

Preparing for GCSE Success

Year 12 Study Guide

Name:

Parkhall Integrated College



Top 10 ways to beat Exam Stress

1. Make a Realistic Revision Plan

Break subjects into small chunks and spread them out. You don't need to revise everything in one night – slow and steady works better.

2. Use Active Revision

Don't just read notes.
Try: flashcards, practice questions, teaching someone else and past papers.

3. Take proper breaks

Use the Pomodoro method:
25 minutes of work → 5-minute break.
Your brain needs rest to stay focused.

4. Get Enough Sleep

Sleep is revision. A tired brain can't think clearly, so aim for 8-9 hours where possible.

5. Eat and drink well

Water, fruit, and proper meals help your energy levels. Too much caffeine and sugar can make anxiety worse.

6. Talk About How You're Feeling

Stress is normal. Talk to: friends, teachers, parents or school support staff. You don't have to deal with it alone.

7. Try Simple Breathing Techniques

Slow breathing can calm your nerves:
Breathe in for 4, hold for 4, out for 6
Repeat a few times.

8. Keep Things in Perspective

Exams matter, but they don't define you. There are always other routes, retakes, and options in the future.

9. Stay Active

Even a short walk, stretch, or bit of sport can reduce stress and clear your head.

10. Celebrate Small Wins

Finished a topic? Did a past paper?
That's progress.
Reward yourself – you've earned it.

Contents

How your brain learns.....	4
Parkhall Integrated College’s recommended revision techniques.....	5
How to use past exam papers for revision.....	9
Maths past papers	9
English past papers	10
Science past papers	11
How to create and use a revision timetable.....	12
How to use AI for effective GCSE revision.....	16
Top 5 exam day tips.....	18
Top revision websites	19
Blank timetable	20

How your brain learns

1. LEARNING MEANS STORING IN LONG-TERM MEMORY

Your brain works like a library - information needs to be retrieved and stored, not just read once. Practising recall helps information “stick” better.

2. RETRIEVAL PRACTICE IS KEY

Instead of just rereading notes, you should test yourself and practise bringing information up from memory. This builds stronger recall pathways in your brain.

3. REORGANISE YOUR NOTES

Organise what you learn into:

- ▶ mindmaps
- ▶ flashcards
- ▶ summaries in your own words

This helps you understand and remember better.

4. SPACED REVISION BEATS CRAMMING

Studying a topic over **several sessions** spaced out over time is much more effective than doing it all at once. Imagine revisiting a topic several times before exams - that’s powerful revision!

5. TEACH SOMEONE ELSE

Explaining a topic to another person (or even to yourself!) forces you to organise and practise the information - which strengthens memory.

HOW LEARNING WORKS



TOP REVISION TIPS

- ✓ Use past papers and quizzes to practise retrieval
- ✓ Don't just read notes - rewrite them in new formats
- ✓ Mix up topics rather than block one subject for hours
- ✓ Spread your revision over days/weeks
- ✓ Teach someone else to check your understanding

SPACED PRACTICE

And the Forgetting Curve

- ✓ Spread your learning out
- ✓ Three is better than one.



Your memory gets stronger with each spaced review.

- ✓ Flashcards
- ✓ Quizzes
- ✓ Mindmaps
- ✓ Past papers



Parkhall Integrated College's Recommended Study Techniques

1. Blurting

What it is: Read a page of your notes or a textbook, close it, and write down everything you can remember on a blank sheet of paper. Then, go back with a different coloured pen and fill in what you missed. You need to focus on the information you have written in different coloured pen because you don't know this yet.

- **Why it's useful:** It's a stress test for your memory. It exposes exactly what you *don't* know so you don't waste time reviewing what you already do.
- **Example:** After a 10-minute review of Cell Biology, try to draw and label the entire cell from memory.

2. Spaced Repetition

What it is: Instead of cramming for five hours the night before, you review the same material in short bursts over several weeks.

- **Why it's useful:** It fights the Forgetting Curve. By reviewing just as you're about to forget, you lock the information into your long-term memory.
- **Example:** Review a new History topic today, then again in 2 days, then in 1 week, then in 1 month, you are more likely to remember the information on exam day than if you crammed it the night before.

3. Flashcards (Digital or Physical)

What it is: Small cards with a question/term on one side and the answer/definition on the other. Use apps like **Anki** or **Quizlet** to make them portable.

- **Why it's useful:** They force Active Recall. Unlike re-reading, your brain has to physically find the answer.
- **Example:** For Spanish vocab, put the English word on one side and the Spanish on the other. Flip and repeat until you get 5 in a row right.

4. Past Papers

What it is: Doing actual exams from previous years under timed conditions.

- **Why it's useful:** This is the Final Boss of studying. It gets you used to the *way* questions are phrased and the pressure of the clock.
- **Example:** Set a timer for 30 minutes and try to complete Section A of last year's Maths GCSE paper.

5. Teaching Each Other

What it is: Explaining a concept to a friend, a sibling, or even your dog, in the simplest terms possible.

- **Why it's useful:** You can't teach what you don't understand. If you stumble while explaining it, you've found a gap in your knowledge.
- **Example:** Try explaining how Inflation works to a younger sibling. If they get bored or confused, you need to simplify your understanding.

6. Pomodoro Technique

What it is: A time-management method where you work for **25 minutes** and then take a **5-minute break**. After four Pomodoro's, take a longer break (20-30 mins).

- **Why it's useful:** It stops study burnout. It's much easier to start working when you know a break is coming in just 25 minutes.
- **Example:** Use a Pomodoro timer app while doing your homework so you don't end up scrolling on TikTok for an hour mid-session.

7. Interleaving

What it is: Mixing up the subjects or topics you study in one session, rather than focusing on just one thing for hours.

- **Why it's useful:** It helps your brain distinguish between different types of problems. It feels harder at the time, but the information sticks much better.
- **Example:** Instead of doing 2 hours of Algebra, do 20 minutes of Algebra, 20 minutes of English Lit, and 20 minutes of Chemistry.

8. Dual Coding

What it is: Using both words and pictures to learn something. It's not about making fine art, it's about turning your notes into a comic strip or a diagram so your brain has more to look at than just a wall of text.

- **Why it's useful:** Your brain has two 'folders': one for words and one for images. If you only use words, you're only using half your brainpower. When you add a sketch or a timeline, you're double saving the info, making it way harder to forget.
- **Example:** Instead of just writing a paragraph about how a cell works, draw a circle and label the parts like a map. Even a quick stick figure sketch works.

How to use past papers for revision



PRACTISE WITHOUT A CALCULATOR

Make sure you practise both calculator and non-calculator papers.



USE THE FORMULA SHEET

Learn what's on it and practise using it properly.



SHOW ALL YOUR WORKING

Even if the final answer is wrong, you can still get method marks.



MARK CAREFULLY

Check:

- ▶ Method marks
- ▶ Accuracy marks
- ▶ Where you lost marks



SPOT TOPIC PATTERNS

Maths papers often repeat topics like:

- ▶ Algebra
- ▶ Percentages
- ▶ Angles
- ▶ Graphs

Focus on your weak areas.

HOW TO USE PAST PAPERS IN MATHS



PRACTISE WORDED PROBLEMS

These are usually the hardest. Slow down and underline key information.



REDO HARD QUESTIONS

Repeat tricky questions until you can solve them confidently.



IMPROVE YOUR SPEED

Time yourself so you don't rush the last questions.



USE EXAM TRICKS

Check answers by:

- ▶ Estimating
- ▶ Substituting back
- ▶ Checking units



LEARN COMMON MISTAKES

E.g. rounding errors, missing units, incorrect rearranging.



KNOW THE PAPER FORMAT

Learn what each section is:

- ▶ Reading
- ▶ Writing
- ▶ Literature



USE PEEL/PETAL

Structure your paragraphs:

- ▶ Point
- ▶ Evidence
- ▶ Explain
- ▶ Link



PRACTISE PLANNING ANSWERS

Spend 2-5 minutes planning longer answers.



LEARN KEY QUOTES

For Literature, memorise short, powerful quotes.



ANALYSE LANGUAGE

Use words like:

- ▶ "suggests"
- ▶ "implies"
- ▶ "creates"



PRACTISE CREATIVE WRITING

Try:

- ▶ Descriptions
- ▶ Story openings
- ▶ Persuasive writing



IMPROVE TIMING

Don't spend too long on one question.

HOW TO USE PAST PAPERS IN ENGLISH



MARK USING THE CRITERIA

Check:

- ▶ Structure
- ▶ Vocabulary
- ▶ Analysis



IMPROVE SPAG

Spelling, punctuation and grammar matter.



LEARN EXAMINER PHRASES

Phrases like:

- ▶ "This shows..."
- ▶ "The writer suggests..."



USE THE CORRECT PAPERS

Choose:

- Biology, Chemistry, Physics
- ▶ Foundation or Higher
- ▶ Combined or Triple



USE KEYWORDS

Marks depend on using scientific language correctly.



LEARN THE REQUIRED PRACTICAL METHODS

These often appear in questions.



PRACTISE CALCULATIONS

For example:

- ▶ Speed
- ▶ Density
- ▶ Energy
- ▶ Magnification



REVISE WEAK TOPICS

Use your mistakes to guide your revision.

HOW TO USE PAST PAPERS IN SCIENCE



ANSWER IN FULL SENTENCES

Especially for 4-6 mark questions.



STUDY MARK SCHEMES

Look for:

- ▶ Key phrases
- ▶ Exact wording



MEMORISE REQUIRED FACTS

E.g. equations, processes, definitions.



PRACTISE GRAPH QUESTIONS

Learn how to:

- ▶ Label axes
- ▶ Describe patterns
- ▶ Explain trends



REDO QUESTIONS AFTER REVISING

This proves your improvement.



How to create a revision timetable

A revision timetable helps you:

- ✓ Stay organised
- ✓ Avoid last-minute cramming
- ✓ Balance school, revision, and free time
- ✓ Cover every subject properly

It turns "I should revise" into a clear plan.

1

STEP 1: LIST YOUR SUBJECTS AND TOPICS

Write down:

- ▶ All your GCSE subjects
- ▶ The main topics for each subject

Example:

- ▶ **Biology:** Cell biology, infection & response, bioenergetics
- ▶ **English:** Poetry, Macbeth, unseen texts

This helps you see what you actually need to revise.

2

STEP 2: BE REALISTIC ABOUT YOUR TIME

Look at your week and mark:

- ▶ School hours
- ▶ Homework
- ▶ Clubs/Work
- ▶ Relaxing time
- ▶ Family time

Now see where revision can fit.

Even **30–60 minutes a day** is enough if you use it well.

3

STEP 3: CREATE YOUR TIMETABLE

Use:

- ▶ A planner
- ▶ A printed sheet
- ▶ A notes app
- ▶ A whiteboard

For each day, add:

- ▶ Subject
- ▶ Topic
- ▶ Time

4

STEP 4: MIX YOUR SUBJECTS

Don't revise the same subject all day.

Mixing subjects:

- ▶ Keeps you focused
- ▶ Helps your memory
- ▶ Stops boredom

Try to include:

- ▶ A written subject
- ▶ A science or maths subject
- ▶ A lighter task (like flashcards)

5

STEP 5: USE ACTIVE REVISION

Avoid just reading notes.

Instead, try:

- ▶ Flashcards
- ▶ Past exam questions
- ▶ Blurting (write what you remember)
 - ▶ Mindmaps
- ▶ Teaching someone else

These methods help you remember, not just read.

6

STEP 6: ADD BREAKS

Your brain needs rest.

Use:

- ▶ 25-30 minutes revision
 - ▶ 5-minute break
- ▶ After 2 sessions, take a longer break

No breaks = less focus.

7

STEP 7: STICK TO IT (BUT BE FLEXIBLE)

You won't follow it perfectly every day - that's normal.

If you miss a session:

- ▶ Don't panic
- ▶ Just move it to another day

The timetable is there to **help**, not stress you out.

8

STEP 8: REVIEW IT WEEKLY

Every week, ask:

- ▶ What's working?
 - ▶ What isn't?
- ▶ Do I need more time for any subjects?

Adjust your timetable to suit you.

Maths	<i>Trigonometry & sequences</i>
English Language	<i>Fiction conventions and features, figurative devices & structure devices</i>
English Literature	<i>Plot characterisation and theme in Macbeth and Animal Farm</i>
Biology	<i>Cell biology, infection & response, bioenergetics</i>
Chemistry	<i>Quantitative chemistry & equations for reactions</i>
Physics	<i>Magnetism and electromagnetism</i>
History	<i>Elizabethan society & exploration 1569 - 1588</i>
Geography	<i>Coastal landscapes - the Jurassic Coast, coastal processes & geological structure</i>

WEEKDAY TIMETABLE

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
4:00 - 4:30	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
4:30 - 5:15	Maths	Chemistry	Physics	Biology	Physics
5:15 - 6:00	English Language	History	English Literature	Maths	English Language
6:00 - 6:30	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
6:30 - 7:15	Biology	Maths	Geography	Chemistry	

SATURDAY

TIME	SUBJECT
10:00 - 11:00	History
11:15 - 12:15	Maths
1:00 - 2:00	Chemistry
2:15 - 3:00	Geography

SUNDAY (REVIEW DAY)

TIME	SUBJECT
11:00 - 12:00	Biology
12:15 - 1:00	English Literature
2:00 - 3:00	Weekly Review

Final Tips!

- ✓ Start early - little and often
- ✓ Be honest about your effort
 - ✓ Reward yourself
- ✓ Ask for help when you need it
- ✓ A good revision timetable can make exams feel **manageable**, not scary.



How to use AI for effective GCSE revision

AI can be a revision coach that helps you practise, understand, and improve - but it must never replace your own thinking. Use this guide to make AI work for you, not against you.

USE AI TO HELP YOU:

Understand Topics and Concepts

- ▶ Explain topics in simple language
- ▶ Break down difficult concepts
- ▶ Give step-by-step examples
- ▶ Summarising lots of text

Try these prompts:

*"Explain photosynthesis in simple GCSE-level language."
Or "Explain photosynthesis like you are explaining it to a Year 7 student".*

Copy and paste text from your booklet/document and type - *"Summarise this text and select the 10 most important pieces of information. Give me this information as 10 bullet points".*

Practise Exam Questions

- ▶ Generate exam-style questions
- ▶ Create quizzes and flashcards
- ▶ Check answers against mark schemes

Try this prompt:

"Create 5 AQA GCSE Science (physics) exam-style questions on electricity with answers using AQA specification language and typical AQA command words. Include mark allocations and clear mark-scheme style answers".

Plan Your Revision

- ▶ Make a realistic revision timetable
- ▶ Break subjects into small chunks
- ▶ Help you revise a little, often

Try this prompt:

"Create a 3-week GCSE revision plan for Edexcel GCSE Maths. A maximum of 1 hour per day".

Improve Exam Technique

- ▶ Help structure 6-12 mark answers
- ▶ Explain why marks were lost
- ▶ Show what grade 7-9 answers include

Try this prompt:

"How can I improve this answer to achieve a grade 7-9 using the AQA GCSE Geography mark scheme?" (Copy and paste your answer).

Creating Revision materials

- ▶ Create revision cards
- ▶ Create a quiz with answers

Try this prompt:

"Create for me a set of revision cards with a question on one side and an answer on the reverse using the Edexcel GCSE History specification for Paper 2 Superpower Relations."

WHAT AI IS NOT ALLOWED FOR

YOU SHOULD NEVER USE AI TO:

- × Write coursework or controlled assessments
- × Complete homework to hand in as your own
- × Copy answers without understanding them

If you wouldn't be allowed help in the exam, don't use AI for it.

HOW TO USE AI PROPERLY (THE RIGHT WAY)

ALWAYS

- ✓ Read and understand the answer
- ✓ Check it against your notes/textbook
- ✓ Ask why, not just what

NEVER

- × Copy and paste answers
- × Memorise without understanding
- × Use AI instead of revising yourself

HIGH-QUALITY REVISION PROMPTS YOU CAN USE

FOR TESTING YOURSELF: "Test me on this topic. Don't give hints unless I ask."

FOR FIXING MISTAKES: "Here is my answer. What went wrong and how do I improve it?"

FOR CONFIDENCE: "Explain this like I'm in Year 7, then again at GCSE level."

A SIMPLE RULE TO REMEMBER

AI can help you practise and improve - but you must do the thinking.

USED PROPERLY, AI CAN:

- ✓ Boost confidence
- ✓ Save time
- ✓ Improve exam performance

USED BADLY, IT CAN:

- × Stop you learning
- × Lower your grades



Exam Day Tips

1

ARRIVE EARLY & STAY CALM

Get to school with time to spare. Rushing = stress.
Take a few deep breaths to settle your nerves.

2

READ EVERY QUESTION CAREFULLY

Underline key words and check what the question is *actually asking*.

3

MANAGE YOUR TIME

Don't spend too long on one question.
Move on and come back later if needed.

4

SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW

Write something for every question - you can still
earn marks even if you're unsure.

5

STAY POSITIVE

You've prepared for this.
Trust yourself and do your best.

Bonus Tips

- ✓ Bring the right equipment
- ✓ Drink water
- ✓ Don't panic if others finish early
- ✓ Focus on your paper, not anyone else's

Revision Websites

Resource	Best for:	Web address
 <p>gcsepod Education on Demand</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All GCSE Subjects • Concise explanations • Short learning videos • Exam preparation 	<p>www.gcsepod.com</p>
 <p>Corbett mαths</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSE Maths revision • Video explanations • Practice questions and exam style worksheets 	<p>www.corbettmaths.com</p>
 <p>SPARX MATHS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework and independent practice • GCSE Maths skills reinforced • Personalised learning and instant feedback 	<p>www.sparxmaths.com</p>
<p>Parkhall Integrated College Maths website</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSE Maths support • Classwork, homework and revision materials 	<p>https://sites.google.com/c2ken.net/parkhall-mathematics/gcse</p>
 <p>Quizlet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flashcards • Key terms • Quick revision, retrieval 	<p>www.quizlet.com</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear revision notes • Exam questions • Science and Maths 	<p>www.savemyexams.com</p>
 <p>CEA Rewarding Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official past papers and mark schemes • Subject specific fact-files • Exam guidance • Exam timetables 	<p>www.ccea.org.uk</p>

Top Tip!

Don't use too many websites at once.
Pick 2-3 and use them regularly.



Revision Timetable

WEEKLY REVISION PLANNER

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	TIME	SATURDAY	SUNDAY

The online version can be found at:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zn3497h#zwndjsg>