



# A study skills guide for students of Park High School





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Preparing for exams does take time and effort. Everyone is different, so there's no ideal plan we can give you, but in this guide are some planning points which we know have been successful in the past.

Remember that your teachers are here to help you and they want to support you in your learning and revision. So, if you get stuck, please ask for their help.

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Learn</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the most of lesson time! <b>Effective learning</b> takes place in class!</li> <li>• It is important that you <b>fully understand each topic</b> before you can revise it.</li> <li>• If there is anything you don't fully understand, think about how to self-regulate yourself: What questions do you need to ask yourself? Your teacher? Do you need to re-read the textbook? Or find additional information to support your learning?</li> </ul>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Revise</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once you have fully mastered a topic, you can start to revise it.</li> <li>• Revision is reviewing material you have previously covered to reinforce what you already know or find out where your gaps are.</li> <li>• There are many different ways to revise:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o condense your notes (e.g. using The Cornell notetaking method)</li> <li>o create mind-maps or flow-charts</li> <li>o prepare flashcards from your notes (question on one side, answer on the back)</li> <li>o convert your notes into your own podcasts, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Revision is not re-reading your notes over and over again! You need to do something with your notes instead!</li> </ul>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Retrieve</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once you have revised a topic, you are ready to test yourself:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o ask a friend or family member to test you on your flash cards</li> <li>o re-draw your mindmaps or flow charts from memory</li> <li>o complete past paper question</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

We wish you the best of luck with your exams and we hope that you will be delighted with your results in August 2026.

Best wishes

The Staff of Park High School

# TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE REVISION AND RETRIEVAL

## Build your life around studying

This is one of the hardest things to do. Now you are in you are in Key Stage 4, it is vital that you make sufficient time for exam preparation.

For the next few months, some other activities might need to be put on hold until after the exam.

Think about what has got to give way and where you can turn 'down time' into 'study time'. Sacrifices should be less difficult now the exams are getting closer

## Keep healthy

As we said at the beginning, revision takes time and effort and a lot of your energy. You do not need to stay at home and study all the time, however, try and avoid any activities that leave you drained and exhausted the next day.

Make sure you eat sensibly and drink plenty of water.

Moderate exercise and plenty of sleep are also important.

Remember that you should stop revising one hour before you intend to go to sleep. If you don't allow for some down time after revision, it is likely that you will find it harder to fall asleep straight away.

## Keep Calm

It is natural to feel a bit of tension as the exam season is drawing closer. Remember that if you have organised your time, started revision early and kept to your revision timetable, you are going to be fine.

If you are worried, try to identify what it is that is bothering you and talk about it with your parents and teachers. The chances are that you can do something about it.

Get the basics right and make sure you have the following:

- a comfortable chair
- a clear desk
- good light
- comfortable temperature
- pens/coloured pencils
- highlighters
- paper
- folders and dividers
- flashcards
- post-it notes
- ruler & protractor
- eraser
- calculator
- dictionary
- revision guides
- exercise books
- textbooks
- past papers
- mark schemes
- examiners reports

If the place where you do most of your schoolwork is not easy to work in, what can you do to make it better?

What distracts you when you are trying to settle down to revision? Can you do something to remove that distraction (e.g. place your phone into a lockable box or different room)?

If you find it difficult to study at home, use your local library.

# STUDY PLAN

Before you start your revision, it is essential that you know what needs to be revised in each subject. Often your teacher will provide you with a checklist or exam specification which makes it also clear which topics are on which exam paper. These are easy to find on your exam board websites.

## Using the exam board specification to create a checklist

You can use the exam board specification to divide the task up into a lot of smaller topics (it is easier to get started and to see your progress if you divide one large topic into a series of smaller topics). This means that each topic is fairly quick which keeps up your motivation to continue with your revision:

Example: Chemistry Topic 5.9.1 The composition and evolution of the Earth's atmosphere

Specification point	Notes made	Revised notes	Need help
Students need to know the proportion of gases in atmosphere			
Students are required to know the composition of the Earth's early atmosphere			
Students need to describe the process by which the level of oxygen in the atmosphere increased			
Students need to describe the process by which the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere decreased			

## Weekly study timetable

Make a provisional timetable for which topics you will cover each week. With a study timetable you are able to check that you are covering all subjects and are not running out of time.

- Aim to study a little every day (2 hours a day initially)
- Build in some unallocated study time because you may get a bit behind.
- Put the timetable up on the wall or fridge at home where everyone can see it. Ask your family to help you keep to it.
- If you find that you are repeatedly not sticking to your study timetable, find out why you are struggling to keep to it and rewrite it!

Example study timetable:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7am	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
8am	School	School	School	School	School	Home learning	Home learning
9am	School	School	School	School	School	Home learning	Home learning
10am	School	School	School	School	School	Football	English
11am	School	School	School	School	School	Football	Geography
12pm	School	School	School	School	School	Football	Spanish
1pm	School	School	School	School	School	Lunch	Lunch
2pm	School	School	School	School	School	Maths	Phil & Eth
3pm	School	School	School	School	School	Science	Maths
4pm	Home learning club	Period 7	Tea and TV	Period 7	Tea and TV	History	Tea and TV
5pm	Maths	Dance	Geography	Science	Tea and TV	Tea and TV	Science
6pm	English	Maths	Spanish	Maths	Spanish	Art	History
7pm	Science	English	Art	English	History	Art	Break
8pm	History	Science	Home learning	Phil & Eth	English	Break	Break

# STRUCTURING YOUR STUDY SESSIONS

## Study session – Version 1 – The Pomodoro method

1. Select a task.
2. Set a timer to 25 minutes.
3. Work until the timer goes off.
4. Take a 5 minute break.



5. Set the timer to 25 minutes.
6. Go over the work done so far, then move on.
7. Work until the timer has gone off.
8. Take a 5 minute break.



9. Set the timer to 25 minutes.
10. Go over the work done so far, then move on.
11. Work until the timer has gone off.
12. Take a 5 minute break.



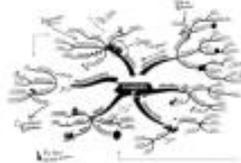
13. Set the timer to 25 minutes.
14. Go over the work done so far, then move on.
15. Work until the timer has gone off.
16. Take a longer break.



1. Choose a small number of past paper questions.



2. Spend 20 minutes revising/re-viewing what you need to know to answer your chosen questions.



$$\begin{array}{r} 8 + 6 = 14 \\ \hline 8 + 6 \\ \hline 16 - 9 = 7 \\ \hline 16 - 9 \end{array}$$



3. Set a timer for 20 minutes and answer the past paper questions you chose.



4. Mark your answers using the mark scheme.



5. Show your teacher your work and ask whether your marking is accurate and how you could improve your answer.

# TRANSFERRING INFORMATION INTO LONG-TERM MEMORY

## Cold-recall

Choose a topic, or part of a topic. Spend time reading through the topic in your revision guide, textbook or exercise book.

Cover up the information that you have just read and write down everything that you remember on a blank piece of paper.

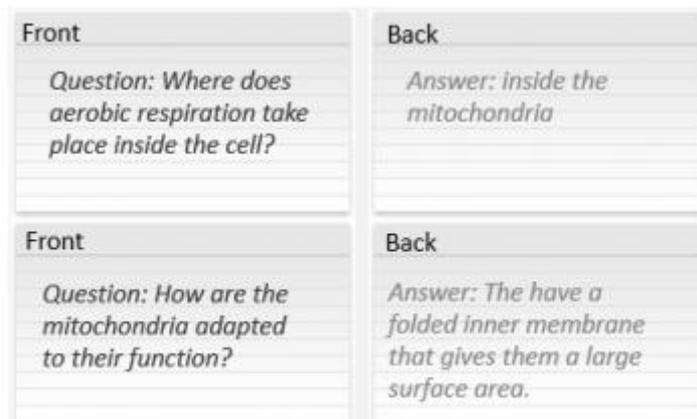
Then check what you wrote against the original notes. Highlight the areas you have missed or did not remember correctly. Then repeat the process until you can remember everything correctly.

## Self-quizzing

One of the best revision techniques is to quiz yourself (or get someone else to quiz you).

Use the notes from the revision guide, textbook or exercise book to create a set of questions and answers (on paper or flashcards).

If you make flashcards, remember to write the question on one side and the answer on the other side of the same card.



Using this technique, you will find out exactly how much you have forgotten about a topic. Forgetting is a normal process.

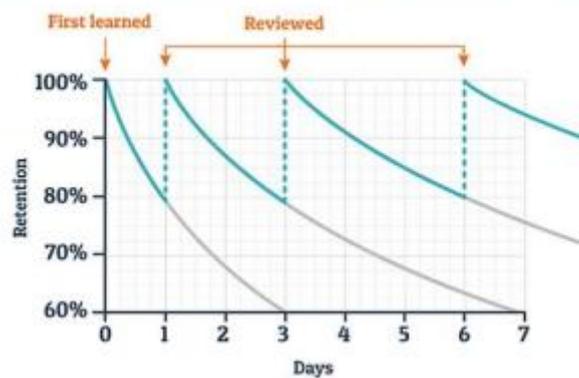
Quiz yourself more often on the questions you get wrong or forget. Don't stop quizzing yourself on the questions you get right. Repeated quizzing is required to transfer the information into your long-term memory.

## Spacing

Leave time between quizzing sessions. Once you feel confident that you remember everything about a particular topic, allow some time to pass before returning to that topic (a few days or even a week).

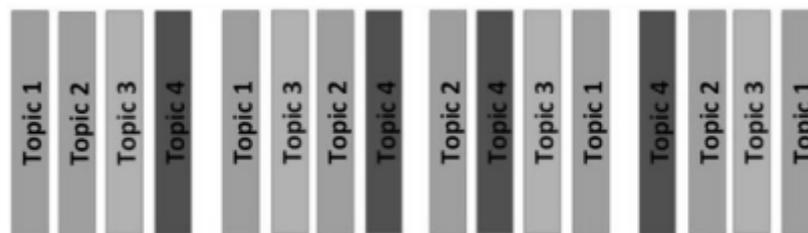
Over this time, you will start to forget some of the information. This means you will need to try hard to recall the information, which helps with the information being committed to long-term memory.

Typical Forgetting Curve for Newly Learned Information



## Interleaving

Don't study one subject or topic for too long. When you go back through your flashcards or notes, go through them in a different order:

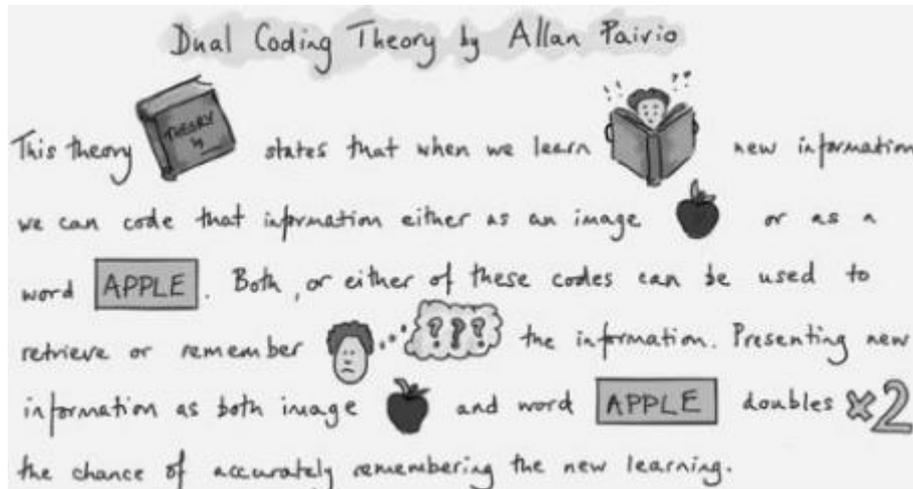


Balance your time between subjects: if you spend too much of your time on one subject, either because it is your favourite one or because it is known to be weak, the other subjects will suffer. It is very common for students to get their best results in subjects they found difficult - because they neglected their stronger subjects during revision.

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For some people it helps to draw diagrams to go along with the notes:

You can  
up the  
use the



also cover  
notes and

diagrams/drawings as clues to explain/recall a concept. Don't forget to check for accuracy against your notes afterwards.

## Examiner reports/Insight reports

Every year, the exam boards make public a document that is written by the examiners. In this document the examiners summarise what the most common errors were, which questions were answered well and what this good answer looked like (e.g. examiners have given high marks for answers that offer criticisms to viewpoints during an evaluation question).

Examples of what not to do are also included.

In terms of exam technique, this document is incredibly useful and an important resource to use during your revision. Read it carefully, turn it into notes, diagrams etc.

## Past-papers

Once you know off by heart the information from your notes and flashcards, you need to move on to past papers to see how the specification is tested/examined.

Most students will complete each past paper once; however, you should complete each past paper at least twice.

The first time round you might have to use your notes to answer some of the questions.

Then go through the markscheme. Only accept answers that are worded exactly like the markscheme. If you are unsure if you can award yourself a mark for an answer, ask your teacher for advice. You know what you wanted to say, but that does not mean the examiner will interpret your answer the same way and very often the examiner wants to read a very specific phrase. It is important that you do not overmark your answers.

The second time round, you should complete the paper without any of your notes and under timed conditions so you get used to the time pressure you will be under in the exam.

## Other techniques

Create a mind map on a topic. Then use the mind map to test yourself: turn the mind map into explanation and descriptions and check these for accuracy.

Use revision websites such as <https://quizlet.com/en-gb> , [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize) and <https://senecalearning.com/>

Write key points on posters and post-it notes and pin these to walls and doors around the house.

Plan answers to essay questions. Which quotations will you include and why?

Record a series of questions and answers (leave about 5 seconds between a question and answer so you can use this strategy to test yourself) or explanations on your phone and listen back to them on your way to and from school.

Come up with mnemonics to remember lists (e.g. Richard of York gave battle in vain – red orange yellow green blue indigo violet).

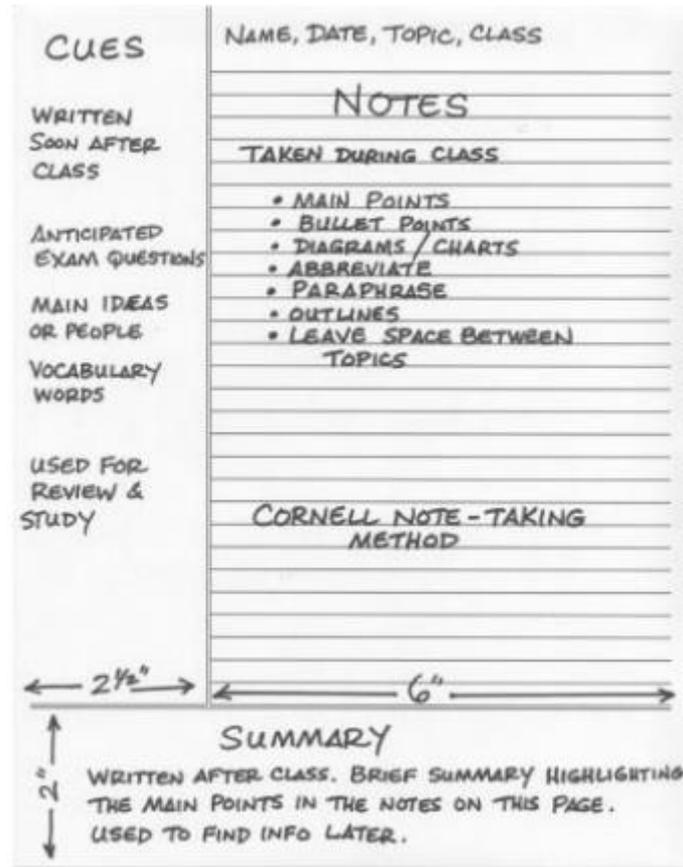
Find a study buddy. Structure your meetings (e.g. study, test each other, study, test each other) but make sure you stay focused and don't get sidetracked.

Talk out loud when you quiz yourself.

Walk (forwards, backwards, in circles) as you are quizzing yourself.

## The Cornell note-taking method

You can use this method at home, when creating revision materials, or in class. It is useful to go through old exercise books and add the cues and summary notes to each page as part of your revision.



# EXAM SEASON

The hard work is done. Your revision has met its end and now is the perfect time to calm your nerves and make sure that you are ready to enter the exam hall well rested and confident in your ability to answer the questions on the paper.

## The night before your exam

- 1) Have everything ready for the next day (pencil case, calculator, spare pens, school uniform, water, food, money for transport, alarm clock set)
- 2) Re-check the time of the first exam.
- 3) Plan to study for a few hours in the afternoon/evening.
- 4) Go offline – avoid any social media sites.
- 5) Exercise to work off stress (run, walk, swim, basketball, etc.)
- 6) Visualise a positive exam experience. This will calm your nerves and increase your confidence.
- 7) Remind yourself of how much revision you have done; again, this will boost your confidence.
- 8) Focus on yourself. Do not compare yourself to others.
- 9) Visualise the exam as a challenge or an opportunity to show off your knowledge rather than as a threat. This will reduce your stress levels.
- 10) Remind yourself of how you overcame previous challenges. This will build your mental resilience and help you keep calm in the exam.
- 11) Get a regular night of sleep 6.5-8 hours, go to bed early.

### **Suggested timetable for the evening before an exam:**

1. Finish intense retrieval by 8pm.
2. Exercise for half an hour.
3. Review the topics for the next day's examination at 8.45pm.
4. Do some reading or another relaxing activity at 9.25pm.
5. Re-check your equipment, food, water and uniform for the next day at 10pm.
6. Sleep

## The morning of your exam

- 1) Get up early – allow time to get ready without rushing.
- 2) Review the topics that will be tested in the exam.
- 3) Eat a balanced and healthy breakfast. Avoid sugary foods. Drink water to ensure you are hydrated for the exam.
- 4) Double check your school bag to ensure you have packed your pencil case, calculator, spare pens and water.
- 5) Arrive at school with plenty of time (30 minutes before the start of the exam).

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- 6) Visualise a positive exam experience. This will calm your nerves and increase your confidence.
- 7) Remind yourself of how much revision you have done; again, this will boost your confidence.
- 8) Focus on yourself. Do not compare yourself to others.
- 9) Visualise the exam as an opportunity to show off your knowledge rather than as a threat. This reduces your stress levels.
- 10) Remind yourself of how you overcame previous challenges. This will build your mental resilience and help you keep calm.

### Entering the exam hall

- 1) Set out your equipment.
- 2) Imagine yourself on results day: visualise opening your results and being delighted with the outcome.
- 3) Focus on slowing your breathing to help you relax (inhale for 4 counts - hold your breath for 4 counts - exhale for 4 counts – repeat).
- 4) Listen carefully to the invigilator.
- 5) Read the written instructions on the front of the exam paper carefully. These will tell you: time, choice of questions, type of answer, number of marks.
- 6) Fill in the centre number, candidate number and your name.
- 7) Read each question slowly. Use a highlighter to highlight or underline command words and essential information. Then read the question again.
- 8) Think about a general plan for the answer before writing down your answer.

### What happens if your mind goes blank?

- 1) Focus on your breathing to calm your nerves.
- 2) Jot down some initial thoughts.
- 3) Move on to the next question if you still feel you cannot answer the question.
- 4) Return to the question you struggled with at the end of the exam once you have answered all the other questions.

### At the end of the exam

- It is natural to discuss answers with other students once the exam is over, however, don't bother with a full post-mortem. You have done your best.
- Physically and mentally, pack up your revision notes for that exam and move on to the next subject and exam.
- Think about the type of question you found most difficult. If you know that the same style of question will come up in another exam, make sure you practise answering these types of questions before the next exam.

## CHANGING YOUR MINDSET

<b>Exam desolation</b>	⇒	<b>Exam consolation</b>
Unhealthy self-talk	⇒	Healthy self-talk
During exam time, I am isolated from my friends and family.	⇒	I am not alone, lets go through this together. My friends, family and teachers are all behind me.
I am going to fail.	⇒	My friends and family love me, whatever happens.
All my friends are going to do better than me.	⇒	I belong to a special school community and they want me to try my best, that is all.
I can't go to sixth form/Uni/college unless I get the grades.	⇒	As one door closes, another one opens.
Exams are everything.	⇒	This is an important stage of my life but there are many adventures ahead.







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