Studies have shown that Mindfulness helps over

80% of young adults with the reduction of anxiety symptoms



Stress busting apps

The following apps are great at helping you combat stress. You can download them from your app store!

Headspace



Calm



SleepCycle



Pacifica -
Stress & Anxiety



Online Revision Programs:

www.senecalearning.com

Seneca is an online revision service that offers support in most major subjects. The materials they offer are comprehensive and thorough.

The basic level of service is free but they do offer a paid service as well which guarantees a certain level of performance.

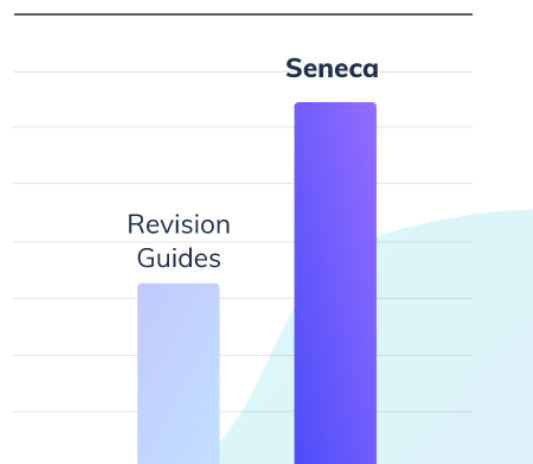


Proven to make you learn **2x** faster

Our smart learning algorithms [are proven](#) to make you **remember topics better**. If you get a question wrong, we'll show you the content again but in a different format. We'll even do it at a time when it's optimal for you to learn it. We've also hand-selected the best GIFs and memes on the internet so revision **makes you laugh instead of stressed**.

Get started free

Exam Scores



www.gcsepod.com

All students in Y11 have access to this service, it offers videos and guidance in many of our subjects and the response to it has been highly positive. It is an excellent resource that we suggest is used extensively.

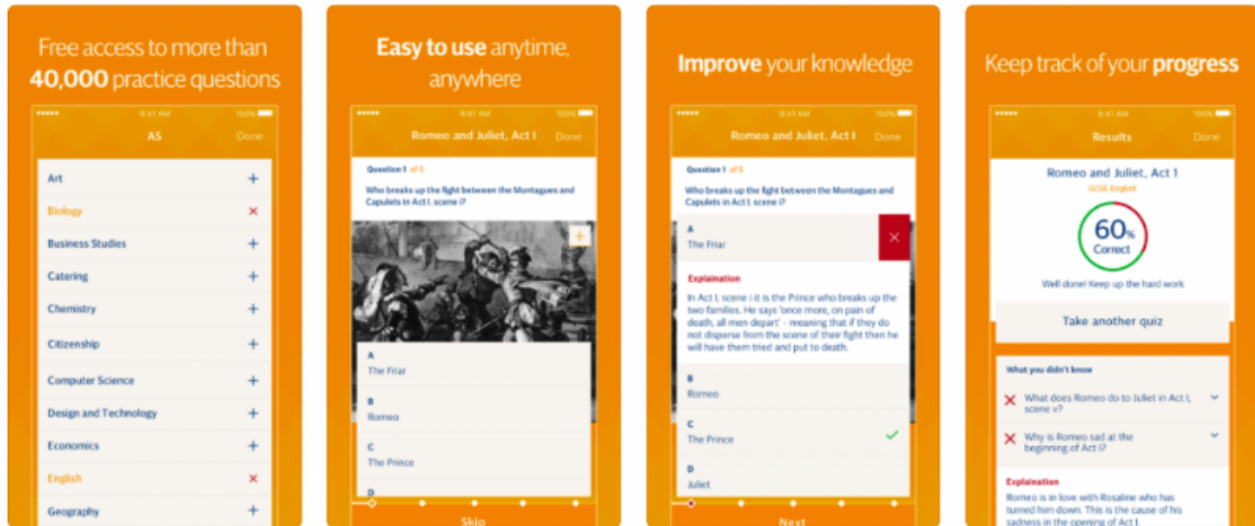


<https://studywise.co.uk/gcse-revision/>

Studywise is a site that collates together a huge number of resources for GCSE revision. They focus on three examination boards (Edexcel, AQA and OCR) so it is not useful for all subjects but the site is easy to use.

StudyWise

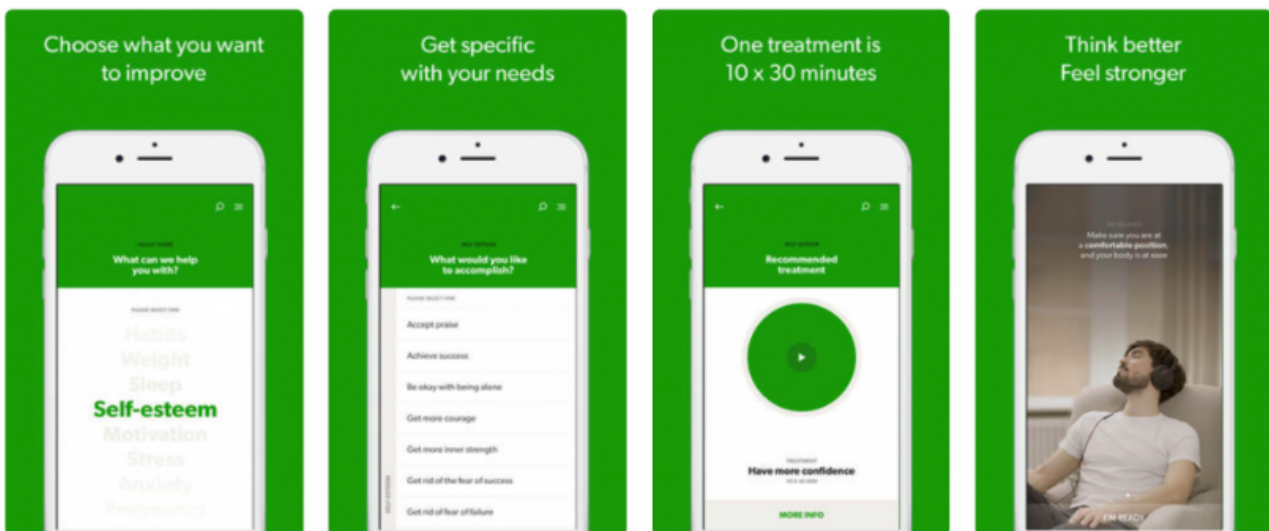
Apps:



The reason Gojimo is our favourite revision quiz app:

Gojimo is our favourite subject quiz app for any exams you have coming up - in fact, there are over 40,000 questions covering A level, GCSE, 11 plus and more.

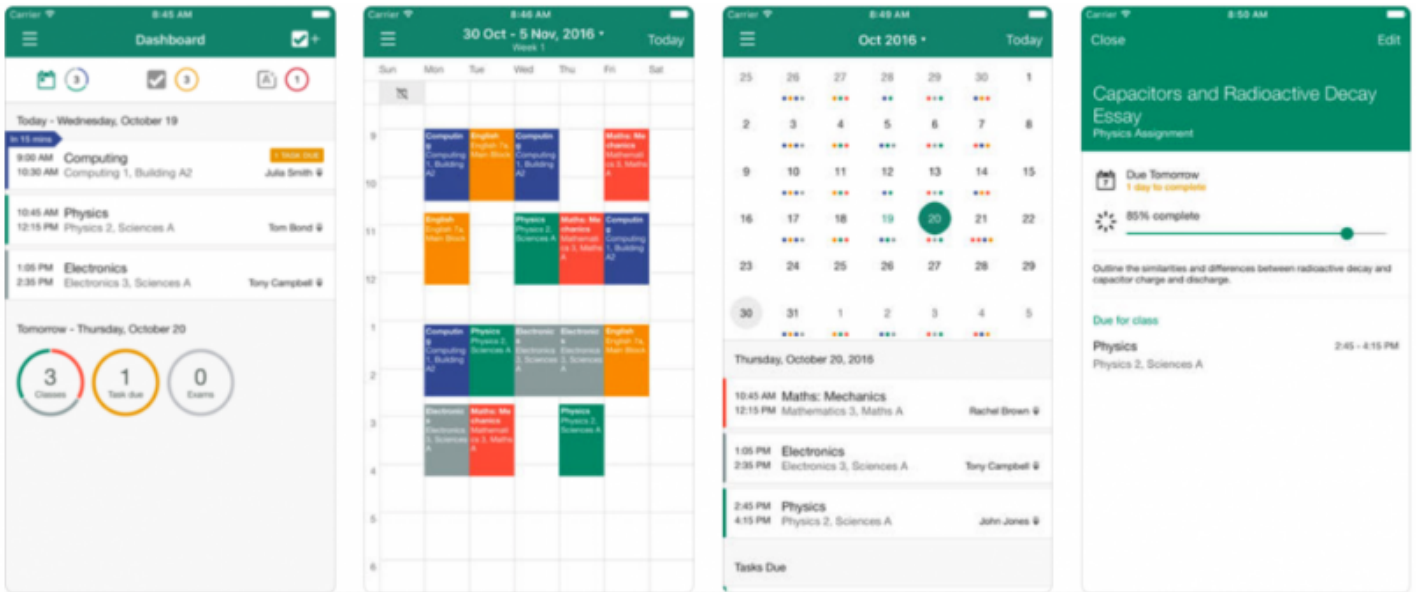
Test your knowledge with revision quizzes and read detailed explanations if you make a mistake. Quizzes are written to optimise your learning, with questions split up into bite sized chunks for better memorisation!



How HelloMind will transform your life during exam period:

It seems pretty unfair that your anxiety can affect your grades, but dwelling on this isn't the most positive step you can take. Accept that it's okay to feel anxious, especially around exam time, but know there are little steps you can take to relax - and ultimately your well-being is the priority!

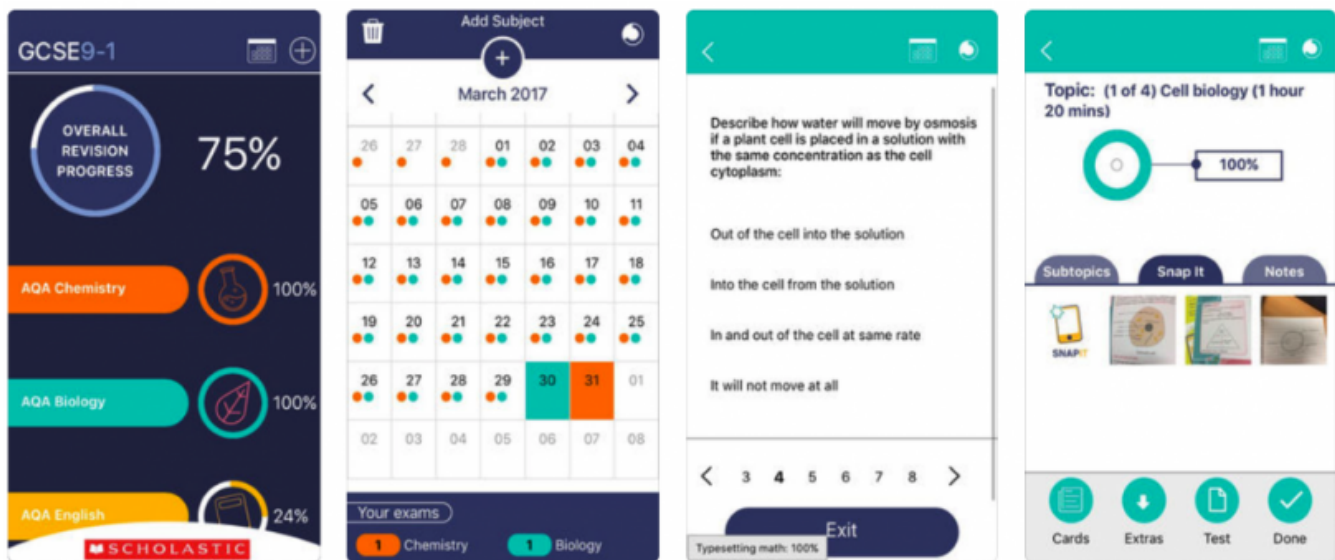
HelloMind has an easy to use interface and research-backed support that aims to help students with exam and study anxiety issues. The app enhances concentration and motivation using hypnosis, a technique that encourages the brain to work in a deep level of mental focus. Know that your learning can be changed for the better, and that you're always able to sink into more calming levels of relaxation.



Why we love My Study Life Planner - helping you plan revision like a boss:

This free cross-platform planner is designed to integrate all aspects of your academic life. See homework due dates, add revision tasks for upcoming exams, all in a free, easy to use app.

The online and offline mode allows you to store your tasks anywhere, at any time, and quickly access all your important dates when exams are looming!



How the Scholastic Revision App will help you ace your GCSEs:

Free and easy-to-use, the Scholastic GCSE 9–1 app allows you to revise on the go, wherever you want, whenever you want. The interactive app automatically creates a revision timetable, lists exam paper dates, offers multiple-choice quizzes to test knowledge, allows you to keep track of your own revision and offers the ability to create and flick through digital flashcards to aid memory.

Linked to Scholastic's leading Revision Guides (get 25% off from the Scholastic Shop), and recommended by teachers, parents and other students, it's the best way to help you keep on top of revision and achieve your very best in exams. Download the free app for iOS or Android today!

Sharepoint

Links:

Sharepoint is a virtual learning and information area that can be accessed by all pupils. Inside you will find areas for each subject which contain revision materials. It is an excellent resource that contains a wide range of things to aid learning. A link to it can be found on the home gateway.

