



Parent Support Guide For GCSE Exams Summer 2022

NO-ONE
ever leaves an exam
wishing they had
REVISED LESS

Introduction

As we approach GCSE examinations, a common question we are asked is, 'What can I do to support my child?'.

These final few weeks and months can be crucial in terms of success and there are simple and small things that you as a parent can do to help support your child in achieving their potential.

This booklet aims to provide you with easy, practical suggestions of ways in which you can support your child and signpost support you might draw upon in these coming months.

Thank you for taking the time to read some of our suggestions. If you require more help or support, please contact Pastoral Leader for Year 11, Mrs T Williamson on twilliamson@ems.bhcet.org.uk.

How can I help?

The most important role you will play is that of a person who will love and support your child. Don't underestimate the power of your emotional support. There are also some practical ways you can support at home which can help.

Preparing to revise:

“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” Benjamin Franklin

- **Ensure attendance to school:** Research tells us that pupils with the lowest 5% of absence rates were more than 4 times more likely to achieve 5 good GCSEs, including English and maths. Making sure that your child attends school on time every day can make a tremendous difference to their outcomes. The final weeks of teaching are planned to meet the needs of students as they approach the exams, so having students in the classroom is vital.
- **Ensure attendance to Mastery and extra-curricular support:** At English Martyrs, we tailor the support we offer students in Year 11 and this includes bespoke Mastery sessions that focus on the key skills and knowledge students will need to succeed. As well as this, we will publish a timetable of holiday and weekend revision support. Please encourage attendance to these sessions - you are helping us to help them.
- **Ensuring students are prepared for learning every day:** Sending students to school with the right equipment and ready to learn is key to them getting the most from their lessons in these final weeks. The simplest things often get in the way of beginning those final weeks of revision – weeks can be lost while students are ‘going to get some folders soon..’. Organisation is key: provide files, dividers, and other equipment that your child will need for the revision period.
- **Checking that students have what they need to begin revision at home:** Can they access Teams from home? Have they missed work and do they need to liaise with a teacher so that they can close this gap? Do they have revision materials from their teachers? Encourage your child to empty their bag and file handouts and information from lessons at the end of each day. They won’t seem important until they need them. Encourage them to speak with staff or liaise with us at school if they are unsure about anything so we can make sure they are prepared for the task ahead.
- **Asking your child what might help them:** It sounds simple but having a conversation well before those final stages of revision about what they feel they need can be useful. What do they think will help them?

During revision:

- **Support your child to make a revision timetable and encourage them to stick to it:** Look on <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zn3497h> for some useful tips on planning and downloaded templates to help structure revision. Praise them when they do it, and possibly even simple, inexpensive rewards e.g. they can watch their favourite programme or choose what you will have for a family meal if they manage to complete the allocated revision.
- **Be flexible:** Whilst a revision timetable is important, build into it events / hobbies that you know your child have planned. We do want them to be focused on revision at this time, but sometimes planned breaks and treats make more intense periods of revision more bearable and manageable.
- **Feed the brain:** Provide favourite snacks and water for revision periods.
- **Be sensitive to the pressure your child is feeling:** Remind them of all the good work they have done, and will continue to do. It's the big picture that will count in the end. Talk through any difficulties and be prepared to help them reschedule their planning as necessary. Helping your child keep stress at bay will help them think more clearly and focus on their revision.
- **Help create a productive revision environment:** Students need to find a place that they can focus, learn and work. Tidy, quiet places work best for most students. We all know the temptation to check our phones or scroll through social media. Asking your child to limit time on their phone during revision, or even to leave their phone in another room, will help limit distractions for them.
- **Show an interest:** You don't have to be an expert in the subject to show an interest in the subject / topic they are studying. Get involved by allowing them to test you and correct you if you don't know the answer, or you could test them. One of the best ways to revise is to teach someone else so let them demonstrate their knowledge for you.
- **Provide paper, pens and other stationary to help with revision:** Having a supply of simple materials at home means that revision is always possible. If you can include your child in buying some of these materials e.g. choosing their favourite colour paper, purchasing some special pens, it can help their motivation and organisation.

How much revision?

There is the erroneous belief that “serious revision” equates to studying hours on end. Marathon studying sessions are certainly not recommended.

Encourage 30-45 minute revision sessions with short breaks in between.

The fundamental principle to revising is to do it habitually and constantly, little chunks at a time. A student who studies for 2 hours 7 days a week would be much better off than a student who studies 10 hours straight on Saturday and Sunday.

Revision planning begins with creating a revision timetable. To be consistent, students should strive to study at least 5 days of the week. On weekdays, this time would be after school and the choice is theirs on weekends. Advise your child to breakdown the subjects by topics; so revising Mathematics on Tuesday night becomes revising quadratic equations instead. Give priority to the subjects and topics that are most difficult; this means placing them early on in the timetable and allowing more revision time.

Sometimes, it's good to plan a night off. On these “off” nights, let your child have fun and relax. Allow them the opportunity to be stress-free in what can be a high-pressure period.

It is also important to not leave revision to the last minute. The earlier your child starts their revision, the better. Fortunately, students have had the opportunity to prepare and revise for their two sets of Prep Exams which means they will have already begun detailed revision for these final exams.

However, many students still underestimate the time needed for thorough, final revision; this adds more stress and anxiety to the situation because they begin to overextend themselves to make up for the lack of time. Every student will need different amounts of revision for different subject and topics, depending on their prior knowledge and skills and the foundations they have already laid when revising for their Prep Exams.

Revision Techniques: Tips for students and parents:

1. Learn – Revise – Test:

Learn – Before you start a topic, make sure you understand it. Collate all of your notes, work completed in school, homework and extra research. The learning process begins well before you begin revision.

Revise – Revising is a process of going back over what you have learned so you are ready to answer questions on it in the exams. There are various ways to revise and some are detailed below.

Test – Testing yourself on topics help it 'stick'. Think fact recall, practice exam questions and realistic exam practice that allows you to apply your learning. If you can't answer a question, go back to your notes and revise it.

2. Condensing notes:

Start with notes and then rewrite them in your own words.

Simplify and summarise into key points.

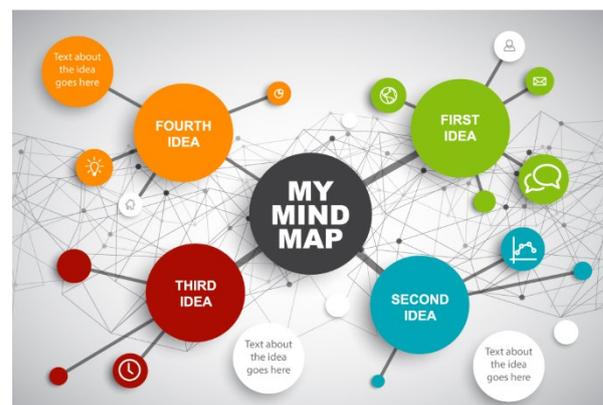
Aim to get each topic onto two sides of A4 paper. How you present this might depend on the subject e.g. labelled diagrams for Science, a timeline for History or a list of quotes for English Literature.

Organise ideas in some way e.g. linking topics together or grouping them together.

3. Mind Maps:

Mind maps are a great way to visually organise information.

One mind map represents one topic. This topic goes in the middle and subtopics and further details are positioned around it in boxes or bubbles.

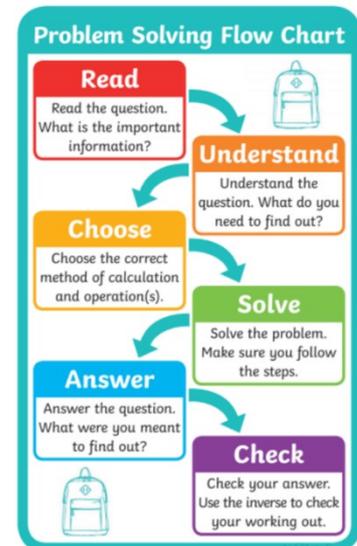


4. Flow charts:

A flow chart is a type of diagram that shows a process from the beginning until the end.

Words and images help organise information clearly.

Lots of subjects require students to have a working knowledge of systems and processes, as well as sequences of events. For example, Business Studies when understanding a supply chain, History with a timeline of events, Science with the stages of an experiment.



5. Using Flashcards:

Flashcards are small cards with a question or idea on one side and an answer / notes / information on the other.

These are great tool for self-testing, particularly for vocabulary and key words and definitions.

There are some useful websites out there that have ready-made, online flashcards:

<https://quizlet.com/en-gb>

<https://www.brainscape.com/>

6. Memory Techniques and other tips:

There are number of tried and tested techniques that can help a student remember key information.

- Mnemonics – the first letters of words become a sentence, song or rhyme e.g. Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain to remember colours of the rainbow.
- Memory journeys to link information – as you walk through the journey in your mind, you pass by information you need in the right order. Write down key points to learn, choose a journey you know well and choose some landmarks that can be associated with the key points. Make links between them in your 'story' and practise walking or riding through the journey in your mind.
- Revise with a friend – test each other using your flashcards and create quizzes for each other.
- Say it out loud – practise talking through a topic / ideas. Record yourself and play it back when you are sitting on the bus.
- Use practice papers to help structure and test how your revision is progressing.

Once exams begin:

- **Make sure your child is getting enough rest and looking after their well-being:** *Sleep is an essential function that allows your body and mind to recharge, leaving you refreshed and alert when you wake up. Healthy sleep also helps the body remain healthy and stave off diseases. Without enough sleep, the brain cannot function properly. (Sleep Foundation 2021).* With sometimes multiples exams each day for a month or more, the exam period can be an intense time. Rest and recuperation are important. To achieve their best, students need to be as rested and relaxed as they can be. Revision during this time is important but this needs to be balanced with breaks.
- **Make sure they are eating a healthy and balanced diet:** Like sleep and rest, nutritious food, including lots of fruit and vegetables, helps the brain to function at its optimum. Having breakfast and water with them to take into the exam is important.
- **Reassure your child:** Many students are anxious and nervous on the morning of an exam. Reassure your child that you will be proud of them having done their best, whatever the outcome.
- **Encourage them to look forwards rather than backwards:** If an exam doesn't go as well as they hoped, encourage them not to dwell on it. Once an exam is completed, there is a noting that can be done. Encourage your child to focus on preparation for the exams to come and making the most of the opportunities still ahead of them.
- **Support is available:** There are lots of people in school who are on hand to support you and your child's well-being throughout the examination period: Mrs Williamson, the Pastoral Manager, subject teachers, support staff and leaders in the school. Contact us via email or via the school office with any concerns, queries or questions. Kooth: <https://www.kooth.com/> and Qwell: <https://www.qwell.io/> provide free, safe and anonymous mental wellbeing support for children and adults across the UK.
- **Results day:** Thursday 25 August – GCSEs and other Level 2 qualifications. Results are collected from school on the morning, a letter will be sent to parents with more detail about this.
- **Enrolment to EMS6:** Thursday 25 August and Friday 26 August – Students will be invited to enrol with us at the college following receipt of their results.

More information will be sent to applicants but if you haven't yet made an application or have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch: ems6@ems.bhcet.org.uk.