

St Angela's
URSULINE SIXTH FORM



STUDY GUIDE



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Introduction

Studying for A level qualifications presents you with a wonderful opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of a range of topics embedded within subjects chosen by you. The successful application of this knowledge and understanding requires you to challenge yourself and put in a large amount of independent work. As a Sixth Form we collectively share high expectations for your studies and we believe that your hard work will pay off. To support you as you embark on this new chapter of your educational journey we have put together this study guide. The tips here will help you balance homework, study, revision and life so that you are able to successfully make the leap from GCSE to A level. It provides practical advice on how to keep on top of your workload and get more out of your study time. We look forward to working alongside you over the next two years to ensure you are fully prepared to sit your examinations and achieve your personal goals.

What's in the guide?

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1. Making the most of your TIME

The first and most important thing you can do at the beginning of the term is get organised with your time. **Time management and organisation is the key to success both in your studies and in preparation for future employment.** You will have lots to think about - lessons, homework for each subject, revision, clubs you are part of, life outside school... the list goes on! So being organised is essential and the only way to do this is to plan your weeks and days in advance.

Long-term planning

To start with it is useful to have a **long-term view** of what you are working towards. In school, this means finding out when your **exams** are - and other key assignments or tests, if you know them - and putting all the information into a calendar. You might also add in dates of **holidays**, driving tests and other **deadlines**. To help with this, you can use your Google calendar connected to your school account.

This will allow you to look ahead and be prepared, calm and confident as important events approach.

September 2020							October 2020							November 2020							December 2020										
wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
36		1	2	3	4	5	6	40				1	2	3	4	44							1	49		1	2	3	4	5	6
37	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	41	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	45	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	50	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
38	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	42	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	46	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	51	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
39	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	43	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	47	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	52	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
40	28	29	30					44	26	27	28	29	30	31	48	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	53	28	29	30	31				
															49	30															

January 2021							February 2021							March 2021							April 2021										
wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
53					1	2	3	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	13				1	2	3	4
1	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	6	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
2	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	7	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	11	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	15	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
3	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	8	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	12	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	16	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
4	25	26	27	28	29	30	31								13	29	30	31					17	26	27	28	29	30			

May 2021							June 2021							July 2021							August 2021										
wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
17						1	2	22		1	2	3	4	5	6	26				1	2	3	4	30							1
18	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	23	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	27	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	31	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	24	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	28	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	32	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
20	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	25	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	29	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	33	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
21	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	28	29	30				30	26	27	28	29	30	31	34	23	24	25	26	27	28	29		
22	31																				35	30	31								



Bonus Tip: It's most useful to use an academic year calendar for your key dates and events, like the one above!

Weekly and daily planning

Now you are ready for the long-term, you need to organise your **weekly** and **daily routines**. A good place to begin is by creating a weekly schedule that includes:

- Your daily school timetable
- After school clubs or activities
- Regular commitments outside of school
- Social plans

Once you know where your time is being spent, it is much easier to organise your workload and plan the best time to get things done *without* having to rush or panic about deadlines.

Week 3	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Deadlines	History coursework first draft			Drama rehearsal today	
Period 1	Read hist. c/w	Drama	Maths	Re-read play	History
Period 2	Maths	Drama	Maths h/w	History	Maths
Period 3	Maths	Maths	History	History	Maths h/w
Period 4	Do Maths h/w	Drama read play	Drama	Hist. corrections	Drama
Period 5	History	Drama read play	Drama	Hist. corrections	History study
After School					
4 - 5pm	History study	Singing lesson	History study	Drama rehearsal	Visit Nan all evening
5 - 6pm	Football training	Practice drama performance	Football training		
6 - 7pm	Football training		Football training		
7 - 8pm					
8 - 9pm					
Saturday			Sunday		
Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Walk dog 10-11am Maths assignment	1pm Dentist 2-4pm Practice drama performance	Dinner with friends	Walk dog 10-11am Maths assignment	12-5pm Football match	Check Maths assignment completed

Making your own weekly schedule

Look at the example given - you will notice that it is **colour coded**, with red showing important events, blue showing homework and school assignments and green showing social and other commitments outside school. In addition, not every hour of free time after school and at weekends is used for work - it is really important to leave some time free in your schedule, as unexpected things will crop up.

To make your own, copy the table above for each week and then follow these steps:

- **Step one:** fill in each weekday with your **lessons** in school in **black**.
- **Step two:** use your long-term plan to add any **important deadlines** in **red**.
- **Step three:** use **green** to write in any regular **commitments** and **plans outside school**.
- **Step four:** use **blue** to include **study** time for **each subject**.



Bonus Tip: For each subject you take, you should aim to do at least 5 hours of work outside of lesson time each week. This might be used for homework, assignments, revision or additional reading.

2. Organising your **WORK**

Most sixth formers study three subjects for A Level. From each subject you will receive weekly **homework** and regular **assignments**. Alongside this, it is good practice to do **additional study/reading** around the subject area and complete small **revision tasks** as you go along. It will also mean you are more likely to achieve higher grades.

If you make the effort to organise yourself you will balance your subjects evenly, meet all deadlines and you will feel much more relaxed!

Subject folders

For each subject you must have an A4 folder or file where you store and organise all your work for that subject.

A well-organised folder will include:

- ★ Subject A Level specification at the front
- ★ File dividers to split the subject into units of work, or topics
- ★ Checklists for each unit/topic
- ★ All class notes, homework, assignments and revision notes in checklist order
- ★ Any additional reading or notes you have made



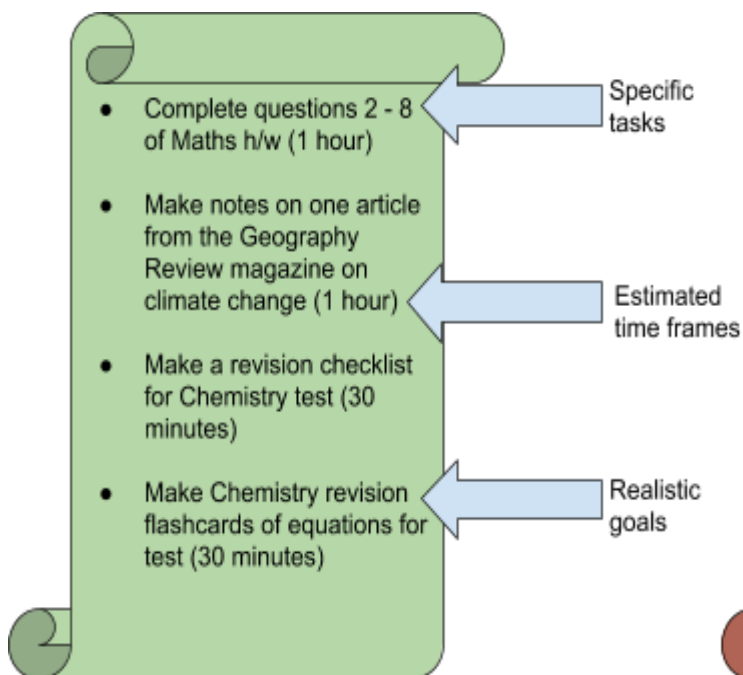
Using 'to do' lists

You will probably have a rather long 'to do' list at most times, that you must keep updated as you go along. You should have a main 'to do' list with target dates for when you need to complete each item - this will help you prioritise your tasks.

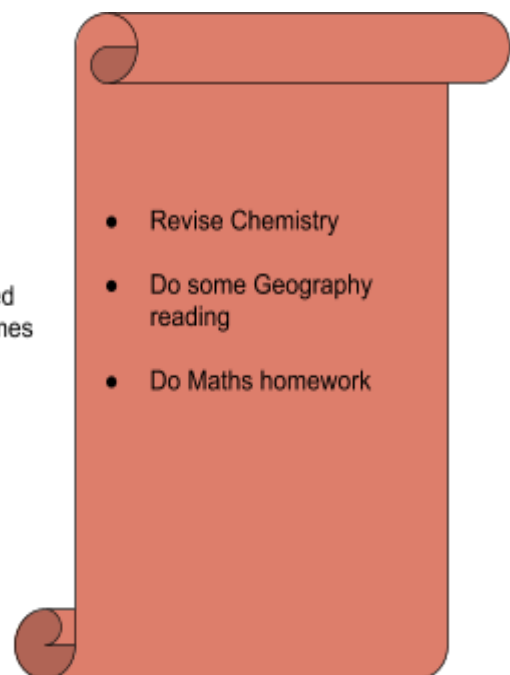
In order to avoid your list becoming daunting, you should set yourself smaller targets for each day that are specific and more achievable. Your time will be spent more purposefully in this way and it is important that you do not aim to do too much each day, as this can be demoralising.

However, a good list will help you make satisfying progress with your work on a daily basis.

Example 1 - Effective list



Example 2 - Ineffective list



3. Completing ASSIGNMENTS

Aside from regular homework your subjects may well include **larger assignments** that require a different approach. The first time you attempt an assignment like this you may feel a little overwhelmed by the size of the task - don't worry! This is perfectly normal.

Below you will find some guidance on how to approach large assignments to complete them efficiently and in good time.

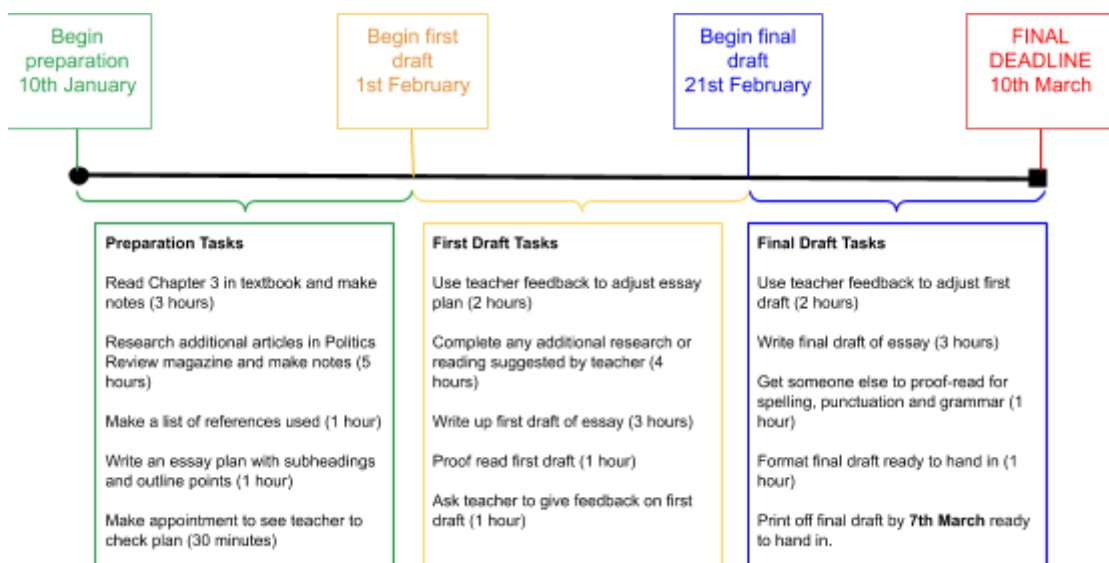
Know the task

Before you can begin it is important to know exactly what is expected. If possible, ask to see an example of the 'finished product' so you know what you're aiming for. **Asking your teacher for support and guidance when you are not clear on something is absolutely vital for your success.** You should also make sure you have the deadline correctly noted in your calendar!

E.g. If you've been asked to write an essay, what is the word count? How many sources of information should you reference? Is there a particular way it needs to be presented?

Take small steps

The best way to approach a really large task is to break it down into smaller, more manageable steps. You could make a timeline of the steps you think you need to take and set your own 'mini deadlines'. Businesses use this approach all the time for big projects, which indicates how effective it is. Have a look at the example below...



4. Effective STUDY

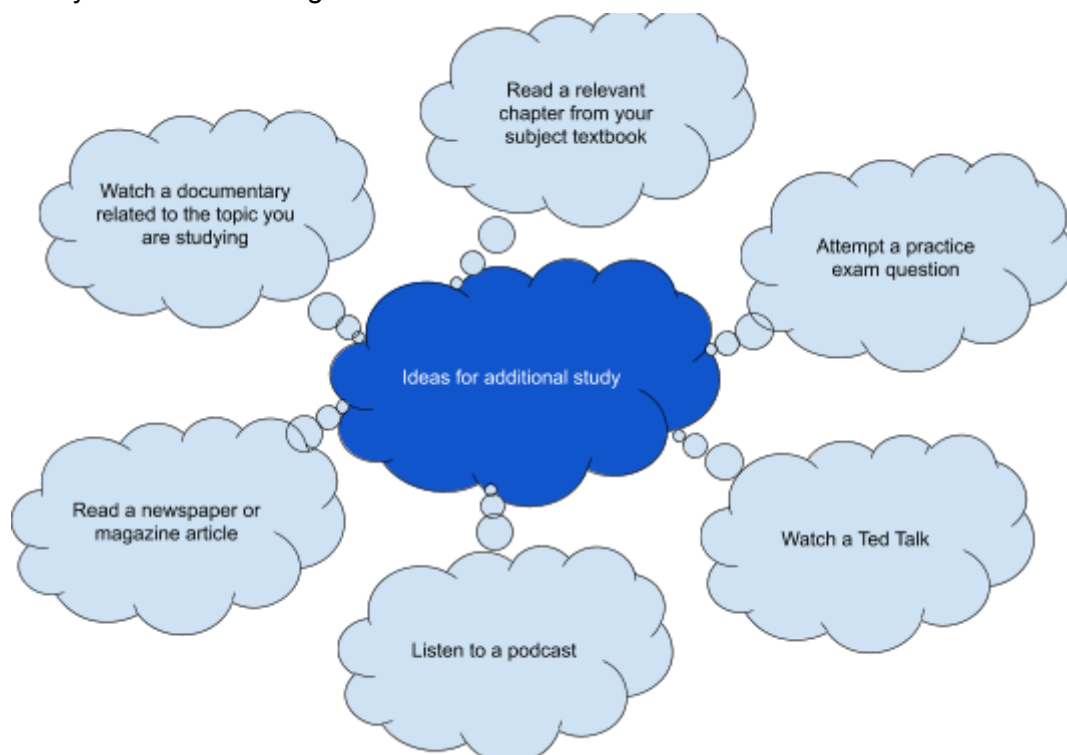
Using your study periods **effectively** is vital and much of the advice you have already read on **organisation** and **planning** will go a long way to helping you with this. However, there will inevitably be times when you wonder what you can do to improve your grades and what your teachers mean when they say you need to 'study more' or 'read around the subject'.

If you study effectively in school, it lessens the time you will need to spend on work at home.

How do I 'study'?

If you have completed homework and assignments for a subject, you might feel like you have nothing to do during your study periods. This is an easy but unfortunate mistake to make. To reach your **potential** and especially the **highest grades**, **additional study** is **essential** in all subjects. But what does this mean?

Below are some ideas on what you can do. But be sure to ask your teacher for recommendations before you begin, as otherwise you could spend hours searching for resources! Most importantly, make sure that whatever you do, you are **taking notes** and **linking** it to your subject specification and what you have **already learned**. How does it improve your understanding?



Staying focused

While we all sit down to work with the best intentions, there will always be distractions from friends, family and - hardest of all - social media. Let your family know your intended study plan so they can support it and know when you will be available. In order to stay focused, try sticking to the recommendations below.

- ★ Remove distractions such as phones, friends and music
- ★ Use your 'to do' list to set clear goals
- ★ Start with a quick, easy task
- ★ Only do one task at a time
- ★ Plan small breaks in which you walk around or do something else
- ★ Don't attempt marathon sessions
- ★ Reward yourself when you 'tick off' tasks from your list
- ★ If you have difficult tasks, tackle them early on
- ★ Use active study methods, such as note-taking as you go



Bonus Tip: If you want to listen to music while you study, choose wisely - studies show that music with lyrics distracts your brain from your task, while more soothing instrumental music can help concentration.

5. Mastering REVISION

By now you should be an expert in how to **plan** your time and **organise** your work. Revision for your subject exams is similar to a large assignment - it will take a significant amount of time and you should try to do it in **small**, manageable '**chunks**' **over time**, rather than all at once just before the deadline. The most effective revision is **continuous** - it starts now! Everything you do both in lessons and beyond contributes to effective revision and ultimately better outcomes.

The more frequently you hear, read, discuss, see or practice something, the more likely it is to stick!

Organisation of revision

Although you should be revising throughout the year, there will come a time before exams when *all your time* will be devoted to revision. To prepare for these periods you will need to create a special revision timetable. Be sensible - you cannot revise for 16 hours a day and you are unlikely to be able to concentrate for more than an hour or two at a time.

Below is a small part of a revision timetable for a student preparing for mock exams in January.

	28th Dec	29th Dec	30th Dec	31st Dec	1st Jan	2nd Jan	3rd Jan
8-9am	<i>French</i>	<i>Test - Psy.</i>	<i>Doctor appt.</i>	<i>Psych.</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Test - Ec.</i>	<i>Econ.</i>
9-10am	<i>French</i>	<i>Break</i>		<i>Test - Psy.</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Econ.</i>
10-11am	<i>Break</i>	<i>Econ.</i>		<i>Break</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Psych.</i>	<i>Break</i>
11-12pm	<i>Psych.</i>	<i>Econ.</i>	<i>Econ.</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Psych.</i>	<i>French</i>
12-1pm	<i>Psych.</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Test - Ec.</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Econ.</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>French</i>
1-2pm	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Psych.</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
2-3pm	<i>Econ.</i>	<i>Psych.</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Econ.</i>	<i>Econ.</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Psych.</i>
3-4pm	<i>Econ.</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Test - Fr.</i>	<i>Econ.</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Psych.</i>
4-5pm	<i>Break</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>NYE plans</i>	<i>Psych.</i>	<i>Econ.</i>	<i>Break</i>
5-6pm	<i>Test - Fr.</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Econ.</i>		<i>Psych.</i>	<i>Econ.</i>	<i>Test - Fr.</i>
6-7pm	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>		<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Babysitting</i>
7-8pm	<i>Test - Ec.</i>	<i>Family plan</i>	<i>Psych.</i>		<i>Test - Fr.</i>	<i>Test - Psy.</i>	

Notice how the timetable takes into account social plans and commitments and has a good amount of time dedicated to breaks in each day. The revision slots can be split between revising and testing yourself.

The subjects are evenly distributed and in just one week of revision this person is able to complete between 15 and 17 hours of revision for **each** subject. Over a 3 week period, that could be 45 hours of revision per subject!

Revision techniques

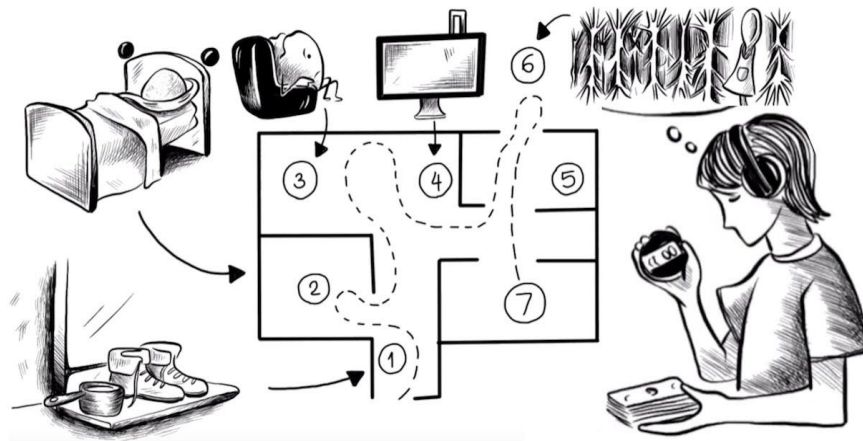
There is no 'best' or 'right way' to revise. Each individual will find different techniques more or less effective depending on how they learn. It is recommended that you try a range of different revision techniques early on in the year to work out which is best for you.

The Memory Palace

The idea behind this technique is that you use a place you are already very familiar with and try to 'attach' new ideas to existing memories.

For example, you probably know your own bedroom so well that you could move around it with your eyes closed and still find everything. Your brain has very concrete memories of this room that you are unlikely to forget. So try using this to your advantage and attach some revision facts to your existing memory of your bedroom.

You can actually physically do this by using post-it notes and sticking them to different objects in your room. For example, you might then associate your desk with a particular case study in Geography.



Flashcards

In some subjects there will be facts that you will need to know off by heart - dates in History, equations in Chemistry, vocabulary in Spanish. There is no quick way to do this - it takes time and it can be boring!

However, using flashcards effectively can really help your memory. The best way to do this is to have just one fact or idea per card - you may need a lot of cards!

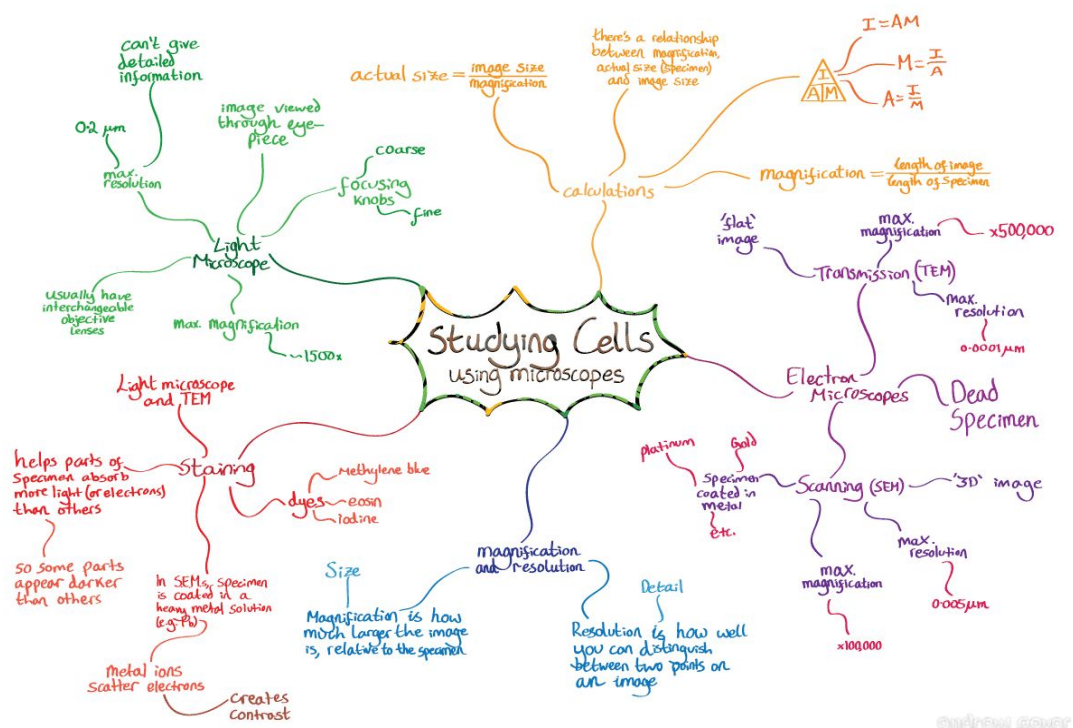


Make sure that once you have made them all, you shuffle them regularly to test yourself and repeat the testing at least three times.

Mind Maps

To achieve the best grades in lots of A Level subjects it is important to be able to link topics, concepts and ideas together. Mind maps are a really effective way of doing this and provide an excellent visual aid for those students who find colour a good memory tool.

The process of drawing a mind map can also help to secure memories of key ideas. It is up to you how much detail you want to add.



Exam practice

Trying to remember everything you need to know for exams is only half the battle. Applying your knowledge correctly to answer exam questions is vital and so practising this skill is just as important as memory-based activities. Studies have shown that students who spend more time practising exam questions in revision do better, on average, by 1.5 grades in exams.

To get this right, you first will need a bank of exam questions to use. Your teachers will be able to help with this. You may also want to ask for some help with particular question techniques from subject teachers.

The Power Hour

A good way to get exam practice into your revision is to use the 'power hour' technique.

1. Set an hour on a timer.
2. Spend 40 minutes revising a particular topic using a memory technique (e.g. making a mind map of leadership styles in Business).
3. Pick one or two exam questions linked to the topic you have revised.
4. Spend 20 minutes completing the exam question(s).



Bonus Tip: Marking other people's answers can be even more effective, especially if you can explain how they could improve! Getting into the examiner's brain is a great way to understand how to give better answers.

6. Your WELLBEING

Perhaps the most important aspect of studying effectively is looking after yourself. You can be organised, hardworking and disciplined but it is impossible to achieve your potential if your physical and mental health is neglected.

Students with better wellbeing are likely to achieve better outcomes - research has proved this!

Taking care of yourself

Sleep

Teenagers need at least 8 hours of sleep a night. Sleep allows your body and mind to relax and recover - without enough sleep your brain will be working slower and less effectively. Put electronics away an hour before bedtime to improve your sleep.

Relaxation

Although it is tempting to try and 'power through' work until it is finished, this is not good for your mental health. Relaxation for your brain is just as important as for your body. Make sure you take time to remember and do the simple things that give you joy.

Social Interaction

Everyone needs someone to talk to and connect with on a social level - it can be family, friends or teachers. Make sure you find time to talk, listen and connect with people for better mental wellbeing.

Nutrition

Eating healthily can improve your mood, concentration and brain function - nobody can work on an empty stomach. Be mindful of what a healthy, balanced diet looks like and try to make sure you get a good dose of the nutrients you need.

Activity

Physical activity is shown to improve academic achievement in students. It improves your sleep, mood and concentration. If you aren't a fan of sports, take a walk with friends or enjoy a cycle ride round the local park.

Summary

Plan your **TIME** carefully to make the best use of it - remember to **update** calendars and schedules as you go along.

Organise your **WORK** using **checklists** and folders to make your workload easier.

Start **large ASSIGNMENTS** early on and break them down into **smaller tasks** for maximum efficiency.

Use **STUDY periods** effectively to carry out **additional reading** and research in your subjects to aim for the higher grades.

Remember to balance **REVISION** between active **memorisation** tasks and **exam practice**.

Finally - and most importantly - be mindful of your wellbeing and look after yourself!