

BCS PARENT PARTNERSHIP

Get all your revision
guide info here



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S STUDIES EFFECTIVELY



Welcome to our Study Support Toolkit – a guide to support your child's learning journey. In this booklet, we'll explore key areas that contribute to academic success and overall well-being.

We'll begin by understanding the crucial role parents play in creating a positive and supportive learning environment for their children.

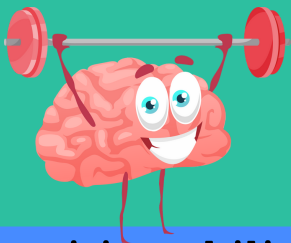
When adolescents don't get enough sleep it can impact...



Mood



Behaviour



Cognitive Ability

Grades



UNDERSTANDING TEENAGE SLEEP

Teenagers are notorious for not getting enough sleep. The average amount of sleep that teenagers get is between 7 and 7 ¼ hours. However, they need between 9 and 9 ½ hours (studies show that most teenagers need exactly 9 ¼ hours of sleep). Teenagers do not get enough sleep for a number of reasons, but screen time, social media use and gaming are undoubtedly huge factors often keeping them up awake and on their screen til late.

How to help your teenager get enough sleep

- Maintain a regular sleep schedule. Your teenager should go to bed and wake up at about the same time each day. Their sleep schedule should also ensure adequate time in bed.
- Avoid oversleeping on weekends. Although catching up on some sleep on the weekends can be helpful, sleeping in until noon on Sunday will make it hard for them to get back on a school schedule that night.
- An afternoon nap of 15-20 minutes can be beneficial. Any longer and it could disrupt their sleep that night.
- TVs, computers, consoles, internet use, and other stimulating activities at bedtime will cause problems falling asleep. They might not agree with you stamping it out, but remember, you're in charge.
- Avoid caffeine. Energy drinks can play havoc with sleep, there's a reason they have minimum age for purchasing.

Read about Loughborough University's study on teens and sleep, physical activity and screen time [here](#).



Watch: Why sleep is so important for teenagers



Wellbeing is paramount. Taking care of your mental and physical health will not only improve your ability to study effectively but also contribute to a more positive and successful exam experience. If you find yourself consistently struggling, consider reaching out to a parent, teacher, counsellor, or mental health professional for additional support.



WELLBEING

Prioritise Self-Care

Sleep is number one, but in addition...

- Eat a balanced diet to fuel your body and brain.
- Take short breaks during study sessions to avoid burnout.
- Avoid excessive caffeine or energy drinks, as they can negatively impact sleep and stress levels.
- While technology can be a useful study tool, excessive screen time can contribute to stress and fatigue. Take breaks from screens. Especially in the hour before bed as the light disturbs sleep hormones.



Stay Active

- Incorporate regular physical activity into your routine, even if it's just a short walk.
- Exercise helps reduce stress and improves concentration.

Create a Realistic Study Schedule

- Plan your study sessions in advance and create a realistic schedule.
- Break down your study material into manageable chunks, focusing on one subject at a time.
- Celebrate small victories to stay motivated.



Mindset

- Cultivate a positive attitude towards challenges and setbacks.
- Remind yourself that exams are just one part of your academic journey.



Stay Connected

- Maintain a support system of friends and family. Share your feelings and concerns.
- Take breaks to socialise and relax with loved ones.



Kooth - Free, safe and anonymous support for young people

TOP TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE REVISION



Be informed

What exam board do you follow for each subject? How many exams do you have? When do they start? How long is each exam? Being informed is vital as it gives you control over how to prepare effectively for exams.

Start early

It is never too early to revise and revisiting information as frequently as you can will really help to make it stick – repetition is key! Do some revision every day – small amounts frequently are better than periods spent cramming.

Be well-equipped

You need a range of materials to help you revise effectively, these include class notes and folders, revision guides, notebooks, paper, pads, highlighters, post it's, pens etc. Get the correct equipment to make sure that when you sit down to revise, you have everything you need.

Space out your revision

It is beneficial and helps to strengthen your memory if you build in forgetting time - your brain remembers more if you leave breaks between revising the same topic again – this is called spaced repetition

Find out more here



Teach someone else

Testing is super powerful and revising with someone who can test you and vice versa is a really effective form of revision

Find a suitable space

To get the most out of your revision you need to find a quiet and calm space to revise. Make sure you have no distractions – so switch off phones and music with lyrics. If you struggle to concentrate at home or want to do more study in the day, the study zone is an excellent space for all students to use.

Things to avoid...

- Cramming – don't leave revision to the last minute. The night before, you can briefly use some flash cards or read some notes to refresh your memory but don't use up too much energy!
- Spending too long working without taking a break – it is important to build short breaks into your revision. When planning your day, ensure you have gaps to rest, eat and stay hydrated. Have a planned treat either during the day or at the end as a reward for working hard.
- Think that buying a revision guide is enough – owning a guide is not the same as using it effectively. If you find a really good revision guide, make sure you build it into your revision timetable to get the most out of it.
- Planning to revise at your least productive time of the day – everyone has a time in the day when they are at their best. For some it's early in the morning, others it's later in the evening. You know best what will work for you!

THE IMPORTANCE OF READING

The importance of all student having high levels of literacy have never been so important in preparing students for not only their GCSE exams, but for the rest of their lives too. A recent study of GCSE exam papers has found that on average students require a reading age of 15 years to be able to confidently access the papers; the same study found that a quarter of all 15-year-olds have a reading age of 12 or below, and that the reading ability gap between boys and girls widens significantly after primary school. At age 15, 53% of girls have a reading age of 15 and higher compared to only 47% of boys. This is a shift from the situation at age 11, where the gender gap is much smaller – 21% of girls and 19% of boys have that ability. The later gender gap is reflected in exam results too. Last summer 22.6% of girls got a grade 7 or above in English language, compared to just 12.4% of boys. As a result, these students will struggle as much in maths and science at GCSE as they do in English and in arts subjects.



Don't forget, we also have the new BCS digital library with hundred of engaging and age appropriate books to enjoy.

Ideas to improve reading age:

- Cut out newspaper articles about topics your child is studying.
- Read together if your child is having problems with reading in a particular subject. Equally, audio books can be just as powerful and the evidence suggests that there is little difference between reading comprehension and listening comprehension...they get similar benefits!
- Encourage your child to use all of the new study areas in school. The study zone is open before school, during lunch and after school.
- Speak to your child's subject teacher to see if there is anything that they could read that would help their studies or that would help them enjoy a topic.
- Talk about everyday topics, encouraging your child to be the 'expert' and use the technical terms they are learning at GCSE. For example, your child could tell you about tomorrow's weather using words such as precipitation, humidity and isobars, or they could explain how a circuit works when you switch on the light.
- Look up technical words you or your child don't recognise from their work in a dictionary or on the internet and make it your word of the day. When you have a list of new words you could test your child on them.
- Talk to your child about reading. Often GCSE students feel they have little time for reading for pleasure. You can help by talking about what they enjoy reading and helping to make time for it.

SUPPORTING ACADEMIC CHALLENGE AT HOME

The biggest contribution a parent can make to their child's education is to **be interested and appreciate what they are doing**, know what they are interested in, and support them in what they do. This does not mean you have to be an expert in any of the school subjects! Nor does it mean being 'on their case' all the time.

So, where does the balance lie in supporting your child's independent learning, and how can parents extend academic challenge at home?

- Developing young people's language
- Extending their knowledge of the world
- Encouraging discussion
- Developing a range of skills and a balanced perspective
- Praising and valuing effort and persistence, not just achievement
- Complement what is done at school, rather than replicating it
- Supporting social and emotional needs



Applying learning

All students need repeated learning, but to stretch and challenge young people at home parents can support by helping students to apply their learning in a different context or extend their learning: going sideways rather than upwards. This will mean students don't spend time replicating and consolidating knowledge that is already secure, and instead challenge them to think more deeply and embed their learning.

Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking refers to the ability to objectively analyse information and make a reasoned judgement. The key skills listed below enable students to become more effective and reflective learners, and foster key characteristics of their learning:

- Analysing
- Evaluating
- Creating
- Problem-Solving
- Independent Enquiry



Supporting students with critical thinking

There are simple and practical ways parents can support students in developing their critical thinking skills beyond the classroom, such as: asking them challenging questions, encouraging them to be more analytical and ask their own questions, ask them to teach you a key learning point, encourage them to use dictionaries and thesauruses to enrich their language, challenge them to produce revision/responses in ways other than writing, and many more.

DIGITAL STUDY TOOLS



Embracing technology can greatly enhance your child's learning journey. This guide explores powerful digital study tools, from memory-boosting apps to interactive platforms, empowering parents to support their students effectively.



Anki utilises spaced repetition to reinforce learning, making it ideal for creating adaptive and personalised flashcards that enhance memory retention.



Seneca's smart learning platform employs neuroscience principles to enhance memory retention. Encourage your child to use Seneca for effective revision through interactive quizzes and adaptive learning techniques.



Quizlet offers collaborative study sessions and interactive quizzes, promoting engagement and knowledge-sharing among students. Harness its potential for effective group learning.



Active YouTube Learning

Transform passive watching into active learning. Encourage your child to engage with educational content on YouTube by taking notes, summarising key points, and discussing topics with peers.



OneNote

OneNote is a versatile tool for note-taking and organisation. Teach your child how to structure and categorise study materials, fostering a systematic approach to learning. Students have access to OneNote as well as the rest of the Office 365 suite using their school login.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MEMORY AND LEARNING

Making it stick

Our memories are like Velcro, when we are learning, we need to give them something to stick to. When we learn something new, we have to activate what we already know, so our new learning has a place to go. You could ask your child questions about what they are about to revise to activate this process.

Repetition is also key to making it stick. Research by cognitive psychologists has found the key way to transfer memories into our long-term is through repetition.

Practical tips:

- Revising in silence
- Sitting at a desk
- Having a clear desk space, only have out the current subject you are working on
- No mobile phones or other distractions



Memory overload

A common mistake students make when revising is overloading their memory. Research has shown that our short-term memory has an average capacity of 5-9 items. Many students will be using techniques which do not allow their learning to move to their long-term, such as:

- Flash cards **crammed with information**
 - Detailed mind maps
 - Trying to learn lengthy paragraphs/reading full pages
- The method of 'chunking' is shown to be more effective in memory and learning. Watch the video to find out how.

Check the resources your child is using
- are they overloaded with information?



Watch: Chunking: Learning
Technique for Better Memory

Context is key

Do you ever go upstairs, and forget what you went up there for in the first place? Research has shown this is due to the change in context. This is what is happening to students, they are revising in an environment which does not mirror the context of the exam.

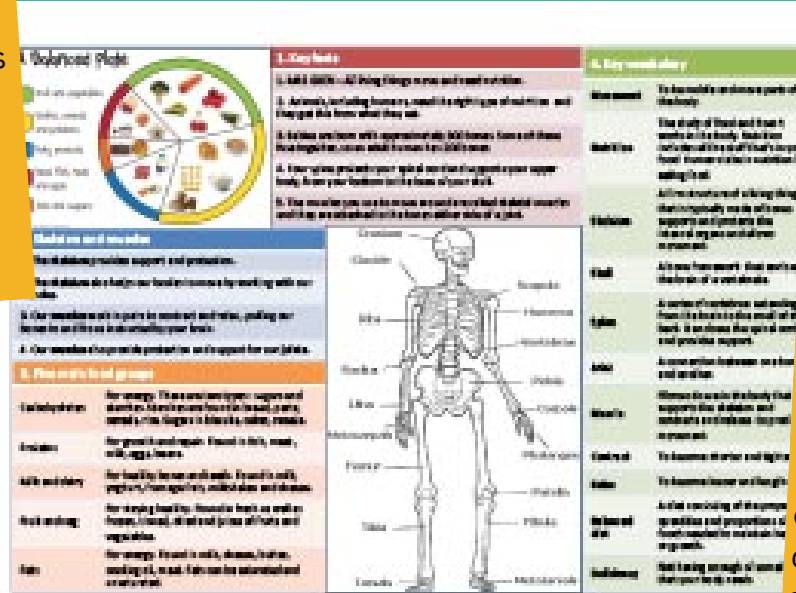
Find out more here



USING A KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

What is a knowledge organiser?

A knowledge organiser sets out the important, useful and powerful knowledge on a topic on a single page (Kirby, 2015). With the content demands of new courses, and schools adopting a knowledge-based curriculum, these are becoming increasingly popular in schools at secondary.



The Purpose of a Knowledge Organiser

The purpose of a knowledge organiser is to help students excel in a specific area by providing foundational factual knowledge, understanding those facts within a conceptual framework, and organising information for efficient retrieval and application. Knowledge organisers offer a more systematic approach compared to traditional guides and textbooks. Advocates argue for the memorisation of essential knowledge due to the limited capacity of our working memory; storing more in long-term memory can free up working memory capacity. With careful design and use of knowledge organisers, we can create schemas—complex knowledge structures in long-term memory—with the aim of automating their application. Particularly for complex tasks, such as crafting an English literature essay, knowledge organisers reduce cognitive load by enabling students to easily retrieve information and quotations from their long-term memory.

Practical tips for using a knowledge organiser:

- Regular Retrieval Practice - Quizzes, brain dump before you check
- Test to identify gaps
- Use it to link knowledge together
- Organise knowledge in different ways - Re-ordering lists based on different criteria enhances recall and deepens understanding.



Watch: How to use a knowledge organiser

HOW TO USE INTERLEAVING FOR REVISION

Interleaving is a method to use when revising to help remember more for the exam and to understand it better as well.

By revisiting material from each topic several times, in short bursts, this can increase the amount students remember in the exams. The forgetting curve shows us that we forget a lot of the information we learn if we don't revisit it at all. Each time you revise information it strengthens your memory recall as you can see by the 'learning curve'. When planning revision students should break units down into small chunks and split these over several days rather than cramming one topic all at once. This can mean doing just 10 minutes revision for each subject in a revision session and then the next day covering a different subtopic for each subject again. Students can create a revision timetable like the one below to organise their time so they can space revision from the whole course right up to the exam.

An example of how students can plan interleaved revision

| | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 4 | Week 5 | Week 6 |
|------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Subtopic 1 | Mon – 10 mins | | Mon – 10 mins | | Mon – 10 mins | |
| Subtopic 2 | | Mon – 10 mins | | Mon – 10 mins | | Mon – 10 mins |
| Subtopic 3 | | | Mon – 10 mins | | Mon – 10 mins | |
| Subtopic 4 | | | | Mon – 10 mins | | Mon – 10 mins |



THE POWER OF TESTING

Tests in education are often associated with grading and ranking students, but they serve broader purposes that significantly enhance academic performance.

At Buxton Community School, retrieval practice, also known as 'the testing effect,' is ingrained in our teaching. Regular quizzes, reviewing information weekly or monthly, enhance long-term memory. Research shows that actively recalling information strengthens retention.

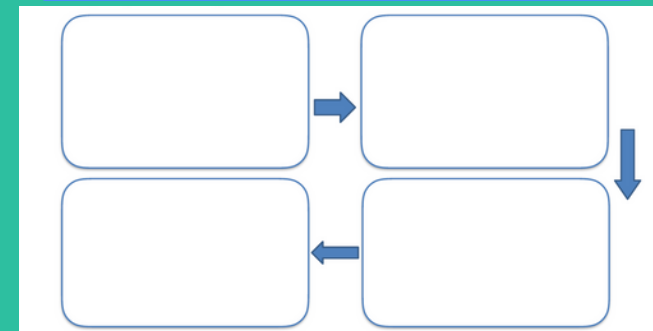
So, for example, if a student was asked “Which kings fought in the Battle of Hastings in 1066?” and she correctly answered the question, her active retrieval of this fact would lead to it being better recollected again later than if she had no practice or had simply studied the answer. This is an example of the direct effect of testing.

Surprisingly, pre-tests, even with incorrect answers, have proven to enhance learning. In a study, students who attempted pre-tests outperformed those who memorized questions. The process of attempting to retrieve information, even if initially incorrect, enhances long-term learning.

Beyond direct effects, frequent quizzes prompt more regular study and help identify knowledge gaps. Embracing testing as a primary independent study and revision strategy leads to greater learning. Short-term challenges in performance should be viewed as valuable for long-term educational gains.

Retrieval Relay

Choose a topic you have studied or a past paper question you could be asked. Without using your notes, write as much as you can remember in the first box. Now spend 3 minutes your notes before putting them away. Now add any further information to the second box. Repeat these steps for boxes 3 and 4. By box 4 you should have a fully complete answer or topic summary. Boxes 2, 3 and 4 also highlight any gaps in your knowledge.



Keyword Spotlight

IN YOUR OWN WORDS
WRITE A DEFINITION:
democracy: A system with a government chosen by the people for the people fairly.

USE THE TERM CORRECTLY IN A SENTENCE: countries that have a democracy include Britain, USA and Australia.

CREATE A QUESTION WHERE THE KEYWORD IS THE ANSWER.
What is the system where a government is chosen by the people for the people fairly?

KEYWORD: DEMOCRACY

WHAT OTHER WORDS ARE CONNECTED TO THE KEYWORD?
Election, Equality, Politics, Democrat, Political Parties, Government

DRAW OR FIND A PICTURE TO ILLUSTRATE THIS KEYWORD:
A ballot box labeled 'NOTES'.

SELF ASSESS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THIS KEYWORD:
★ Got it! Almost! Not yet



THE POWER OF TESTING

4 Methods of Retrieval Practice

@ImpactWales

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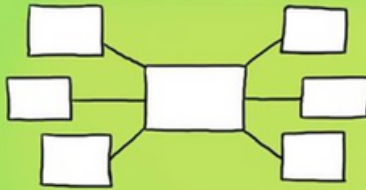
Before you start put away all your books & classroom materials.

Retrieval Practice Examples

- * Exit Tickets
- * Starter quizzes
- * Multiple choice quizzes
- * Short answer tests
- * Free write
- * Think, pair, share
- * Ranking & sorting
- * Challenge grids

BRAIN DUMP

Write, draw a picture, create a mind-map on everything you know about a topic.



Give yourself a time limit, say 3 minutes, then have a look at your books & add a few things you forgot.

QUIZZING

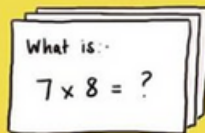
Create practice questions on a topic. Swap your questions with a partner & answer.

Question - What is a metaphor?

- ☐ A comparison using 'like, as, than'.
- ☐ A comparison where one thing is another.
- ☐ A comparison with a human attribute.

FLASHCARDS

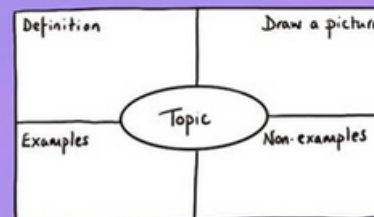
Create your own flashcards, question on one side answer on the other. Can you make links between the cards?



You need to repeat the Q&A process for flashcards you fail on more frequently & less frequently for those you answer correctly.

KNOWLEDGE ORGANISERS

Complete a knowledge organiser template for key information about a topic.



You can use knowledge organisers to learn new vocab & make links in between subjects or ideas.

After you have retrieved as much as you can go back to your books & check what you've missed. Next time focus on that missing information

The Protégé Effect



All about flashcards



Watch: How to study flash cards