

ST AMBROSE COLLEGE



REVISION

GUIDE

GCSE AND A LEVEL

## **GCSE & A Level Revision Guide**

This booklet is designed to help you prepare effectively for your exams by giving you clear, practical strategies for each subject. Inside, you'll find:

- ☀ General [revision techniques](#) and links to guides/ folders to support you with this
- ☀ Subject specific revision advice
- ☀ How to stay organised and manage your time
- ☀ What to do if you're struggling
- ☀ A revision timetable template

Whether you're preparing for your GCSEs or tackling A Level content, this guide will support you in achieving your best possible grades.

### **Step by step guide to effective revision**

#### **Step 1: Organise your revision**

##### **☑ Make a revision timetable**

- List all your subjects and topics you need to cover
- Prioritise subjects based on difficulty or upcoming exams
- Set specific time slots for each subject (e.g. 30 minute or 1 hour blocks) (a revision timetable template is included in this booklet, or you can find one online at <https://getrevising.co.uk/planner> )
- Include breaks to avoid burnout (e.g. 5-10 minutes every 45 minutes)
- Get yourself colour-coded folders for each subject and some dividers for each topic

##### **☑ Gather your materials**

- Class notes, textbooks, revision guides, past papers (these can be found on the exam board website)
  - Highlighters, flashcards, sticky notes, coloured pens
  - Apps/ websites like Quizlet, Seneca, Uplearn or SmartRevise for extra support
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#### **Step 2: Understand the content**

##### **☑ Active reading**

- Don't just read – make notes in your own words
- Summarise key points into bullet points or diagrams
- Highlight key terms, definitions, and concepts

##### **☑ Break down topics**

- Use specification overviews if available (again, these can be found on the exam board website. Ask your teacher if you can't find these)
- Identify gaps in your knowledge

##### **☑ Use different formats**

- Try **mind maps** for big topics or essays
  - **Flashcards** for key facts or quotes
  - **Diagrams** for processes (e.g. science cycles)
  - **Acronyms** or mnemonics to remember key points
  - **Self quizzing** using multiple choice questions for rapid testing
  - **Teaching others:** explain a topic to a friend or family member
  - **Practice papers** under timed conditions
  - Watch **YouTube videos** and **Podcasts** to process the information in a new way
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#### **Step 3: Test yourself**

##### **☑ Use active recall**

- Cover your notes after creating them/ revising them and try to write down what you remember
- Ask yourself questions instead of re-reading (check the [AI library](#) to see how to get ChatGPT to help you create quiz questions)

### ✔ Practice past papers

- Complete under timed conditions
- Check mark schemes and examiner reports for key insights
- Identify areas where you lost marks and revise those topics

### ✔ Use spaced repetition

- Don't cram! Review topics regularly over time
  - Revise a topic today, then again in 3 days, then in a week – this is why it's so important to create a timetable. It's even better if you record what you covered in each of your revision sessions.
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## Step 4: Engage with the material

### ✔ Teach someone else

- Explain the topic to a friend, family member, or even ChatGPT if no one else is available!
- If you can teach it, you understand it

### ✔ Use ChatGPT or AI Tools

- Ask AI to quiz you on topics
- Summarise your notes into key points
- Generate practice questions and answers
- Check the [AI library](#) for step-by-step instructions
- **Remember:** AI tools can make mistakes so DOUBLE CHECK the information is correct (especially for things like quotations from texts)

### ✔ Make it fun

- Turn revision into quizzes, challenges, or games
  - Use YouTube videos or podcasts for a different learning style
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## Step 5: Stay motivated and healthy

### ✔ Take breaks

- Follow the **Pomodoro technique** (25 minutes study, 5 minute break)
- Avoid burnout – quality, spaced revision beats quantity

### ✔ Stay healthy

- Get **enough sleep** (at least 7-8 hours)
- Eat brain-boosting foods (nuts, fish, fruit)
- Exercise or go for a walk to clear your mind
- Don't neglect your extra-curriculars or things you enjoy (obviously within reason!)

### ✔ Stay positive

- Track your progress with checklists for each subject
- Reward yourself after completing revision goals
- Stay confident – small progress adds up
- Keep your notes tidy and well organised/ labelled. This will make it less daunting to open your folders.

## Active revision methods

Avoid passive revision (just reading or highlighting). Instead, try the following. Links to videos explaining how to effectively use each strategy are included below – click on the name of each technique. Tick each one when you have tried it:

- [Flashcards](#) – for key facts, vocabulary, and formulas
- [Mind maps](#) – for linking ideas and themes
- [Self quizzing](#) – use past paper questions and try to answer from memory
- [Teaching others](#) – explain a topic to a friend or family member
- [Practice papers](#) – always use a timer to mimic exam conditions

## Subject specific revision advice

<p><b>English Language &amp; Literature</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn key quotes and themes by making flashcards</li> <li>• Practise timed essay writing with past questions Plan essays using</li> <li>• Analyse examiners' reports to understand common mistakes</li> <li>• Look over previous assessments</li> </ul>	<p><b>Maths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do as many practice questions as possible – the more, the better</li> <li>• Focus on your weak topics first and revisit them regularly</li> <li>• Use step-by-step solutions and understand where you went wrong</li> <li>• Watch YouTube tutorials for tricky concepts</li> </ul>
<p><b>Science – Biology, Chemistry, Physics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use flashcards for key definitions and formulas</li> <li>• Practise drawing and labelling diagrams</li> <li>• Complete past papers under timed conditions</li> <li>• Use acronyms or mnemonics for key facts and lists of features</li> </ul>	<p><b>History, Geography &amp; Politics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create timeline summaries to understand key events in order</li> <li>• Use mind maps to connect themes</li> <li>• Practise source analysis and essay writing</li> <li>• Memorise case studies by condensing key facts onto flashcards</li> </ul>
<p><b>Computing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review class notes and highlight key information, using flashcards to memorise key information</li> <li>• Practise programming using online tools</li> <li>• Do as many practice questions as possible – the more, the better</li> <li>• Focus on your weak topics first and revisit them regularly</li> <li>• Use the online revision website</li> </ul>	<p><b>Business, Economics &amp; Psychology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand key theories and practise applying them to real life examples</li> <li>• Practise writing structured essays using evidence</li> <li>• Make concise revision notes with key terms and definitions</li> <li>• Complete multiple choice quizzes to test your knowledge</li> </ul>
<p><b>Languages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise vocabulary daily using flashcards or apps (e.g. Quizlet)</li> <li>• Practise listening by watching foreign-language TV or YouTube</li> <li>• Write out and memorise model answers for key topics</li> <li>• Speak aloud as much as possible to build confidence – the ChatGPT app has a spoken translation feature that will help you with this</li> </ul>	<p><b>DT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use revision guides and class notes to create flashcards with key information</li> <li>• Complete multiple choice quizzes to test your knowledge</li> <li>• Complete past papers under timed conditions</li> <li>• Look at past papers/ mock exams to check for areas of weakness</li> </ul>
<p><b>RE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use flashcards for key terms and concepts</li> <li>• Create mind maps for ethical theories</li> <li>• Practice past paper questions</li> <li>• Teach a topic to someone else</li> <li>• Look at past papers/ mock exams to check for areas of weakness</li> </ul>	<p><b>Art, Drama &amp; Music</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse key works</li> <li>• Rehearse performances or compositions</li> <li>• Sketch or storyboard key concepts</li> <li>• Record and review practice sessions</li> <li>• Look at past papers/ mock exams to check for areas of weakness</li> </ul>

## What to do when you're struggling

### Struggling to remember information?

Teach it to someone else – explaining forces you to recall details.

Create story based mnemonics to make facts more memorable.

Try a different revision technique.

Check your revision style – revising with somebody else might be helpful for some, but for many it will just be a distraction.

Be honest with yourself: are your revision habits effective?

### Feeling overwhelmed?

Break work into smaller chunks.

Focus on ONE topic at a time.

Use relaxation techniques (deep breathing, short walks).

### 💡 Not seeing improvement?

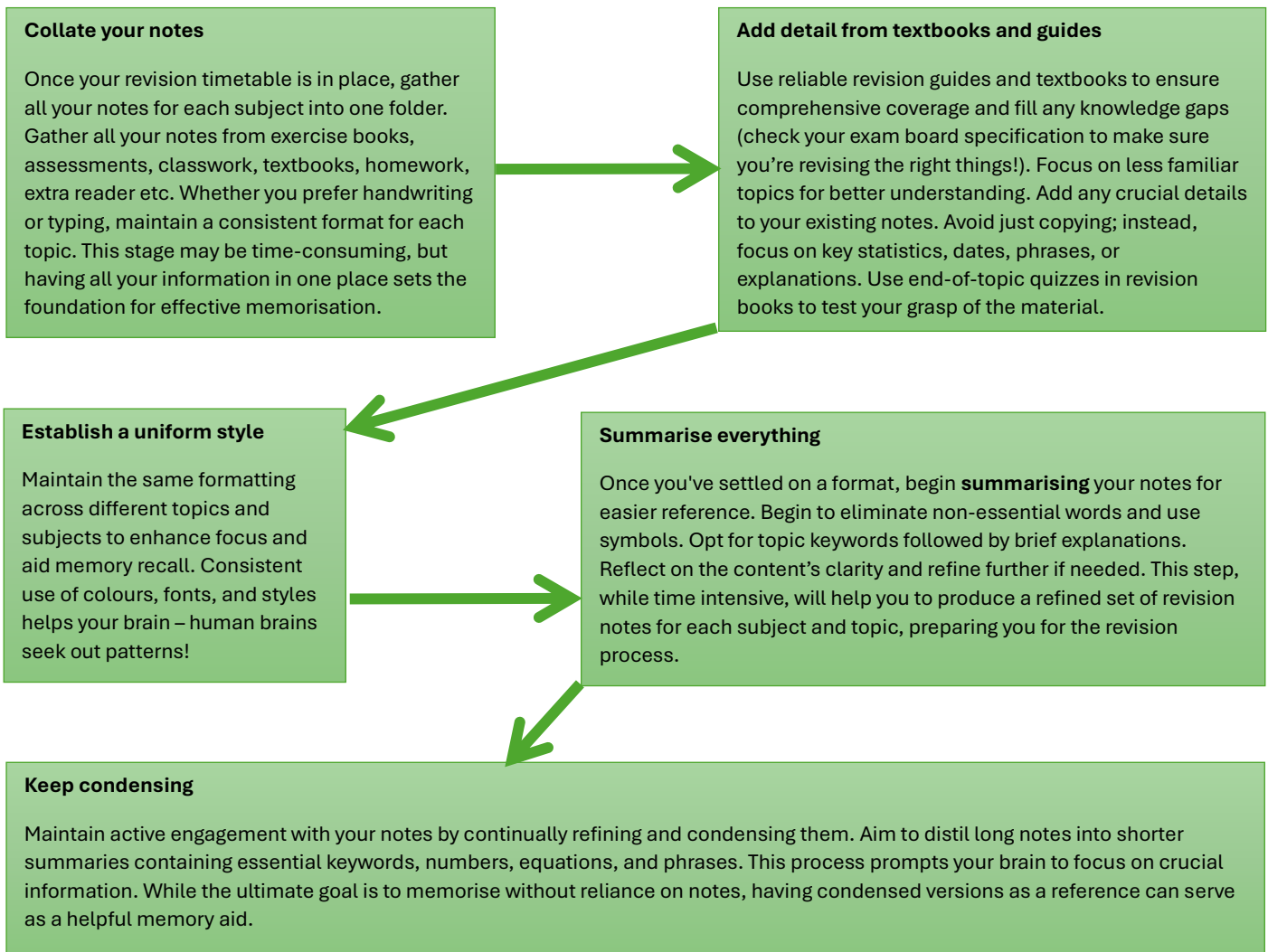
Change your revision method – try active recall or past papers.  
Seek help from teachers or classmates.

### 😞 Losing motivation?

Set small, achievable goals and reward yourself.  
Change up your revision timetable to combine different subjects on different days  
Study in different locations to stay engaged.

### How to make notes for revision

By following these steps, you'll have a well organised set of revision notes ready for your exams. Remember, the key is to make the material your own through active engagement and condensation.



## How to condense longer notes into short summaries

When summarising notes, focus on key ideas and remove unnecessary words.

- 🌿 Identify key words – pick out the most important words that capture the core meaning
- 🌿 Remove unnecessary words – cut out extra details, repeated ideas, or long explanations
- 🌿 Use shorter phrases – replace long sentences with concise statements
- 🌿 Maintain key meanings – ensure the core ideas are still clear

### Key tips for summarising notes effectively

- Use bullet points for clarity if necessary
- Paraphrase rather than copy
- Keep one main idea per sentence
- Highlight/ underline key terms

See the example below:

*Macbeth is a tragedy that tells the story of a soldier whose overriding ambition and thirst for power cause him to abandon his morals and bring about the near destruction of the kingdom he seeks to rule. At first, the conflict is between Macbeth and himself, as he debates whether or not he will violently seize power, and between Macbeth and his wife, as Lady Macbeth urges her husband toward a course of action he is hesitant to take. Once Macbeth stops struggling against his ambition, the conflict shifts. It then primarily exists between Macbeth and the other characters, in particular Banquo and Macduff, who challenge his authority. Macbeth is the protagonist in the sense that he is the main focus of the narrative and that audiences frequently have access to his point of view. However, as he often acts against his own best interests, as well as the best interests of the other characters and his country, he is also the antagonist. The characters who oppose Macbeth and eventually defeat him do so in order to restore order and justice.*

- 🌿 Identify key words – “Macbeth,” “tragedy,” “ambition,” “morals,” “kingdom,” “conflict,” “protagonist,” “antagonist,” “Banquo,” “Macduff” (you could highlight these in your original notes)
- 🌿 Remove unnecessary words – cut “thirst for power,” “violently seize power” (implied in ambition), “audiences frequently have access to his point of view” (not essential) (**Remember: these kinds of words and phrases would be useful when you are writing an essay, so return to these when you are completing past papers!**)
- 🌿 Use shorter phrases – “Overriding ambition and thirst for power” → “ambition”
- 🌿 Maintain key meanings – meaning of the text still focuses on Macbeth’s ambition and summarises the main events

Condensed version:

*Macbeth is a tragedy about a soldier whose ambition leads him to betray his morals and destroy the kingdom he wants to rule. Initially, he struggles with his conscience and Lady Macbeth’s influence. Once he embraces ambition, he becomes both protagonist and antagonist, facing opposition from Banquo and Macduff.*

See an additional example below:

*The Haiti earthquake struck on 12th January 2010 with a magnitude of 7.0. The epicentre was 16 miles west of Port-au-Prince, the capital. Haiti is located on a conservative plate boundary between the Caribbean and North American plates. The earthquake caused massive destruction, with over 220,000 deaths, 300,000 injuries, and 1.3 million left homeless. Infrastructure collapsed, including hospitals and the presidential palace. The lack of clean water led to a cholera outbreak, worsening the humanitarian crisis. International aid was slow due to damage to roads and the airport. In response, organisations like the Red Cross and the UN provided emergency supplies, while long-term recovery efforts focused on rebuilding infrastructure and improving disaster preparedness.*

- 🌿 Identify key words – date, magnitude, location, key impacts, key responses
- 🌿 Remove unnecessary words – cut “hospitals and presidential palace collapsed” (implied by “infrastructure damage”)
- 🌿 Use shorter phrases – “International aid was slow due to damage” → Removed (not as crucial for key points)
- 🌿 Maintain key meanings – used bullet points to make key details easy to recall

Condensed version:

### *Haiti Earthquake (2010)*

- *Date & Magnitude: 12th Jan 2010, 7.0 magnitude*
- *Location: Conservative plate boundary (Caribbean & North American plates)*
- *Impacts: 220,000+ deaths, 300,000 injured, 1.3m homeless, cholera outbreak*
- *Responses: Red Cross, UN aid, infrastructure rebuilding, disaster preparedness improvements*

### **How to use flashcards effectively**

Once you have watched the video on how to make good flashcards, have a go at using the Leitner System (flashcards with spaced repetition). This is a method that improves recall by reviewing flashcards at increasing intervals based on how well you remember the information.

#### **Example:**

◆ Create **three boxes** for flashcards:

- **Box 1:** Cards you struggle with (review daily)
  - **Box 2:** Cards you know fairly well (review every 3 days)
  - **Box 3:** Cards you've mastered (review weekly)
- ◆ If you get a card wrong, move it back to Box 1.

👉 **Why it works:** Reinforces knowledge by focusing on weaker areas.

### **Self quizzing: Blurting (recalling from memory)**

Write down everything you can remember about a topic **without looking at your notes**. Then, check what you missed and fill in the gaps.

#### **Example:**

◆ Topic: Forces

- Write down **everything** you remember about scalar and vector quantities
- Compare with your class notes
- Rewrite your response, filling in the missing details

👉 **Why it works:** Forces active recall, improving long-term retention.

### **Self quizzing: Cornell notes**

A structured method for condensing information and testing knowledge.

#### **Example:**

Key term	Notes
Photosynthesis	Process by which plants convert sunlight into energy. Takes place in chloroplasts.
Equation	$6\text{CO}_2 + 6\text{H}_2\text{O} \rightarrow \text{C}_6\text{H}_{12}\text{O}_6 + 6\text{O}_2$
Limiting Factors	Light intensity, $\text{CO}_2$ concentration, temperature

◆ Cover the **right-hand column** and try to recall details using only key terms.

This can also work for maths:

Key term/ question	Notes/ explanation
What is Pythagoras' Theorem?	In a right-angled triangle, the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.
Formula	$a^2+b^2=c^2$
What is the hypotenuse?	The longest side of a right-angled triangle (opposite the right angle).
Example question: Find c if a=3 and b=4	$3^2+4^2=c^2 \rightarrow 9+16=c^2 \rightarrow 25=c^2 \rightarrow 5=c$
When do we use Pythagoras?	When working with right-angled triangles to find missing side lengths
Rearranging the formula	To find a shorter side, use $c^2-a^2=b^2$
Scenarios	Navigation, architecture, engineering to calculate distances

👉 **Why it works:** Organises information in a structured way for **active recall**.

### Mnemonics & acronyms

Using patterns, rhymes, or acronyms to remember key facts.

#### **Example (Geography: causes of tropical storms)**

#### **W.H.A.L.E.S.**

- 🌊 Warm ocean water (at least 27°C)
- 💧 Humidity (moist air rising)
- 🌬️ Air pressure (low pressure system)
- 🌍 Latitude (5°–30° from the equator)
- 💧 Evaporation (rapid water cycle)
- 🌀 Spinning (Coriolis effect)

👉 **Why it works:** The word *whales* relates to the ocean, making it easy to associate with storms forming over warm seas. (Hint: ChatGPT is amazing at coming up with mnemonics!)

### Mind mapping

Useful for subjects that require linking ideas, such as **English, History, RE and Science**.

#### **Example (History: causes of WW1)**

◆ Draw a central bubble: **WW1 Causes**

◆ Branch out into **MAIN**:

- Militarism
- Alliances
- Imperialism
- Nationalism

◆ Add **key events** and details under each branch.

👉 **Why it works:** Engages visual memory, helping recall complex ideas.

Map out your typical week Include school, meal times, extra curriculars, and other commitments. Then, add each of your subjects in a different time slot. Make sure you include all subjects and allocate them the appropriate time needed.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
1							
2							
3							
4							
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