



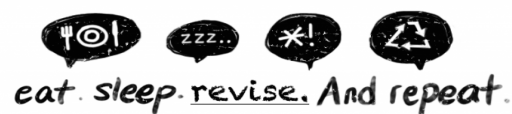
Coping Well with Exams A Brief Guide for Parents and Carers

We've gathered together a brief guide for you to support your son/daughter in coping well with the pressures of exams.

- A revision guidance and top tips booklet will be given to all Year 11 students (some of the contents are also included here). Copies of all exam and revision guidance will also be updated on the school website during that week too. Please click on the tab: 'Students' and the 'Examinations' link.
- If you have any concerns or queries please direct them in the first instance to your son/daughter's subject teacher or Head of Department, or if your query or concern is of a more general nature or a pastoral concern their Tutor or Head of Year.
- Any queries about exams should be made to Sarah Pearce, our Exams Officer.

We encourage students to use a varied range of revision techniques. Many students found GCSEpod a very valuable revision tool last year. They provide general exam and GCSEpod information for parents and carers too at: www.gcsepod.com/parents/ and next week we will be reminding students of how to log on and make the most of the resources.

Top Revision Tips for students



Quick Tips

- ✓ Make yourself start however much you don't want to – that's the hardest bit, get it out of the way!
- ✓ Take short breaks.
- ✓ When you take a break stand up and walk around, do some stretches, especially your neck and shoulders.
- ✓ Drink water and get fresh air – have your room cool enough or you will fall asleep!
- ✓ Eat well, not too many sugary snacks.
- ✓ Give yourself time out to do something completely different.
- ✓ Don't leave the most difficult bits until last.
- ✓ Do something more relaxing between revision and bed.
- ✓ STOP when you feel frustrated, angry, overwhelmed and take a break. Make a note of the problem and deal with it next lesson or session – move onto something else.
- ✓ Give yourself a reward after a revision session – favourite TV programme, website, go out with a friend, have some great food.

...and with more detail...



1. **Have an aim for each revision session** – by the end of this session I will have...
2. **Find a quiet place to revise** – your bedroom, school, the library/LRC – and refuse to be interrupted or distracted.
3. Make sure you don't just revise the subjects and topics you like. **Identify what you already know and the parts you need more time on** – try using a PLC or check list to help you do this.
4. **Break all topics into do-able chunks and don't just read at this stage – DO SOMETHING ACTIVE WITH IT.**
5. **Short bursts of revision (20-25 minutes) are most effective.** Your concentration lapses after an hour and you need to take short breaks (5 – 10 minutes).
6. **Make your own revision notes** because you will remember what you have written down more easily. Stick key notes to cupboards or doors so you see them everyday.
7. **Rewrite the key points of revision notes;** read them out loud to yourself. We remember more than twice as much of what we say aloud than of what we merely read.
8. **Use different techniques.** Make your own learning maps, use post-it notes to write key words on, create flash cards. Record your notes on your phone and listen to them again and again. Ask friends and family to test you. Use highlighters to mark important points. Chant or make up rap songs!
9. **Revisit notes after a day, a week and a month really works.** 5 repeats on different occasions really supports you remembering.
10. **Practise, practise, practise on past exam papers and revision tests.** Initially do one section at a time and progress to doing an entire paper against the clock.
11. **You will need help at some stage,** ask parents, carers, older brothers and sisters, friends, teachers and support staff – **get them to quiz you or help you review.** Use podcasts and videos on websites to help you out too: **GCSEpod is a great place to start.**
12. **Manage your stress!** Follow our top tips in this booklet. Sleep well (you process and secure your learning when you sleep) eat well (fuel yourself with good food) drink plenty of water (keep your brain and body hydrated).
13. **Do not be influenced by friends that appear to be doing little work – your result does not count for them and their result does not count for you BUT YOURS DOES.** Tell yourself this is not for long, in a few weeks time you have a very long summer break to look forward to.
14. **Use a positive growth mindset. Believe in yourself and be positive. If you think you can succeed you will if you prepare and 'do what counts'.**
15. **Last minute revision is worth it – breakfast sessions and before exam preparation sessions will help** – just one thing more may stick in your mind and get you those extra marks to raise your grade. It will all help.



Coping Well With Stress



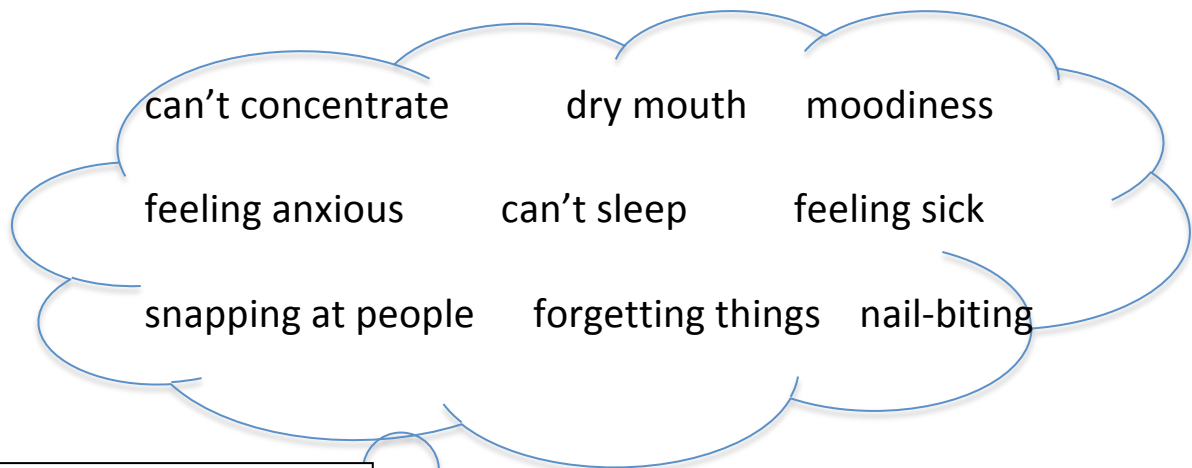
What is stress?

Stress is a natural process. We are designed to cope and survive in a world that is very different to the one we live in today. Stress is the body's way of coping with a threat and it is a very natural reaction of the nervous system to protect itself from a real or imagined attack what is called 'fight or flight'.

- If our senses detect a threat a particular part of the brain, the amygdala, sends messages to different parts of our bodies preparing us to run away or stand up to the threat.
- Adrenaline is released and if it goes unused the result is stress.
- Stress can be caused by many things by physical factors like pollution, extreme temperatures or injury or by psychological factors such as having an argument at home or studying for exams!

How can stress affect you?

- A small amount of stress is necessary - it's part of our natural warning system, making us alert to danger and ready to run from threatening situations.
- In an exam situation, a small amount of adrenaline pumping through your body keeps you alert. If you have been on stage or involved in sport you will know what this feels like.
- Think about your fight or flight response as being your 'Super Hero' response it can enable you to perform well under pressure. Managing and coping with it is important though.
- Stress can make you feel or be more likely to do all or some of the following things:



BUT REMEMBER - Everyone is different and reacts to stress in their own way.

What can you do to reduce this? Try the following:

- Encourage your son/daughter to ask for help if they find their planning or revision difficult. You could contact school and ask us to sensitively address concerns if this is difficult for them.
- Support your son/daughter to plan their revision schedule and stick to it!
- Remember everyone revises differently what works for your son/daughter's friends (or even worked for you) might not work for them.
- Remind them to take breaks and plan some 'time out'.
- Try to help them find some quiet space to study and organise their revision notes, books and files.

Learning and coping well with stress:

**Plan
Prepare
Perform**

Plan and Prepare Well

- ✓ **Plan backwards**, working from your exam date for each subject so that you allow enough time.
- ✓ Use a weekly planner chart, complete it by hand or on your phone or computer – whatever works best for you.
- ✓ **Work on what counts and chunk your learning.**
- ✓ Attend all of your lessons and exam revision and preparation sessions, staff plan them to help you!
- ✓ Talk things through with a member of staff, parent, carer or another adult you trust if things get tough.

Eat well

- ✓ Feed your brain and give your body a boost. Eat regularly. Skipping meals may give you more cramming time but it can leave you hungry and unable to concentrate.
- ✓ Drink plenty of water. Dehydrated brains don't think clearly and water is healthier than sweet, fizzy drinks.
- ✓ Make sure you eat breakfast on the day of an exam – it will keep you going, especially when you are under pressure.



Exercise

- ✓ Staying in your room can seem like the best option when revision time is short.
- ✓ Getting outside can give you a fresh view on things, clear your mind and help you relax.
- ✓ If you can't get out, at least get up and out of your chair for a stretch and a wander.
- ✓ Better still go for a walk, take your dog out, get on your bike, play some sport or do some exercise.

Sleep Well and Get Some Ideal Relaxation

- ✓ With your eyes closed, take a moment to create, in your mind's eye, an ideal spot for relaxation. You can make it any place, real or imagined. Perhaps it is a sunny beach, a favourite room or a peaceful meadow. Once you have created it, close your eyes & go back there whenever you feel the need to relax.



Quick Relaxation Tips

- ✓ **Tense yourself all over, one part at a time.** Pull your toes up as if to touch your shins & hold. Tense your calves... your thighs... all the way up your spine... tense your arms & your hands. Take a deep breath & hold it. Clench your jaw & hold your eyelids tight. Hold yourself tense all over for four or five seconds then let go all at once. Feel the tension leave your body.
- ✓ **Cool air in, warm air out:** With your eyes closed, shift your attention to the tip of your nose. As you breathe in, become aware of the air coming in your nostrils. As you breathe out, be aware of the sensations of the air passing back out. Continue for several breaths.

Resources to Manage Stress

NHS exam stress advice

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/coping-with-exam-stress.aspx>

BBC exam stress advice

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1HsY1X8ySjKBMVXPVCbP4qH/exam-stress>

Young Minds Charity

<http://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

Useful Reading

My Anxious Mind by Michael Tompkins and Katherine Martinez

Starving the Anxiety Gremlins by Kate Collins-Donnelly

Mindfulness. A practical guide for finding peace in a Frantic World by Prof. Mark Williams and Danny Penman is a book with accompanying CD

Quiet the Mind a book for teenagers by Matthew Johnstone

Mindfulness App

Headspace offers a free ten day app to start you learning Mindfulness. Informative website and you can choose to buy products later.

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