



Danetre and Southbrook
Learning Village

Nurture | Aspire | Achieve

An E-ACT academy

Helping your child to achieve their best

A parents' guide to study and
revision skills for GCSE



“The dictionary is the only place
where success comes before work”

Anon

Contents

Introduction to this guide	2
Exam Stress – So, what can you do?	3
How can parents make a difference	4
How do we keep the motivation up?	5
How students can improve their chances of getting at least a Grade ‘C’	6
How to revise – Guide for parents	7
Frequently asked questions	8

Introduction to this guide

These are important exams for your child as the grades achieved will determine what he or she does next in life. You will want your child to achieve the best grades that they can and this can be made possible when there is a partnership between the student, the school and parents.

There is still enough time for students to prepare if they are organised and work hard. There are a number of simple things that you can do as parents to help students to be as prepared as possible. Parental support is eight times more important in determining a child's academic success than social class, according to a study by The Campaign for Learning. The study found that parental involvement in a child's education can mean the difference between an A* and an 'also-ran' at GCSE (TES, 10 October 2003).

The aim of this booklet is to offer you guidance for supporting your child to understand what is required for GCSE exams, how to best prepare and also how you can become involved in the revision process. As a parent there is lots you can do to help your child revise for their exams, from reminding them to attend after-school period 7 sessions to encouraging them with praise and rewards. There are also various things you can do to support your child with their individual subjects. You will also have received a Top Tips Booklet that outlines key subject specific information. Alongside this, your child will have a Revision Checklist for each of the subjects they study. Both these resources are useful for you as a parent in ensuring your child is revising the appropriate content in order to maximise their learning potential.

Exams, particularly important public exams, are stressful for students and probably even more so for their parents. It goes without saying that all children are different, so it follows that there is no single approach to how a parent can help out, but here are some suggestions:

Students who do best in exams:

- have revised thoroughly and carefully.
- feel confident.
- have parents who take an interest in their revision.

Exam Stress - So, what can you do?

Before we look at how you can support your child in their various subjects, some general advice is listed below:

Do

- ✓ Discuss with your child what will be involved in the revision period and what your role could be. Provide the environment necessary for success. Students need a place to revise which is quiet, calm and comfortable. Probably the most important is quiet. A tidy room, but a visually stimulating study centre.
- ✓ Respond positively when they ask for help. Ask exactly how you can help and if you can't help immediately, say when it's convenient.
- ✓ Give plenty of praise and encouragement. Point out what they are good at. Tell them daily what they do well. Stay calm and don't expect too much.
- ✓ Point out what they have done well if you look at their work. Don't dwell on the errors - emphasise the positives.
- ✓ Keep them well supplied with food and drinks.
- ✓ Keep a low profile.
- ✓ Be prepared to listen when they want to talk about problems as everything becomes more emotional and heightened during the exam period.
- ✓ Encourage them to take regular breaks during long periods of revision.
- ✓ Encourage morning revision when the brain is more receptive and discourage studying right up to bedtime.

Don't

- ✗ Make comparisons with brothers, sisters, friends and so on.
- ✗ Unintentionally add to their worries by constantly mentioning the exams.
- ✗ Relate too much to when you were sitting exams at school or how you did your revision.
- ✗ Worry if their revision techniques seem strange or unusual.
- ✗ Make a battle out of whether or not they listen to music when doing their revision.
- ✗ Distract them unnecessarily.
- ✗ Expect them to study all the time as taking some time out to relax will have a positive effect on their work.
- ✗ Join in the general anxiety; be a picture of serene confidence.

In Summary there is a great deal you can do as a parent. You can't revise for them and, however much you'd like to, you can't take the exams for them, but you can be invaluable in making the exam process smooth, calm and successful. Please remember: Don't hesitate to contact the school for help and advice.

How can parents make a difference?

Parental support is 8 times more important in determining a child's academic success than social class. The Campaign for Learning found that parental involvement in a child's education can mean the difference between an A* and an 'also-ran' at GCSE. The good news is that you don't need to be an expert in any of the subjects your child has chosen to make a real difference. You also don't need to give up your life and other responsibilities – you just need to know how best to spend the time you do have.

Getting students to understand the long-term importance of doing the best they can sometimes feels difficult. Also, getting them to shelve short-term fun in the interest of long-term benefits is even harder (it is not easy even for adults). Children will also differ in their levels of maturity, their ability to take responsibility for their learning, organisational skills and levels of motivation. This is where parents come in. Your support, encouragement and interest can make a spectacular difference to your child's motivation and ability to cope with the academic and organisational demands of the exam period.

Practical Support that you can offer:

- Provide them with a quiet place to study
- Make sure they take regular breaks
- Ensure that they eat healthy food and drink plenty of water
- Test them on the work they have been revising or encourage older siblings to test them
- Ensure that they go to bed at a reasonable time and get enough sleep
- Ensure that they revise thoroughly
- Encourage them to attend additional support sessions provided by subject areas.

How do we keep the motivation up?

Things your child may say and what advice you can give them

- “I find the subject too difficult, I want to give it up” - Don’t stop going to, or working in, lessons you find hard or dislike. Talk to your class teacher about any difficulties you are having – there is always a solution
- “I don’t want to do any revision as I am not in the mood” – Create a revision schedule and stick to it – even when you don’t feel like it. Don’t wait until you are in the mood – the further behind you get the less you will be in the mood
- “Everything is going wrong, I cannot do anything, who cares” - Resist the temptation to bury your head in the sand if things are getting out of hand – talk to someone
- “My friends aren’t doing any revision and their parents don’t nag them, leave me alone” - Ignore what friends and others are doing or saying – you are working for an easy life for YOU now and later – let your friends have the hassle of redoing coursework or even the full GCSE

How parents can help keep their child motivated in the build up to exams

- Agree the balance between work and social life and stick to the agreement. Again, flexibility is the key – if a special night comes up, agree that they can make up the work at a specified time
- All students fall behind, feel demotivated or overwhelmed, or struggle with the balance of social, work and school demands at times. When your child feels like this, berating and threatening them will have a negative effect. Talk to them about the issues, acknowledge their feelings and adopt a sensible attitude in wanting to find a solution
- Be flexible – use the 80/20 rule. If your child is sticking to what they are supposed to be doing 80% of the time, they will be doing alright
- Reward your child’s efforts to revise, maybe reduce the number of chores that they have to do when exams start
- Make sure the whole family respect the importance of keeping disturbances to a minimum.

How students can improve their chances of getting at least a Grade 'C'

There are a number of factors that cause students to lose marks in the exams. The factors below are often reported by examiners. Here is a list of factors that you need to be aware of and concentrate on:

- Start in good time – leave it too late and you will start panicking
- Plan for half hour or, at most, one hour slots. Nothing extra is likely to sink in if one subject is revised for much longer
- When revising during the evenings plan 1 or 2 subjects only. Leave some time for relaxation
- Allow some days off, but not in the few weeks just before the exams
- Plan to revise specific topics or aspects of a subject – for example, not just science, but human systems, or waves, or chemical reactions or electricity
- Read through a topic and then make brief notes on cards which can be used for further revision later
- Use colours to highlight key works
- Work in small groups to discuss a topic

How to Revise – Guide for Parents

Practice testing

Use low-stakes tests, quizzes or reviews on a regular basis. Encourage students to test themselves frequently as part of their revision. The 'Flashcards by Chegg' app is great for this, as are revision guides...or their exercise book!

Distributed practice

Revision over time leads to better recall than cramming. Help students to do this by spacing their revision for all subjects over time, using their revision planner.

Interleaving

Consider encouraging students to alternate their practice of different kinds of items or problems when revising rather than sticking to one single topic.

Elaborative interrogation

Consider encouraging explanatory questioning to promote learning; for example by asking students "Why?" when they tell you information about things they know. E.g. Student: "I know that temperature increases the rate of a chemical reaction" Parent: "Why is that?"

Self-explanation

Consider encouraging students to explain to you how new information is related to known information, or the steps required to solve a problem.

On the eve of the exam – Tips for Parents

- Please don't add to the stress levels by 'rising to the bait' when your child pushes the boundaries. Shelve the battles that don't need winning just yet
- Help prepare your child for the exam – talk with them about when it starts, how long it lasts for, what are the main topics that might come up. Don't 'over egg' this – they may have worked all day and have come down stairs to relax
- Make sure they have all the equipment required: pens, pencils, eraser, ruler, calculator

Frequently asked questions

Are GCSEs really that important?

Yes, they are. GCSEs are highly valued by schools, colleges and employers. They are the first step in allowing your child to move on to further education or to a career. They have been the benchmark for measuring student ability for more than 25 years.

What results should my son/daughter aim to get?

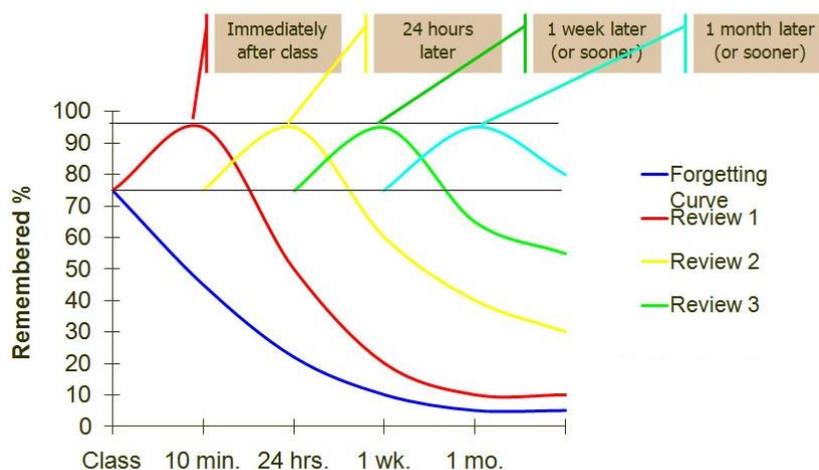
A C grade is considered a good pass, but many post-16 courses require a B grade and many courses and colleges require students to have at least 5 good GCSE passes at C grade including English and Maths

My child doesn't really like English or Maths. Does she have to take these exams?

All pupils must take English, Mathematics and Science. Your child must get a grade C in English or Maths otherwise they will have to continue studying the subjects until they are 18. Some employers will not consider applicants without a grade C in English and Maths and students will need these subjects to carry on studying in sixth form or college.

Is it ever too early to begin revising?

Students who do their best in the GCSE exams work hard all through Year 11 rather than relying on last minute revision. It is best for students to start revision early and to keep revising during the year by doing little but often. This will give your child time to review what he/she has studied and to strengthen the memory and this will avoid the panic of leaving things to the last minute. This diagram called the Ebbinghaus Forgetting curve illustrates how information is quickly forgotten unless it is reviewed at spaced intervals.





An E-ACT academy

Danetre and Southbrook Learning Village

Nurture | Aspire | Achieve

DSL

Hawke Road, Daventry, Northants NN11 4LJ
Telephone 01327 313400 Fax 01327 313419

Website: www.dslv.org.uk

Email: enquiries@dslv.org.uk.