

2015

Helping your child prepare for their GCSEs



FUTURES
Community College

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The exam season is a difficult time for young people, they are trying to concentrate on studying at a time of year and a point in their life when they would rather do almost anything else.

You can help your children as they go through this difficult period by being supportive and recognising how important these exams are and how much effort they will have to put in to do as well as they can.

Most of the advice here is just common sense and you will probably already do many of the things we suggest, but we hope you might also pick up some useful tips.

How can you help?

It is important to encourage your child to persevere and to work hard in the run up to the exams. Students who do best in their GCSE exams work hard all through Years ten and eleven rather than relying on last minute revision.

You can help them to work hard in a number of ways:

- Don't ask them to do too many chores or look after younger brothers or sisters.
- Encourage the rest of the family to be supportive.
- Make sure there is a quiet place for them to study, where their work can be safely kept.
- Revising with the TV or radio on or with loud music is not a good idea, but having their favourite music in the background may help.
- Too much study is not helpful, so encourage your child to plan some relaxation time too.
- Check how they are doing by letting them explain something they have just learned. It's a good rule of thumb that if you can follow their explanation then they will be able to produce a good answer to an exam question on that topic.
- Encourage your son/daughter to ask for help at school on any parts of their work they do not understand.

- Emphasise the need for plenty of sleep.
- As soon as each exam is finished, encourage them not to dwell on how well or poorly they did, but to put it behind them and focus on the next one.
- When you're younger it can seem that exams and schoolwork will go on forever. Remind them that it will soon be over!
- Most of all, praise them when they are working hard.

Revision Tips

As well as being supportive, there are practical things you can do to help your child with their studying:

- Studying is itself a skill that can be learned – there are ways to maximise study time to make it more effective, but briefly there are two important things to do: Plan Your Work, then Work Your Plan. This means drawing up a revision timetable, and then encouraging your child to stick to it.
- The school can supply a blank revision timetable, or you can download one from the following website: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage4
- Make sure that coursework deadlines are also included on the revision timetable. Your son/daughter will not be able to do much revision when they are working hard to complete coursework.
- Having the timetable displayed in their room is a good idea, which helps them stick to the plan.
- Working out a revision timetable will not only ensure that all the important areas are covered, but will also give your child more confidence by breaking up the daunting task of revising into manageable chunks.
- Plan for 30-minute sessions or an hour at most. Any longer and it is likely that nothing more will sink in.
- Allow short breaks in between for a glass of water or something similar to drink.
- In the evenings after school, plan to revise one or two subjects only.

- Plan to revise specific topics in each subject - not everything at once.
- Plan to cover each subject several times and revisit each one closer to the actual exam.
- Ensure that each session starts by tackling the most difficult bits
- Leave some time for relaxation – you might like to consider a small treat at the end of each week, conditional on them sticking to their revision plan.
- Get your son or daughter to check that they have all the notes and texts they need for revision. Ensure they talk to their teacher if they are missing any.
- Reading is not generally enough. Making brief notes either in words or pictures helps them to remember.
- Have all the books they need to hand so they don't have to go off looking for information and get distracted.
- Working with a friend can be useful because it allows them to test each other and to talk about the work.

During the exam period

During the period of the exams, try to ensure that:

- Your son or daughter gets a good night's sleep before exams.
- They have all the equipment they need: a couple of pens and sharp pencils: a rubber and a ruler. Also, many children use their mobile phone as a watch – they won't be allowed to take their mobile phone into the exam hall, so you might need to make sure they have a watch.
- Sometimes they may also need – a calculator or other equipment such as protractor.
- Make sure you know the start times of every exam that day – and so do they.
- Wish them well; tell them they have worked hard enough and that they can only do their best.

- Make a special point of telling your child that you will look forward to seeing them at the end of the day, and will be on hand to discuss any concerns they might have.

And when it's all over!

When it's all over, tell your son or daughter to relax and forget about studying for a while. Perhaps you can think of a small treat they would really appreciate on the day after they finish.

The really big celebration will come on the results day if all has gone well!