



THE CEDARS ACADEMY

Lionheart Educational Trust

Study skills guide

KS4

*Top tips and advice to support you through studying
for GCSEs*



Why study and revise?

Revising for exams is not an easy process. It's important for you to make the most of your time studying. We can show you how to organise your time, how to make sure you are learning effectively, and teach you skills to revise properly. Ultimately however, it is down to you to use these skills.

Firstly, why revise anyway? There is a very important principle that you need to always remember.

You are not at school to pass exams. You are at school to learn!

This might sound obvious to some. It might sound odd to others. Here's what we mean.

- Exams are not the point of your education. Exams are only a measure of how well you have learnt your subjects.
- If you know your subjects well, you will get good results. You can't short-cut the system!
- Revision is not to get you through exams. Revision is to help you master your subjects. Once you've mastered the topics, you will do well in exams.

The purpose of revision.

1) Revision helps you learn. Revision is an important part of any course. It is the act of reviewing your knowledge and lessons to make sure you understand all of it. So, without revision, you will not complete your learning of any subject.

2) You will have plenty of assessments through the remainder of your time at school, and possibly some exams at the end of the year as well. Revision will help you learn your subjects, which will help you pass exams.

3) Revision is a skill that you will use all through your life, not just for exams. Being able to review your understanding, spot gaps in knowledge, and effectively fill those gaps is something you will always need to be able to do.

How to revise.

1) Be organised and deliberate. Identify times to revise. Make sure this is sensible and manageable. Revise topics in short, focussed slots. Use a timetable, and stick to it.

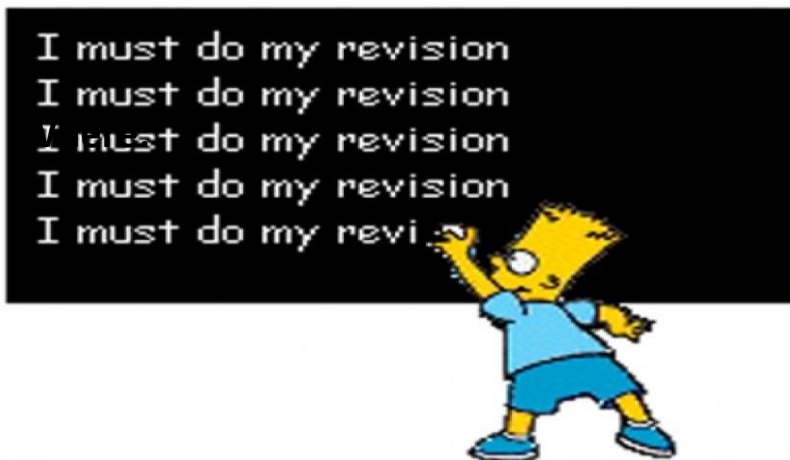
2) Be balanced. Make sure you include plenty of down-time; time for hobbies, sports, or just relaxing. The key is balance.

3) Be honest. Know where your weaknesses are and attack them. Use your teachers and results from tests to help you target weak areas. If you miss a revision slot, don't worry, but make sure you carry on.

4) Be centred. Have a place in your house where you work – no TV/games/phones, just a place set up to work. If you must have music, choose music without lyrics – they will distract your brain, even if you think they don't. Have everything you need in this place, and NO DISTRACTIONS.

5) Be a communicator. Tell people when you are revising – this helps them avoid disturbing you, but also helps them remind you if you go off-task. Keep talking to teachers when you get stuck. If you feel down or frustrated, talk to your tutor, your parents or your friends. Everyone is going through the same thing and they understand.

6) Be challenged. If your revision is too easy, it probably isn't doing much – you should find it challenging, but not impossible. The more effort it needs, the more effective it will be.



How:

We all have our own preferences for working and revising. However the brain has particular ways of working, and it turns out that some methods for revising are particularly good.



Don't Do That!

Firstly – some things to avoid:

Lots of notes from textbooks and lots of highlighting

Takes up lots of time, and you don't learn because you are not using your memory. Highlighting looks lovely, but doesn't actually help you remember (although highlighters when answering questions can be very useful)

Re-reading by itself

Can give the 'illusion of knowledge' – you feel you understand when you read, but you can't explain it again later

Amount of time revising \neq quality of revision

20-30 minutes at a time is often a good amount. Less, and you won't have put enough in to be effective, more and you start to lose focus



Good techniques (your tutors and teachers will tell you more about how these work:

Mind-maps

- **Great if:** as with notes, do this AFTER you have studied a topic and without referring back to the textbook. Use your memory, and then go back and check for any gaps
- **Less useful if:** you spend an age making it pretty and colourful, but don't learn anything from it.

Flashcards

- **Great if:** they are based on questions and answers, getting you to try to remember ideas. Have a system - ones you get right, put aside for a week or more; ones you get wrong, return to sooner.
- **Less useful if:** they are just shorthand sets of notes to jog memory.

Spaced repetition

- **Great if:** You plan this carefully, and alongside the revision plan provided by teachers
- **Less useful if:** you repeat ideas you know well, and don't focus on topics you need to do more work on

Summary notes

- **Great if:** You read or study some topic, and THEN summarise WITHOUT LOOKING AT THE ORIGINAL! This way, you are actively trying to remember ideas, not just copy them
- **Less useful if:** you are just making notes as you read to condense them. Revision guides already do this very well – don't waste time repeating someone else's work

Practice exam questions

- **Great if:** You make sure you get the right level and paper, and focus on questions that are stretching you. Make sure you learn from the mistakes – these are more important during practice than the ones you get right
- **Less useful if:** They are too easy, or you don't check and correct your mistakes

Creating questions and mark schemes

- **Great if:** you can write complex questions, and have a friend you can test yours on (or a teacher who can check them). When you write a good question, store it away and use it to test yourself again a few days or weeks later.
- **Less useful if:** you don't really understand the topic, and so can't ask good questions.

Teaching someone else/prepping a lesson

- **Great if:** you have a partner who is at a similar level and who can ask good questions back to clarify what you mean. Also, this method will help you understand what you still don't know
- **Less useful if:** you don't have a good understanding of your topic – your teaching won't work. You don't need an actual audience if you have a good imagination, but you do need good material.

Don't overdo your revision



- Avoid information overload and burn out by pacing your studies – this reinforces the importance of having a well thought out revision timetable.
- Take frequent breaks. Short chunks of revision work best for most people e.g. revise for 30 minutes then take a short 5 or 10 minute break.
- Stay hydrated and don't get too hungry. Keep a glass of water to hand along with healthy snacks like fruit and nuts.
- Remember your friends and family. Spending time with them will keep you stimulated and stop you going 'stir crazy'.
- If things aren't going quite to plan, don't panic – just re-evaluate what you can cover in the remaining time and focus on what you can achieve.
- Make sure you get enough sleep as this can help you stay alert and energetic rather than tired.
- Discipline yourself and get into the habit of revising regularly
- Plan in some relaxation time – especially if you are revising every day it is important to plan in some time to switch off and relax