



Congleton High School
Together in the Pursuit of Excellence



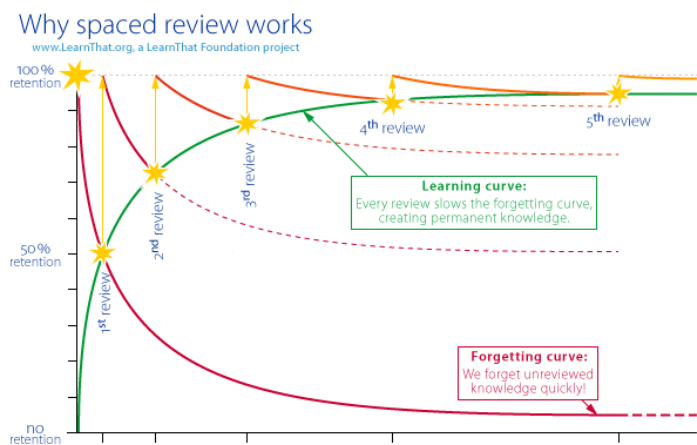
How to Support Students Preparing for Exams

Why Have I Got This Guide?

Preparing for exams is a challenge for every student. At CHS, we want to support our students as much as possible so that they achieve to their full potential. Parents and carers also have a vital role to play in supporting students in the run-up to exams. This guide is to give you ideas for how to support your child. It contains tips on revision methods which we promote in school. Please encourage your child to use these at home. It also contains lots of tips and answers to frequently asked questions. If we all play our part, hopefully there will be lots of happy faces on results day!

Spaced Practice

In the 1880s, Hermann Ebbinghaus did an experiment which showed how much we forget information over time. As a result, studying a topic only once or twice will result in large chunks of it being forgotten. The solution to this is to revisit a topic multiple times, with a gap between each time. This helps us to remember more of a topic. It's shown on this diagram known as Ebbinghaus' Forgetting Curve.



Top Tip

Start a revision plan by revising topics that are trickiest/the student likes the least.

Top Revision Tip: Effective revision involves revisiting a topic many times. Therefore, it is important that students produce a revision plan/timetable and stick to it. This can be done on paper or an app. This means that all topics are covered and are visited regularly to help the knowledge stick.

Retrieval Practice

Retrieval practice is an activity where a person has to retrieve information or facts from their long-term memory without using books or notes. Our long-term memory is where we store information we learnt in the past. If we don't retrieve this from our long-term memory to our working memory, it gets forgotten. Effective revision is about practising this retrieval and helps to make the memory stronger. This makes it easier to recall key information when under pressure in an exam.

Research shows that students do better in exams if they learn information and then do lots of tests or quizzes without using notes. After completing a retrieval practice activity, it is

important to check and correct answers. This helps to make sure that the correct answers are remembered in the future.

Revision Method 1: Flash Cards

Flash cards are a great way of revising and are used by lots of students at CHS. Write a question on one side of a small card and the answer on the back.

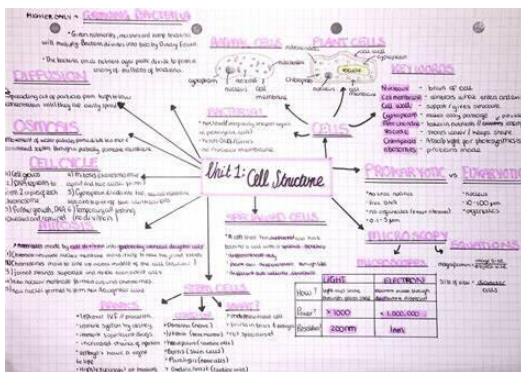
The student can then test themselves with the card, or get a parent, carer, relative or friend to test them.

Top Tip:
Keep flash cards in a blazer pocket then use them for quick revision in the car or bus to and from school.

How did the Great Depression affect American cities?

25% were unemployed
100,000 businesses closed
Apple sellers on the streets
Homeless lived in Hoovervilles

Revision Method 2: Mind Maps



Mind-maps are a great way to revise if done properly. Pick a topic and put it in a bubble in the middle of the page. Then write down everything you can remember about the topic in one colour on the mind map. Then get out your notes/revision guide and check to see how much you remembered. Add in any information you forgot in a different colour.

Revision Method 3: Past Exam Papers

Completing questions from old exam papers is a great way to get more familiar with how questions are worded and also practise retrieving knowledge.

Many subjects at CHS put past papers on SharePoint or Satchel. If you cannot find them, ask a teacher. Just make sure the papers are from the correct examination board.

Top Tip:
Teachers are always happy to mark and give feedback on past exam questions. Don't be afraid to ask!

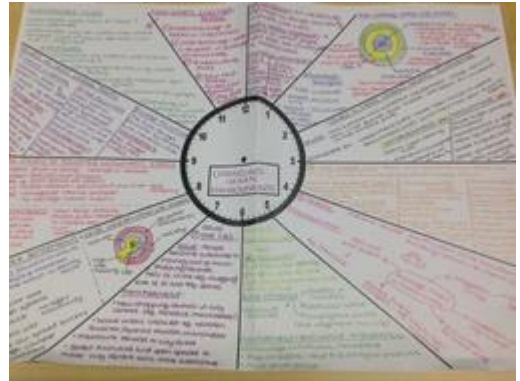
There are two ways of using past exam papers that work well:

1. Work through the paper from memory and in timed conditions. This helps to build up skills of recalling information under exam conditions. Once you have finished a paper, either mark it yourself using a copy of the mark scheme, or get your notes out and add in extra detail that you did not remember. Do this in a different colour. Over time, students find that they remember more and more.

2. Another way of using papers, especially those with lots of long essays, is to plan answers from memory rather than write them out in full.

Revision Method 4: Retrieval Clock

Divide a piece of paper into 12 sections. Write the title of the revision topic in the middle of the page. Each section is one aspect of the topic. Spend five minutes, working from memory, to fill in each section. Then use notes/a revision guide to make corrections and add in missing details.

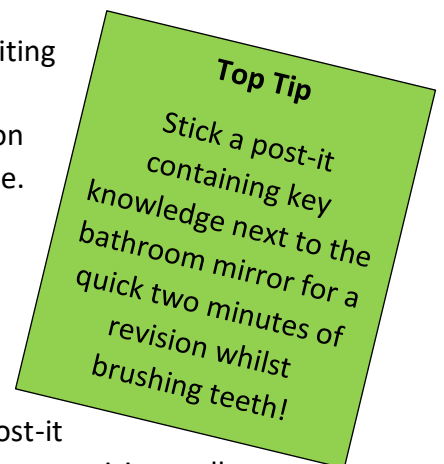


Revision Method 5: Teach Someone Else

This method involves the student explaining a topic to another person from memory. This involves having to recall their knowledge and clearly communicate it. The person being taught can have a set of key notes in front of them. At the end of the 'lesson' they can then go through any key points that have been missed.

Other Revision Ideas

1. Some students find that going through their notes and writing a summary of the key information helps them remember.
2. Occasionally watching a suitable documentary or revision film clip on Youtube can help to develop subject knowledge. Teachers can provide guidance on suitable films.
3. Revision websites such as BBC Bitesize contain key information and revision tasks. However, when revising online, students need to resist the temptation to stray off task!
4. Some students find writing key facts or formulae on post-it notes helps. These can then be stuck around the house or on a revision wall.



Revision Methods that Don't Work as Well

People can sometimes spend hours revising but not actually achieve much. This is because some revision methods are less useful at helping information stick in the brain, or simply waste time. Here are some things that do not work as well:

1. Re-reading notes, or copying notes out word-for-word.
2. Turning information into images.

3. Adding lots of pictures and colour to notes/mind-maps. This can feel like a useful activity but is actually a good way of wasting time!
4. Going through old work and highlighting it. This can make the notes look pretty but doesn't actually help get the knowledge to stick in the brain.

Ten Top Tips for the Exam Season:

1. Find a quiet place to revise where there aren't any distractions. If this isn't possible at home, speak to a teacher or form tutor.
2. Don't spend hours revising without a break. It's better to work for a focused spell of about 45 minutes then take a 15-minute break.
3. Put a limit on console, TV and phone time. Phones can be very useful for revising but can also be a major distraction.
4. Start revising from a long way out. Leaving revision to the last minute simply does not work!
5. Stick to a healthy and balanced diet and drink plenty of water. Staying hydrated helps to improve concentration.
6. Get plenty of sleep. Have a regular bedtime and routine, and ideally only use the bed for sleeping (not revising!).
7. Get exercise. This releases endorphins which helps combat exam stress. Even a short walk two or three times a week makes a difference.
8. Stay in touch with friends and family. Plan social and family time into revision schedules. This provides periods of relaxation. Just make sure a social life does not come ahead of revising!
9. Strictly limit or stop doing paid work in the build-up to and during exams. We all like that bit of extra money but more time working can mean less time revising...and lower exam results.
10. Finally, and most importantly, speak to someone if you are struggling. Don't bottle it up.

Useful Websites and Apps

CHS Sharepoint (accessed through the student's school email account or the Students section on the main school website). Many subjects have uploaded lots of revision resources, including past papers.

CHS Satchel – teachers will set revision activities and put resources on Satchel.

BBC Bitesize (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>) – contains lots of core knowledge and revision tasks for a wide range of subjects.

MathsWatch and **Mathsgenie** both have loads of resources to support Maths revision.

Educake – lots of knowledge-based quizzes. Especially useful for English.

Seneca (<https://senecalearning.com/en-GB/>) – lots of resources for a wide range of subjects.

Get Revising (<https://getrevising.co.uk/planner>) – allows students to build a revision timetable.

Other useful sites used by many CHS subjects include: **Blooket**, **Kahoot** and **Quizziz**. All of these can be used for testing subject knowledge. **GCSEPod** has over 3,5000 podcasts on a range of subjects.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. How can I support my child when they are preparing for exams?

A. You can help them by being involved in their revision, such as testing them. Do your best to provide them with a space to work. Gentle support and encouragement will be needed. Some students need a push to get started. Others need to be told when to take a break.



Q. I am concerned that my child is not revising. What should I do?

A. The first thing is to talk to them about it. It could be that they are feeling overwhelmed, or that they don't know how to revise. It could be that they simply lack motivation. Work together to come up with a revision timetable. It can help if you provide incentives as your child meets certain milestones in their revision. If none of this is helping, please do not hesitate to contact your child's form tutor or Guidance Team Leader.

Q. I am concerned about my child's mental health. What should I do?

A. Exams can be very stressful and some students do struggle to manage their emotional well-being as a result. If you are concerned, contact your GP. Also, let your child's form tutor and/or Guidance Team Leader know. There is support that we can put in place in school to help your child, and other agencies we can recommend such as VISYON.

Q. I am worried that my child is working non-stop and not taking breaks. What can I do?

A. Talk to your child about how they are feeling. Take them a drink and a snack and get them to take a break with you. You could plan activities to get them out of the house. However, as ever, contact your child's tutor or Guidance Team Leader if you are really concerned.

Q. When should my child start revising?

A. Now! It's best to revise for exams from a long way out. Revising little and often is a good approach. Whilst students are still being taught courses in school and have regular homework, it might be 20 or 30 minutes an evening to begin with. This should then build up significantly over time.

Q. What revision guides should I buy for my child?

A. It's best for your child to ask their subject teacher what they recommend. It is important that you know which exam board and which units your child is studying as there are many different commercial guides for the same subject and not all of them may be relevant. Also, a lot of subjects at CHS provide in-house resources such as revision guides written by CHS teachers. CGP have produced a book: **How to Revise for GCSE** (ISBN: 9781789082807) full of revision ideas. It costs £4.49 online.

