



Year 13

Preparing for mock and final exams Parent advice booklet

Contents:

- Introduction
- Revision strategies
- Examples of effective revision strategies
- What can I do to support my son/daughter?
 - Have high expectations
 - Regular communication
 - Promote good reading habits
 - Set homework rules
 - Take their mobile phones off them when revising
 - Make sure they get a good night sleep
 - Make sure they eat breakfast
- Useful links

Introduction

We hope you find this booklet helpful as we come to the final preparation for the mock and final examinations. We want all of our students to leave year 13 with the best possible results. Results that will not only open as many career pathways as possible but that they will be proud to write whenever and wherever required for the rest of their lives.

If at any point in the revision or examination period, you are concerned or worried about your son/daughter then please contact us – we will help whenever possible.

All of the information in this booklet has been shared and discussed with your son/daughter since beginning sixth form. They will also be given the student version of this booklet to help remind them and support them during the final stages of Year 13.

All the strategies and advice in this booklet are based on current educational research and are proven to have the biggest impact when preparing for exams. Central to the success of all of these strategies is attendance. Attendance between now and the final exams is crucial to ensure that your son/daughter not only has as much teaching contact with their teachers as possible, but also to ensure they are privy to essential exam practice. There is a strong link correlation between attendance and success in final exams. The table below shows the attendance of two Year 13 students last year and their final grades.

	Overall attendance	Subject	Subject attendance	Final grades
Student 1	72.5%	1	76%	C
		2	64%	U
		3	71%	U
Student 2	98.4%	1	94%	B
		2	96%	A
		3	97%	A*

It is clear that low attendance has a significant impact on final grades as missed lessons creates knowledge gaps. These gaps in knowledge become quickly apparent to students and puts students under even more pressure to catch up.

Revision techniques

In 2013, research from four universities published a review of hundreds of studies that explored the most effective strategies to lead to long-term learning.

What works:

- **Hard work** gets grades. Students that spend at least two hours a night on their homework/revision are statistically more likely to get better grades. It is important that the students follow the homework/revision schedule set by the teachers.
- **Retrieval practice** (the testing effect) requires students to answer a question. It is proven to be the most effective revision strategy. Examples of strategies used in retrieval practice are:
 - Use flashcards (Quizlet) and testing applications to practise recalling the information from topics.
 - Use mind-maps, knowledge organisers, or Cornell notes to quiz – read, cover, write. Students are aiming to recall all of the information on the revision resource and should be able to reproduce it.
 - Answering short retrieval questions or multiple choice quizzes
- **Spacing** is another good revision technique that students must employ. This involves learning a little information regularly, rather than trying to learn a lot in a single day. Recent research has found that the use of spacing resulted in a 10% to 30% difference in final test results compared to students who did lots of cramming. Spacing out revision gives students enough time to forget previously learnt information, meaning that when this information is re-visited and re-learned it is more likely to be transferred to their long-term memory.
- **Interleaving** involves mixing up the topics the students study within a given subject. Recent research has shown how effective this technique is: those students who used interleaving performed more than three times better if the test was more than a day later. Interleaving helps students make links between different topics as well as discriminate between different types of problems, allowing them to identify the most ideal thought process for each.

All lessons and homework are always planned with the strategies mentioned above in mind.

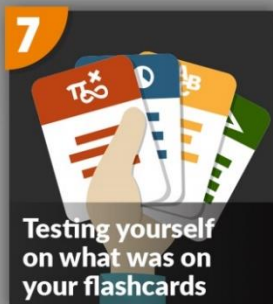
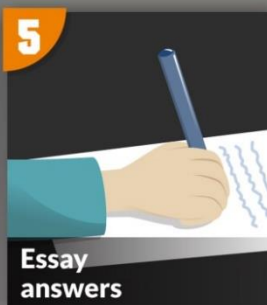
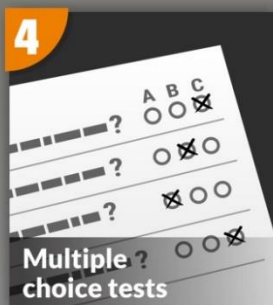
What does not work:

Often the easiest strategies prove to be the most ineffective. The following have all been proven by research to have little or no impact on learning:

- Re-reading your notes
- Highlighting your notes
- Making summaries of your notes

9 Ways to use retrieval practice

by @inner_drive | www.innerdrive.co.uk



Examples of effective revision activities

The following activities are all activities that have been proven to be effective and will be central to the revision lessons and homework set.

Past papers are particularly useful as they are specific to the exams you will be taking, rather than just general test questions. By doing past papers – most of which are free online or available through your teacher – you can use retrieval practice with content that is directly relevant to your studies and exams. They should be completed later in the revision schedule when your son/daughters have revised enough content.

Multiple choice tests can be particularly useful if you are at an earlier stage of revision, as you don't need to know the answer instinctively; you just need to be able to recognise the correct answer from a set of options. This is still an effective method of retrieval practice as you are responding to a question.

Essay answers may well be included in your past papers, but they are a useful method of retrieval practice independently too. This is because they require you to synthesise multiple pieces of information into fluent prose and likely perform some analysis, which will improve retention more than merely recalling isolated facts. In the early stages of the revision schedule your son/daughter should “quiz” on the essay plan so they know what information they should include on the essay question.

Answering a question aloud is a useful form of retrieval practice as replying aloud makes you think about the information differently and make quick connections under pressure.

Testing yourself with flashcards you've made yourself is great because all the questions are directly relevant to your exam rather than being generic questions about the topic. You know what you need to be tested on the most, so you can tailor the questions to your weak spots while using retrieval practice.

Having someone ask you questions lets your son/daughter discover how well they understand the material, as they'll need to explain it to you. Quizzing your son/daughter multiple times on the same quiz helps them their memory recall.

HOW TO TAKE NOTES USING THE CORNELL METHOD

by @Inner_Drive | innerdrive.co.uk

CUE COLUMN

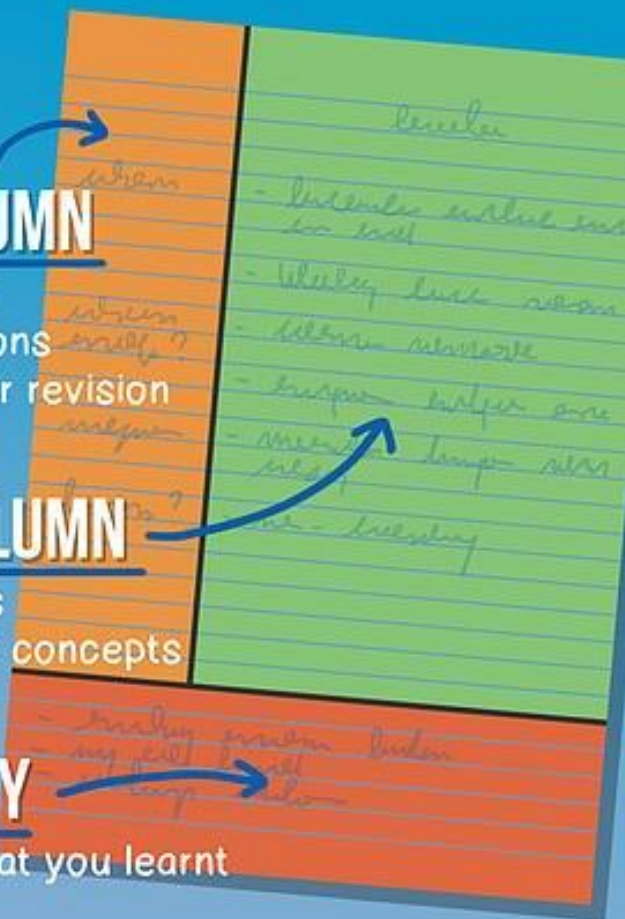
Key words
Ask questions
Prompts for revision

NOTE COLUMN

Make notes
Summarise concepts

SUMMARY

Review what you learnt



Make notes

The right-hand and larger of the two columns should be used to take notes from the lesson. Students should ensure that these notes are concise and that they are not simply writing down exactly what their teachers says but instead summarising the most important concepts in their own words. This helps ensure that they are deeply thinking about the topic.

Summarise

After each lesson or after the school day, students should summarise the key takeaways from each lecture in the row at the bottom of the page. This allows them to take another look at the material before they forget about it, and to engage with it more deeply by figuring out the most important pieces of information.

Ask Questions

As soon as the lesson finishes, students should write questions surrounding the subject matter in the left-hand column. Writing questions is an important part of this strategy, as it forces students to really consider the information they have learnt.

Students should also use this column to record any important keywords or equations.

Practice

When revising, students can then cover the right-hand column and try to formulate answers to the questions and recall the subject matter related to the keywords/equations written in the left-hand column.

For maximum effect, students' answers should be given aloud, rather than in their head, as this forces them to organise the information and make quick connections. Both of these things increase the likelihood of the material being successfully transferred to the long-term memory.

USING FLASHCARDS TO REVISE

by @inner_drive | www.innerdrive.co.uk

- 1** Split a box into 5 different compartments and label them 1 to 5.



2



Place all your flashcards in compartment 1.

- 3** Test yourself on a flashcard



4



If you can correctly recall the information move the flashcard into compartment 2, if not then put it back in compartment 1.

- 5** Continue to test yourself and each time you correctly recall the information, move the flashcard into the next compartment. Flashcards from compartment 1 should be reviewed daily, with flashcards from compartment 2 being reviewed every other day, compartment 3 every third day and so on.



6



Eventually, all your flashcards will have been transferred to compartment 5 and the information they contain stored in your long-term memory.

What can I do to support my son/daughter?

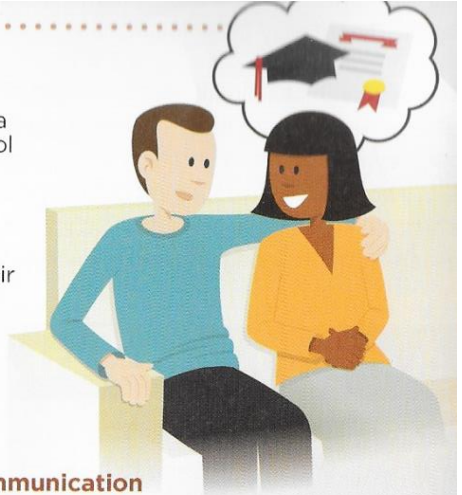
Researchers reviewed 37 studies on the effects of parental behaviours and attitudes on students' grades. They sampled over 80,000 students and their families. They then made suggestions as to what does and doesn't work.

THE MAIN FINDINGS

Their study found that four of the best things a parent can do at primary and secondary school level to help their child's grades are:

1 Have high academic expectations

Having high aspirations and expectations of your child **has the biggest impact** on their grades. Parental expectations include how important school is, their attitude towards teachers, and the value of education.



2 Regular communication

This includes developing and maintaining communication with children about their school life. This **helps parents nip any potential problems** in the bud before they manifest into bigger issues.

3 Good reading habits

This involves **reading frequently and regularly with your child**. This includes reading to them and encouraging them to read alongside you as well.



4 Homework rules

This revolves around having clear rules to deal with how they divide their homework and leisure time. Explaining why these rules are in place **can help them to make better decisions** regarding their independent study time later in their school career.

What can I do to support my son/daughter?

Make sure they don't have their phone on them while they are working:

@inner_drive | www.innerdrive.co.uk

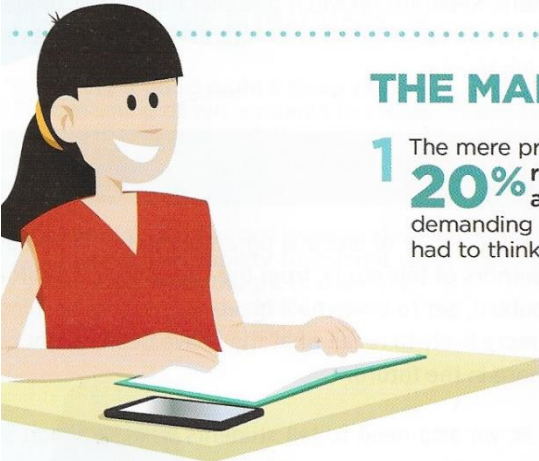
THE STUDY

Mobile phones are a part of everyday life. They have the power to connect people and can be great tools for learning. Most people have their mobile phone next to them for large parts of the day. But is there a darker side to mobile phones? Can the mere presence of a mobile phone negatively impact student performance?

To answer this question, researchers had students complete a concentration task with either a mobile phone or a notepad on the table near them. The students didn't use the phone during the experiment, it was just within their eye-line.

To gather further information, the researchers had students complete a range of questionnaires about themselves and also ran the experiment twice: once with someone else's phone near them and once with their own phone.

THE MAIN FINDINGS



1 The mere presence of a mobile phone led to a **20% reduction in attention, concentration and performance** in tasks that were demanding and complex (i.e. ones that students had to think hard about).

2 Students **performed worse** in these tasks, regardless of whether they could see their own phone nearby or someone else's.



3 This **reduction in performance was found to be true** regardless of the student's gender, age, how much they normally used their own phone or how attached they said they felt to it.



What can I do to support my son/daughter?

Make sure they get a good night sleep:

THE STUDY

We all do it. Only a few of us are getting enough of it and most of us want a bit more. On average we spend over 20 years of our life doing it, but the benefits of sleeping are still underappreciated. Despite The National Sleep Foundation recommending that teenagers need up to ten hours a night, many report getting less than seven.

Researchers reviewed the many different functions that sleep plays and how important it is in terms of students' memory, emotional regulation and mood. Their findings confirm that it is a fundamental part of the thinking and learning processes.

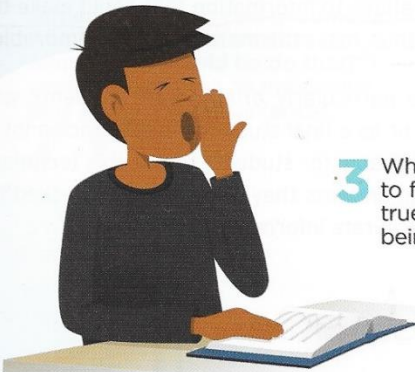
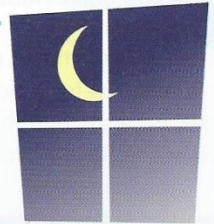
THE MAIN FINDINGS

1 Having a **good night's sleep** prior to learning allows students to create **new memory associations more effectively**. This is known as their ability to "encode information".

2 If students do not get **enough sleep**, it **hinders their ability** to commit what they have been taught to memory. This is known as an inability to "consolidate information".

3 When **sleep deprived**, people are more likely to forget positive memories. The opposite is true with negative memories, with tired students being more likely to retain and recall these.

4 **Excessive sleep loss** increases the likelihood of students displaying negative emotions, feeling stressed and being unable to manage their emotions.



What can I do to support my son/daughter?

Make sure they eat breakfast:

THE STUDY

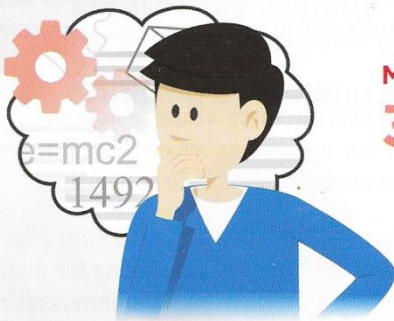
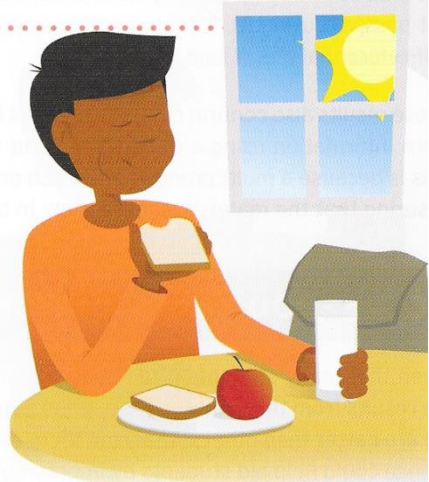
Many students report skipping eating breakfast on a regular basis. But is there a cost to this?

To find out, researchers ran a study that compared students who ate breakfast, drank a glucose drink instead, or skipped breakfast altogether. As well as administering concentration tests throughout the morning, the researchers also ran a memory recall exam and had the students report how they were feeling.

THE MAIN FINDINGS

Concentration levels

- 1** All students had a **dip in their ability to focus** as the morning went on. However, if students had **eaten breakfast**, this decline was **reduced by 50-65%** compared to those who hadn't.
- 2** For the first few hours, **having a glucose drink** instead of skipping breakfast actually led to a **bigger drop** in student's attention levels.



Memory recall

- 3** In a memory test conducted four hours after a revision session, students who had **not had breakfast** suffered **12%** reduction in their score. Students who had **only had a glucose drink** for breakfast had a **27%** decline, with those who **had breakfast** improving their performance by **3-5%**.

Alertness

- 4** Students who ate breakfast felt the **most alert over the course of the morning**. A glucose drink gave an initial boost for the first few hours before dropping to the same low levels by mid-day as those who had missed breakfast.



Useful links:

<https://blog.innerdrive.co.uk/>

<https://revisionworld.com/a2-level-level-revision>

<https://quizlet.com/en-gb>

<https://www.senecalearning.com/>