



# **GCSE Revision Guide Tips & Hints**



# What's it all for?



Exam results matter.

Your GCSE grades will determine which opportunities are open to you after Y11 and which are closed off.

So much depends on your GCSE results that it is worth getting some serious revision done now. Don't put yourself in the position when you get your GCSE results in August of regretting not working now!

## Nobody likes revising

Nobody likes revising!

You just have to face it and get on with it.

Good revision = Good GCSEs. In the long run, it is worth the effort. So stop putting it off and get down to it! NOW!



Once you get into it, you will feel a sense of achievement and your confidence about the exams will grow.

## Planning your revision

You need two things to plan your revision:

**a topic list**

**a revision schedule**

Your teacher should have given you a **topic list** (or *course outline* or *syllabus*) at the beginning of the course. Ask if you have not received it. You can also access the GCSE syllabuses online by going to the websites of the exam boards – but make sure you know which boards you are sitting. Exam boards use the word *specifications* to mean syllabuses.



Plan your revision by creating a revision schedule like this:

Monday	Maths <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Percentages</li><li>• Fractions</li></ul>	Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Atoms</li><li>• Plants</li></ul>	English <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Romeo &amp; J</li><li>• Sentences</li></ul>	D&T <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wood</li><li>• Metal</li></ul>
Tuesday	ICT <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spreadsheets</li></ul>	English		
Wednesday				

***etc.***

Plan to cover a small number of subjects each day. Use your topic list to break up subjects into smaller topics to revise each day. Allow about 30-minutes worth of revision for each subject. When you get through the topic list, start again at the beginning. Ideally you should plan to look at each topic at least three times before the exam.

## The right conditions for study

It is important to study in the right conditions. Often people forget this and try to revise in the wrong conditions and are surprised when they don't get much work done!

The room where you revise needs to be:

### **quiet**

you can't study if there are noisy distractions – try to make the room as quiet as possible – if you must have music then play it softly – if it is loud it demands attention from your brain which takes your mind away from revision

### **well lit**

make sure you have good lighting on the books and notes you are reading and writing – if the light is poor, your eyes get tired – if you get tired, revision becomes a waste of time

**cool**

if the room is too hot you won't get much done – most people have the heating on too high – the room should be cool (no more than 20 degrees – and open a window for fresh air)

**free of distractions**

don't have the TV on - don't have music playing unless it really is quietly in the background - don't have younger brothers or sisters getting in the way

**properly equipped**

make sure you have topic lists, text books, exercise books, notes, handouts, pens, pencils and paper, drinking water – keep everything you need for revision organised – then you won't waste time getting sorted out every evening!

If it is impossible to get good conditions at home, think about using your local library or ask if a room could be made available at the centre for you.

## What sort of learner am I?

There are many ways to revise and learn, and you need to find out what works best for **you**.

Take a look at this section, and also ask your teachers for advice.

- Most people remember things **visually** - in other words, they remember a **picture** of what they saw when they read the page.

If you're one of these people, try writing notes or equations onto one piece of paper and then colouring them in, adding curly bits, trees, animals and anything else that makes it stick in your mind. Then look it over once a day, and notice the shapes on the paper, maybe colour in a bit more; in the exam you'll find that you can "see" the paper and remember what was there. If this is you, you're likely to find "spider diagrams" or mind maps a really helpful trick.

- Or maybe your mind works more on **auditory** recall - you remember **sounds**.

If this is you, and you like to have music playing when you work, try noticing what music is playing on the radio when you revise each bit, and this ought to help you remember the stuff you're revising. Say things out loud, perhaps record your voice and listen to it later.

Or you could get adventurous and make up songs, rhymes or pmonics to help you remember. Example ROYGBIV Richard of York gave battle in Vain. The spectrum of white light is Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo and Violet.

- Other people remember "**kinaesthetically**" - they remember the **muscle movements** they made when they did something.

So write things out on a sheet of paper, cut it out to make a jigsaw, then sort it out - there's an [example](#) below. Practice your jigsaw each evening - with practice it'll only take a minute or so. In the exam, cast your mind back to that jigsaw, and the stuff should come flooding back. If this is you, then **moving around** as you work may help you to remember, as will any kind of cutting-and-sticking. If you play a musical instrument, you could combine the muscle movements and the sound recall ideas, just as you did when you learned to play the instrument.

- Other people are better at recalling **feelings**.

If you're somebody who is particularly aware of how people around you are feeling, or particularly aware of how you're feeling yourself, then use this to help you recall the stuff you need for exams: "*...oh yes, I remember that - it was in the lesson when xxxx was upset because of what yyyy said...*" - make a point of noticing at the time, but not at the expense of paying attention to the work in the lesson! When revising, think about how Anne Boleyn might have felt about the way Henry VIII treated her.

So which type of mind do you think you have? You're most likely to be a mixture of all of these, but by picking out a few of these ideas that you like the sound of, you can make life much easier.



## Using revision time well

It's no good starting revision at any old time, picking a subject at random, and finishing when you are bored!

Work out a revision timetable for yourself and stick to it. Something like this:

**7.00 revise subject 1**  
**7.20 take a break**  
**7.30 revise subject 2**  
**7.50 break**  
**8.00 revise subject 3**  
**8.20 break**  
**8.30 revise subject 4**  
**8.50 stop**

Do the same each day. Cover all your subjects in strict rotation. Don't spend more time on one subject than others. At weekends have at least two revision sessions (of 2 hours each) on Saturday and another two on Sunday.

## How to revise

We are all different and learn and revise in different ways.



But there are some tried and tested ways which have been shown to work.

The biggest mistake that most people make is to think that revision means sitting down with a textbook or notes and reading through them. Scientists have shown that we retain less than 10% of information this way. So reading your notes is an almost total waste of time.

By writing things down, we remember around 80% of what we learn.



So the trick is . . . **TAKE NOTES!**

Something lots of people have found helpful is to get some **index cards** (sometimes called library cards). You can buy index cards in WH Smith and other similar types of shops. If they are too expensive then just cut paper into small sheets.

Use one card per topic. Then write **bullet points** on the card for the main things you need to know. As you write out the cards, you are revising. You can then use the cards like flash cards for further revision. Keep them in your pocket and do bits of revision on the bus, at lunchtime, and any spare moment. Some people find **mind maps** and **spider diagrams** a useful way of revising. The important thing is to find a way of revising that works for you. But be honest about it – don't take the lazy way and just sit there gazing at a book!

**Remind yourself over and over – i.e moving information from your short term memory into your long term memory so that it can be recalled in the exam.**

If you revise something tonight, by this time tomorrow you'll have forgotten at least some of it.

So take another quick look at it tomorrow, to "top up" your memory. Take another quick look next week, and keep "topping up" until the night before the exam.



This doesn't take long to do, and is usually quite comforting - you feel good because you find that the stuff looks familiar each time you look at it; because it's quick you can easily fit it in with all your other revision.

## **"Look, Cover, Write, Check"**

This is probably the way that you learned spellings in Primary School.

- 1) read it,
- 2) hide it away,
- 3) write it out,
- 4) check to see if you got it right.

This technique is good for spellings, diagrams, equations, lists of facts and a whole lot more.

## **Highlighting**

Go through your books highlighting key words / key ideas. Not only does this make it easier to revise later, but the act of scanning through your books looking for the key stuff helps you to remember it. (Might be an idea to ask your teachers first, before you do this to your books, but if you explain why they'll almost certainly be delighted that you're getting on with your revision)

## **Work out "what could they ask me about this?"**

For example, in a question about acids and alkalis, it's a safe bet that you'll be expected to know about the numbers on the pH scale, the colours that Universal Indicator goes, and what "neutralisation" means. In questions about the planets, expect to be asked about their names, the order that they're in (counting outwards from the Sun), which ones are hottest/coldest, which ones go round the Sun fastest.... you've got the idea.

## **Practice on real exam questions**

The more you can try the better! You wouldn't expect to do any other performance without a realistic rehearsal, and this is no different.

## **Be clear about what you're expected to know**

Otherwise how do you know if you've revised it all? Check with your teachers if you're not sure. Go along to any revision sessions that you can. These can really boost your confidence, which is what many people need the most. You'll probably also be able to ask a different teacher about any bits that confuse you, and have it explained in a different way.

## **Identify your strong and weak areas**

Then you'll know where to concentrate your efforts. Go through your books and put green blobs beside stuff that you're happy about, and red blobs beside the bits you find more difficult. Then you know what to ask your teachers about at those revision sessions.

## **Work with somebody else**

There's an old saying: "the best way to learn is to teach".

Try it!

If you can explain stuff to somebody else, then you know that you've got it straight yourself.

## Revision online



There are lots of resources for revision online.

The best is probably the BBC Bitesize website which has revision notes, self-tests and even podcasts to download:

**[www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize)**

Another good revision website is **[www.gcse.com](http://www.gcse.com)**

Some subject websites are listed below:

Biology - **[www.purchon.com/biology/revision.htm](http://www.purchon.com/biology/revision.htm)**

Maths - **[www.mathsrevision.net/gcse/index.php](http://www.mathsrevision.net/gcse/index.php)**

ICT - **<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/subjects/zqmtsbk>**

General every subject - **[www.s-cool.co.uk](http://www.s-cool.co.uk)**

**[www.what2learn.com](http://www.what2learn.com)** Great flash revision games for KS3 and GCSE

**BBC Bitesize Revision**: Key Stage 2 SATs (age 11), Key Stage 3 (age 11-4), GCSE

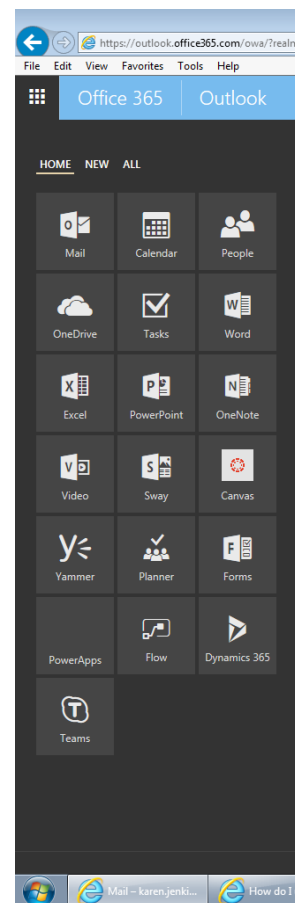
**"SAM" Self Assessment & marking** KS2, KS3, GCSE, 'A' level, most subjects. Revision & test practice.

**Homeworkhigh.com**

**GCSE Answers**

**s-cool.co.uk : 'A' level & GCSE help**

CANVAS is an online learning management tool. It is an online space where you can have access to all of your learning materials for all of your subjects. You can log in to CANVAS through your email and clicking on the menu button in Outlook:

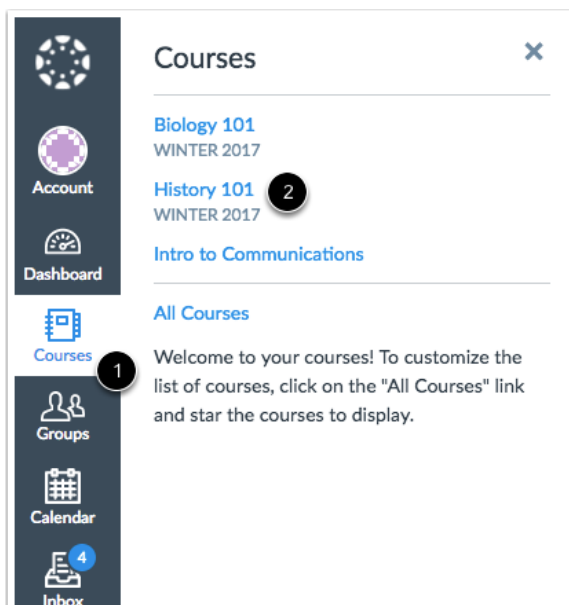


## How do I use the Course Home Page as a student?

If you are enrolled in a course as a student, the Course Home Page helps you navigate your course and manage your coursework.

## Open Course

In Global Navigation, click the **Courses** link [1], and then click the name of the course [2].



## View Course Home Page

The Course Home Page involves Course Page | 12



Navigation [1], the content area [2], and the sidebar [3].

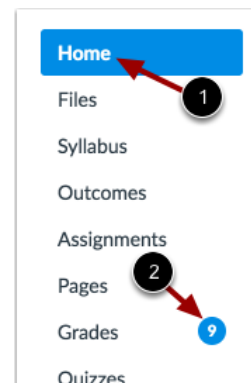
## View Course Navigation

The Course Home Page is viewed from the Course Navigation **Home** link [1].

Course Navigation includes links that help you and your students get to specific locations in the course. Teachers can customise what links are shown in a course, so if you don't see links that may display in other courses, your teacher has hidden those links from your view.

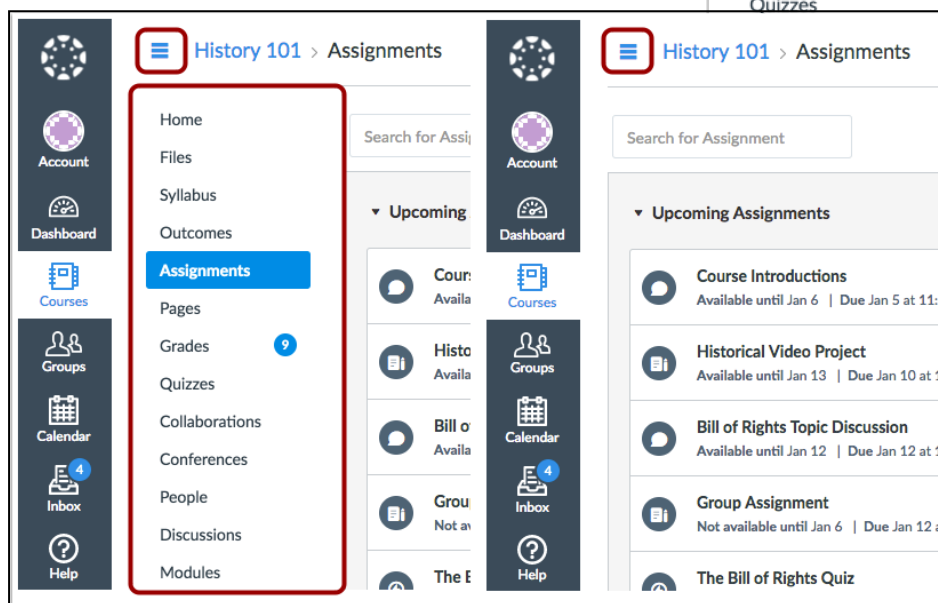
The active link of the page you are viewing is highlighted in blue. This highlight helps you quickly identify the feature area you are currently viewing in Canvas.

You may also see course indicators [2] that show updates to your course grades when your teacher grades your assignments.



## Collapse Course Navigation Menu

To expand or collapse the Course Navigation Menu, click the **Menu** icon.



## View Content Area

Home Page content (and all Canvas content) is displayed in the content area.

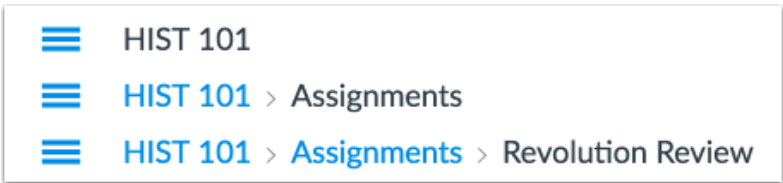
The content can be a page, the syllabus, discussions, announcements, quizzes, or imported content. The content can also show



the Course Activity Stream, which is a list of all recent activity in the course.

The Home Page content also defines what sections display in the sidebar.

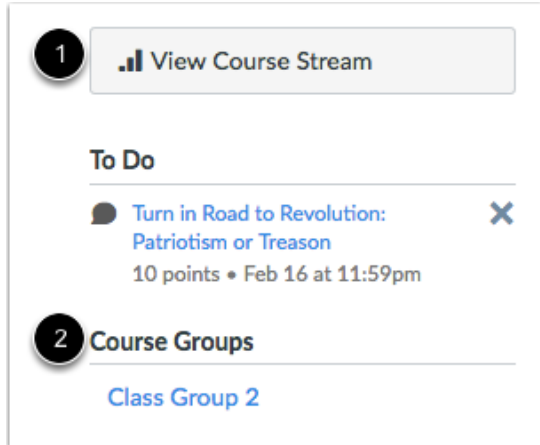
## View Breadcrumbs



HIST 101  
HIST 101 > Assignments  
HIST 101 > Assignments > Revolution Review

Breadcrumbs appear above the course content area.

As you view course content, the breadcrumbs leave a trail to show where you are inside the course. You can follow these links backward to visit prior course content.



1 View Course Stream

To Do

- Turn in Road to Revolution: Patriotism or Treason  
10 points • Feb 16 at 11:59pm

2 Course Groups

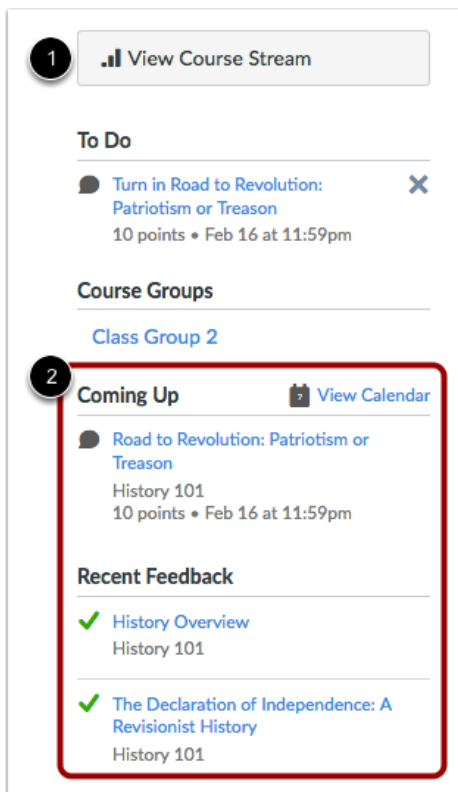
- Class Group 2

## View Sidebar

The sidebar functions the same as the Dashboard sidebar but only shows content for the specific course and includes additional options.

If your Course Home Page displays a page other than the Course Activity Stream, you can view the course activity stream by clicking the sidebar **View Course Stream** button [1]. When the Home Page is set as the Course Activity Stream, this button will not appear.

If you have been added to a group in your course, the **Course Group** section [2] includes links to your course groups.



1 View Course Stream

To Do

- Turn in Road to Revolution: Patriotism or Treason  
10 points • Feb 16 at 11:59pm

Course Groups

- Class Group 2

2 Coming Up [View Calendar](#)

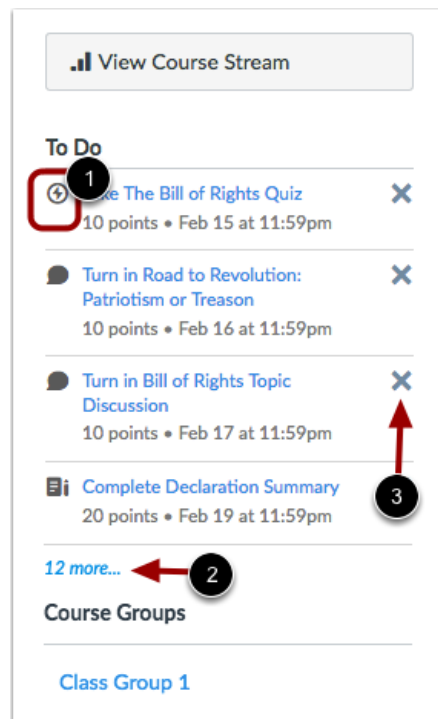
- Road to Revolution: Patriotism or Treason  
History 101  
10 points • Feb 16 at 11:59pm

Recent Feedback

- History Overview  
History 101
- The Declaration of Independence: A Revisionist History  
History 101

## View Sidebar Sections

The sidebar always shows the To Do section [1], which shows all assignments with a due date in the next seven days, including ungraded quizzes and assignments that do not require a submission. Each item in the To Do list displays the assignment name, the number of points, and the due date for the assignment. Once the due date has passed, items remain in this section for four weeks. However, assignments that are not graded or do not require an online submission only display until the due date.



View Course Stream

To Do

- 1 Complete The Bill of Rights Quiz  
10 points • Feb 15 at 11:59pm
- Turn in Road to Revolution: Patriotism or Treason  
10 points • Feb 16 at 11:59pm
- Turn in Bill of Rights Topic Discussion  
10 points • Feb 17 at 11:59pm
- 2 Complete Declaration Summary  
20 points • Feb 19 at 11:59pm

12 more... [←](#) 2

Course Groups

- Class Group 1

The sidebar can also include a variety of other sections [2], depending on the layout your instructor sets for the Course Home Page. Additional sidebar options include Coming Up or the Assignment list, Calendar and Assignment Groups, and Recent Feedback.

## Manage Sidebar Items

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Each section item displays an icon [1] to differentiate between assignments and peer review assignments.

If a section contains more items than are listed, a link will appear under the list that you can use to view additional items [2].

If there are more than 100 items in the To Do section, you must remove items before you can view any new items. To remove a To Do item, click the **remove** icon [3].

**Note:** Assignments submitted through Canvas disappear automatically from the To Do list; no-submission assignments (submitted on paper/in class) can only be removed from the list manually.

Your teachers will be able to give you URLs for exam papers that are online. You can then email/tell your teacher and they can mark the practise paper.

## Other opportunities for revision

Teachers often offer **revision classes** once you have finished the course and during the exam period read your notice board and ask your teachers. Teachers are always willing to help. If you do not understand something or need some **extra help**, ask! If a group of friends gets together and asks for revision classes so much the better.

## What not to do

There are a few bits of good advice about how not to do revision:

- don't leave it to the last minute
- don't be disorganised
- don't just read through your text or exercise books – you must make revision notes
- don't think you can wing it on the day
- do not get distracted by other opportunities like computer games, going out with friends, television etc
- do not put off revision until tomorrow or another day as you will never do it



# Looking after yourself

If you want your brain to perform well on the day of exams, you must look after it! Your brain depends on your body for its health. So:



<b>eat properly</b>	eat healthily in the run up to important exams – make sure you have proper meals and that includes breakfast – eat or drink something to give you energy before you start revision
<b>stay hydrated</b>	drink plenty of water – your brain needs it to work properly – especially when you are revising
<b>attend school</b>	don't make the mistake of taking time off lessons to revise – teachers will be covering more of the course, revising and answering questions and preparing you for the exam
<b>keep up activities</b>	just because it is exam time, don't give up your extra-curricular activities – you may need to cut back a little and give priority to revision but don't stop doing things you enjoy – you need a balanced approach to life
<b>exercise</b>	if your body is tired and sluggish, your mind won't work too well – make sure you get proper exercise – walk, run, swim, play football – do a little bit every day
<b>sleep</b>	15 and 16 year olds need around 9 hours of sleep each night that means if you are getting up for school at 7am, you need to be in bed by 10pm – and don't make the mistake of staying up revising the night before the exam – being fresh in the morning is far more likely to benefit you than a bit of rushed last minute revision!
<b>can't sleep?</b>	It's quite common for people not to be able to sleep properly when exams are coming up. Go to bed on time and try to relax do not watch TV or play computer games. May be some quite gentle music.

# Dealing with parents

Exams are a difficult time for parents too.

They want you to do well and sometimes aren't sure how best to help you.

The best way of handling parents is by showing them that you have got revision planned, that you are sticking to your revision timetable and that you speak to them!



Don't just clam up and go silent – they need to be reassured! Keep them posted on how things are going and chances are they will trust you to get on with it.

## Taking exams

There are strict rules for public exams like GCSEs.

If you do not follow the rules, the exam board can fail you and even prevent you from taking other exams at school this year and in the future at college.

Invigilators are the people who run the exams. Your teachers will be there at the start to make sure everything is OK but then the invigilators will take over. You must treat them with respect and do what they tell you. They have the power to remove you from the exam if you do not co-operate.

### **Some things to remember about exams:**

- Ensure you know when and where all your exams are. Check your timetable or examination statement of entry to ensure all

your details are correct and that you are entered for the exams you think you are taking.

- make sure you **arrive in good time**
- make sure you have all the **equipment** you need: a black pen and pencil, spare pens, ruler, rubber, pencil sharpener, calculator
- pens and pencils must be in a **clear plastic pencil case** or clear plastic bag
- **leave notes, books and revision cards outside** (it is no good saying they were in your pocket and you weren't looking at them)
- **no mobile phones** (there are very strict rules on this – if you bring a mobile phone or any sort of electronic device into the exam you will certainly be disqualified)
- check that you can **see a clock**
- **no talking** (you must be silent right from the moment you enter the exam hall)
- **don't look around** (it can be construed as cheating)
- **don't disturb others** (this is especially important when you have finished and there is still some time to go – don't get restless and make it difficult for others to concentrate)
- go to the **toilet** before you enter the exam hall – but if you really need to go during the exam, don't be afraid to ask
- **don't start looking at the exam paper** until you are told to do so

- make sure you have the **correct exam paper** (correct subject, level, topics)
- **read the instructions** carefully
- take note of **how many marks** are available for each answer – if there are more marks, you need to provide a fuller answer
- if you have **exam concessions sometimes called “access arrangements”** (such as extra time, someone who will read the exam paper, or someone who will write for you), make sure the invigilator knows

## After the exam

After an exam everyone will be talking about it. And you will get more and more concerned because it will always seem that everyone else knew more than you and did better than you! If you can – don't over focus on things you cannot change. Think about your next exam and your college place/next steps in life.



# Good luck

