Parent and Carer Guide to GCSE Revision, Exams and Success

Practical, down to earth advice to help you and your child through their GCSEs.

#RevisionthatSticks
Preparation for GCSE 9-1 exams

A positive attitude makes a real difference to children's success.

Things to do:

- Find out where they are with their estimated grades (teachers/reports can tell you this).
- Help them to believe the positive truth about themselves (i.e. that they can do well, and certainly better than they probably believe).
- Encourage them to be positive towards their exams and their future.
- Inspire them to be positive towards learning and the school.
Rewards & incentives

Rewards can work really well to help teens keep motivated. Some respond to small financial rewards, treats or clothes etc, but many don’t. Find out the ‘little trophies’ and the ‘big trophies’ that work for your family, what you can use as a treat and reward for hard work not just great results. It’s more about rewarding effort – if your child is putting in the effort then reward them daily with comments and the occasional treat. Then maybe talk about a ‘big trophy’ (reward) at the end. Be creative and reward effort in your own family style. We all need a carrot occasionally.

Coaching phrases to use when talking to your teen:

“How do you feel today?”

“How do you feel your revision is going?”

“What do you need from me at the moment?”

“You’ll be fine, you’ll make it, we’ve just got to get through this time together.”

“It won’t be long now, just get your head down for a bit and keep on going, you’ll make it.”

“And then afterwards you’ll enjoy maybe one of the longest holidays in your life!”

Sleep

In recent studies, teenagers and their sleeping patterns have been explored. There’s no doubt that their bodies and minds are in growth mode and need sleep to help that, but good studying needs sleep too. Check your child’s bedroom. Is their bed comfortable? Do they have blackout curtains? But, most of all, what pre-sleep routine do they have? Getting them into a good routine sets them up for good results and for the rest of their life. Late night food binging, distractions, arguments and too much screen time before bed can cause sleeplessness. So encourage them to eat well, and get ready for bed at a reasonable time with the right routine.

The power of focus

Purely focusing on a piece of work or revision will make a big difference. Even just encouraging children to switch off all distractions for an hour or so can mean the difference between getting the grade they deserve or not.

You should see two major benefits:

• They’ll get on better with their work.
• When they do switch on their phone again they will still have friends! It may sound radical to them but it is worth it and, more importantly, it does work.

Revision technique

Research proves that repetition over a period of time helps learners to remember information better long term. Collins Revision and Practice has repeated practice throughout, so that children can just get stuck in.

Find out more about Collins Revision at collins.co.uk/revisionthatsticks
During Year 11 and especially as the final few months approach, there simply aren’t enough hours in the day for teens to consume that amount of media and do well in their revision/exams. It just can’t be done. Think about establishing some realistic family rules, slowly and steadily. Maybe agree to all leave your phones downstairs at night for example. Removing a phone or just a wifi code may be the most powerful thing we have in our parental tool bag. Most teens have phones and are on social media – but this can affect their concentration levels, studies and revision skills.

...is a good habit to encourage. It may not seem probable but it is possible for teens to overwork for exams! During the busy pre-exam season especially, just staring at books for hours isn’t being productive. It is good to encourage exercise and breaks as much as work. The two feed each other. Encourage your child to plan fun/rest/exercise into their revision/exam timetable too.

A good revision plan is a must – you make your own (don’t take too long on it though!) or you can download one for free from Collins at: www.collins.co.uk/students

Stay calm and be supportive.
• Be actively involved with school. Keep in touch with class teachers, regularly read and respond to comments in the planner, make yourself aware of what’s going on.
• Encourage them to do their best and that their best is good enough.
• Tell them you are proud of them and that you love them.
• Get the fridge and cupboards stocked with nice treats and snacks for the duration of the exams.
• Make sure home is calm, warm, and that there is no tension.
• Make sure the journey to school is stress free too if possible.
• Recognise how stressful this time is for teens.
• Strike bargains, build in ice cream and film nights.
• Create a peaceful place for quiet study.
• Be interested in the subjects they are revising.

Mobile phones, screens and tablets!

Quick tips & advice

As the main exams draw near...

The amount of revision and work to do may seem overwhelming to your child. This is where prioritisation becomes the key to GCSE success. Find out the key things to revise and prioritise those, then get them to do the hard stuff first. The subjects they may be less keen on may be the most important. Ask the teachers to help to prioritise, and create a plan together so that they don’t feel swamped by the amount they have to do and remind them that it’s only for a few months.

Rest and relaxation...

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Collins GCSE 9-1 Workbooks

Workbook and practice exam paper in one book for plenty of practice.

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Exam-style test papers provide realistic practice.

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