

Revision Top Tips

Rest is part of revision, not a reward

It's normal to feel guilty when not revising, but regular rest helps memory, focus and emotional wellbeing. A refreshed brain learns better.

Short, focused revision beats long hours

The quality of revision matters more than the number of hours. Short, productive sessions with breaks are far more effective than working all day.

Sleep is essential

A regular sleep routine improves concentration and recall. Late-night revision usually does more harm than good.

Build revision around life, not the other way round

Planning in breaks, social time and activities gives something to look forward to and helps keep motivation high.

Movement and fresh air matter

Getting outside and being active can lift mood, reduce stress and improve focus during revision.

Manage worry, don't carry it alone

Writing worries down and separating what can be controlled from what can't helps reduce anxiety and make problems feel more manageable.

Be realistic and kind to yourself

Some days will be harder than others — that's normal. Doing a little is better than doing nothing, and small steps add up over time.

Use a variety of revision methods

Flashcards, mind maps, posters, teaching others and changing locations can make revision more engaging and effective.

Avoid unhealthy comparisons

Comparing revision time with others is unhelpful. Everyone revises differently, and what works best will vary from person to person.

Keep perspective

Exams are important, but grades do not define you. This period is temporary, and doing your best, knowing that you've prepared well, is what really matters.

Revision Today: What Parents Need to Know

Revision looks very different now compared to when many parents were at school. Alongside textbooks and exercise books, students now have access to YouTube channels, apps, online quizzes, and social media content designed to support GCSE learning. Some of these resources can be genuinely helpful, but they are most effective when used carefully and alongside more traditional approaches.

Online revision resources: helpful, but not a substitute

There are now well-known subject specialists on platforms such as YouTube (for example, Miss Estruch for Biology). These can be useful for:

- clarifying tricky topics
- revisiting explanations in a different way
- supporting independent learning

However, watching videos alone is a passive activity. More effective learning happens when students *do something* with the information — such as making notes, answering questions, or explaining the idea to someone else. Even organising information (for example, ranking it, sorting it into a table, or selecting the most important points) counts as active learning. By contrast, re-reading, highlighting, and simply rewriting notes are largely passive and less effective.

Social media and learning apps

Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and revision apps can offer short bursts of information and quick reminders. While engaging, they are designed to encourage constant scrolling and distraction. These formats are best treated as supplements, not main revision tools.

That said, there is a time and a place for some digital tools. For example:

- Flora blocks distractions and gamifies focus and concentration
- Anki enables students to make flashcards and test themselves
- Quizlet offers resources for active revision across GCSE subjects
- Seneca Learning provides videos, summary notes, and practice questions

These tools are most effective when used intentionally, alongside active learning methods like recall practice, selective note-making, and making conceptual connections by creating mind maps.

Phones are usually a distraction — even when “not being used”

Research and experience consistently show that having a phone nearby, even switched off, on silent, or face down, can reduce concentration. Subconsciously, students are thinking about checking it. Encouraging students to put their phone in a different room for focused revision (using a kitchen timer to signal the end of a study session) can help students focus fully on revision without the mental pull of notifications.

Music, films and multitasking

Many students feel more comfortable revising while listening to music or even watching a film. While this may make revision feel more enjoyable, cognitively the brain is dividing attention between tasks, which reduces how much information is properly learned and remembered.

- Revision is most effective when it has your full attention
- Music, films, and social media are best kept for break times
- Exams are completed in silence, so practising revision in similar conditions has clear advantages

Comfort does not always equal effectiveness. That said, each student is different; if a student has found a method that genuinely works for them and produces results, it may be appropriate to continue whilst still encouraging focused practice.

Pen and paper still matter

Despite all the digital tools available, it's worth remembering an important truth:

In the exam, students sit with a pen and paper — and little else.

Activities such as:

- writing notes by hand
- practising written responses to exam questions
- creating mind maps or summary sheets

remain some of the most effective forms of revision. This is because writing by hand forces the brain to actively encode information. Deciding what is important and how to summarise it. Passive digital engagement, such as watching videos, scrolling through apps, or typing word-for-word, often involves less cognitive processing and can reduce retention.

GCSE specifications: a useful overview for parents

For each GCSE subject, exam boards publish a specification online. This document outlines exactly what students need to know for the exam.

Parents do not need to understand every detail, but:

- it can be helpful to glance at the topic list
- it allows parents to see the scope of what is being revised
- it opens up conversations about what students are studying

A particularly effective revision strategy is encouraging students to explain a topic to someone else. Teaching another person helps students identify gaps in their understanding and strengthens memory.

How parents can support revision at home

Parents can help by:

- encouraging focused, distraction-free revision time
- supporting the use of breaks rather than constant multitasking
- valuing effort and good habits over hours logged
- reassuring students that revision does not need to involve every new app or platform

Sometimes, the simplest approaches are also the most effective.