GCSE REVISION PLAYBOOK

A Master Guide for Pupils and Parents on Mastery, Momentum and Mental Well-being

THE PUPIL'S MASTERCLASS IN REVISION

GCSE success is not about pulling all-nighters or reading textbooks like novels. It is about training your brain to retrieve knowledge effortlessly under exam conditions. Welcome to your toolkit for working smarter, not harder.

THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE: WORK WITH THE BRAIN, NOT AGAINST IT

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNBmG24djoY&t=173s

The human brain's focus peaks after about 25 to 45 minutes. Trying to revise for three unbroken hours leads to diminishing returns and cognitive fatigue. Enter the Pomodoro Technique:

- 25 Minutes of Deep Focus (The Sprint): Total isolation. Phone in another room, notifications off, tabs closed. Pure active engagement with your revision material.
- 5 Minutes of Complete Rest (The Recharge): Step away from the desk. Stretch, grab a glass of water, look out a window. No scrolling social media (it keeps the brain active).
- Repeat 4 Times: After four cycles (two hours), take a longer break of 20–30 minutes to eat, walk outside, or reset.

Sample 2-Hour Evening Pomodoro Block:

- 5:00 PM – 5:25 PM: Biology Flashcards (Active Recall)
- 5:25 PM – 5:30 PM: Stretch and Water Break
- 5:30 PM – 5:55 PM: History Essay Plan (Retrieval Practice)
- 5:55 PM – 6:00 PM: Step away from desk
- 6:00 PM – 6:25 PM: Maths Exam Practice Questions
- 6:25 PM – 6:30 PM: Quick break
- 6:30 PM – 6:55 PM: English Literature Quotes Memorisation
- 6:55 PM – 7:25 PM: 30-minute reward break (Dinner / Fresh Air)

Subject-Specific

Mathematics: Do, Don't Just Read

You cannot revise maths by reading a textbook. You must pick up your pen.
•[1] Do past paper questions under timed conditions.
• When you get a question wrong, write out the correct method step-by-step in a 'Correction Log'.
• Master your calculator inside out - know every shortcut for standard form, tables and statistics.

Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics): Core Practical and Command Words

• Master Core Practicals: Examiners love asking questions about independent/dependent variables, control variables, and data analysis.
• Flashcards for Definitions: Key terms (e.g., electrolysis, osmosis, half-life) must be memorised verbatim.
• Command Words: Pay strict attention to command words like 'Explain' (give reasons), 'Evaluate' (pros and cons with a conclusion), and 'Describe' (what happens).

- Equation/Formula: Master correct identification of equations to use in Physics and accurately recall formulae/equation in Biology and Chemistry.
- Do past paper questions under timed conditions and use mark scheme effectively to understand examiner's expectations.

English Literature

• Theme-Based Quotation Banks: Instead of memorising quotes by character alone, memorise 5 versatile quotes per major theme (e.g. social responsibility in An Inspector Calls).
• Timed Writing: Practice writing introduction paragraphs and thesis statements in under 7 minutes.

- **Flashcards and Retrieval Practice**: Create flashcards for key quotations, themes, characters and context. Learn 5 versatile quotations per major theme. Test yourself regularly, explaining what each quotation suggests, how the writer presents ideas and why they are significant.
- **Mind Maps and Brain Dumps:** Spend 5 minutes writing everything you remember about a character or theme without looking at your notes. Then use a different colour to fill in gaps. Create mind maps linking key quotations, methods, themes, context and writers' intentions.
- **Timed Analytical Writing (Literature):** Practise planning and writing responses to exam questions. Use What? How? Why? to develop thoughtful analysis. PETAZL is a helpful starting point, but avoid rigid structures. Aim to embed short quotations naturally, explore alternative interpretations and weave relevant context throughout your response.
- **Feedback and Improvement:** Complete timed exam questions and use mark schemes, model answers and teacher feedback to identify improvements. Redraft a paragraph or section, focusing on developing analysis, using precise evidence and communicating ideas clearly.

English Language

• Language Paper 2: Practice transactional writing (letters, speeches, articles) focusing on PGGP and persuasive devices (RHETORICAL) and structural variety.

- **Exam Question Practice:** Practise individual questions from Language Papers 1 and 2 under timed conditions. For Paper 2, focus on comparing writers' viewpoints and practising transactional writing (letters, speeches and articles), using PGGP, RHETORICAL devices and varied sentence structures for effect.
- **Feedback and Improvement:** Complete timed exam questions and use mark schemes, model answers and teacher feedback to identify improvements. Redraft a paragraph or section, focusing on developing analysis, using precise evidence and communicating ideas clearly.

History

- Revise the structures and sentence starters for a paper for 25 minutes. Then have a 5 minute break. Then trying and write out the structure and sentence starters you should use for each question on a piece of paper.
- Revise the flashcards for 25 minutes then have a 5 minute break and test yourself on them or have a parent or friend test you.
- Revise the finished core knowledge gap fill for a unit (e.g. 1.1). Then have a 5 minute break and then try and fill out the gap fill without looking at any notes.
- Fill out the crime and punishment blank grid from memory for 15 minutes. Then green pen missing answers for 10 minutes. Then have a 5 minute break and try and redo it all again.
- Return to the above strategies on the same knowledge after a few days to check what knowledge has been gained. Keep going until you can do all flashcards, whole gap fill from memory etc.

Geography:

- Start by revising from the flash cards, infographics, knowledge organisers and video overviews to retrieve your knowledge.
- Practise using your intervention booklets (guidance printed in booklets).
- Apply by practising exam questions from the past paper exam folder using the technique, look (at the question and mark scheme), cover, write (timed conditions – minute a mark), and check (green pen).
- You are revising theme 1, 2 and 4 for paper 1 and using the paper 3 intervention booklet for paper 3.

French :

• Test yourself on understanding the vocabulary from French to English on all themes and topics.
• Add vocabulary you don't know to your read / cover / say / check and retest your self until you know it.

Say the keywords aloud so you are aware of sounds – this will help with listening.

Practise writing about yourself and family, your health and lifestyle, your free time, your education and future in 3 tenses (90 words for Foundation / 150 words for higher)

Practise verbs drill sheets to embed correct verb conjugation.

BTEC Music:

- **Revise relevant musical elements and production techniques (25 minutes):**
  Focus on how musical elements such as tempo, dynamics, texture, timbre, rhythm and instrumentation can help achieve the brief.
  Revise relevant production techniques, such as EQ, reverb, compression, panning and effects, where appropriate to the task.
- **Practice applying your knowledge to the brief (25 minutes):**
  Explain how specific musical or production choices would meet the brief, using technical vocabulary and clear justifications. Always explain what you would do, why you would do it, and how it would help achieve the desired outcome.
- **Analyse the original music (25 minutes):**
  Identify the musical features of your chosen starting point, including genre, instrumentation, tempo, rhythm, melody, harmony, texture and structure. Consider which features you will keep, change or develop to create your reinterpretation.
- **Justify your musical choices (25 minutes):**
  Practice explaining how you used musical elements, genre conventions and performance or production techniques to reinterpret your chosen piece. Explain what you did, why you chose it, and how it helped you meet the music brief.
- **Practice writing detailed commentary answers (25 minutes):**
  Complete timed practice paragraphs using accurate musical terminology and specific examples from your own creative process. Structure each paragraph around a clear point, evidence from your work, and an explanation of its impact. Review your writing to ensure you explain and evaluate rather than simply describe what you did.

Religious Studies:

- Use your Key Term Glossary to complete identified tasks to ensure you know and can competently apply specific terminology.
- Use your quotes booklet to create flashcards on the specific quotes you have identified for each unit – on one side of the flashcard write the quote, on the second side of the flashcard identify where the quote comes from; what the quote means and how the quote links to the different elements of your course.
- Use your bank of exam questions to answer one 12 mark question or one 3 mark, one 4 mark and 5 mark question. Self assess the answers to demonstrate where you believe you achieved marks using the marking criteria you use in lessons.

Citizenship:

- Watch the news headlines and identify how at least one of the headlines links to an element of your course.
- Create a flashcard on each element of your PLCs – including the key information and the significance of that point to the lives of citizens; include specific evidence e.g. statistics.
- Use your bank of exam questions and revision activites to complete practise exam questions – remember I need to see evidence of this work during each Friday lesson.
- Return to an exam paper you have previously completed and reattempt one section.

GCSE Design & Technology:

Apply, Practice, Recall

- **Prioritise Key Topics:** Focus on systems approach to designing, stock forms and sizes, material management, specialist processes, materials and their properties, and energy generation and storage.
- **Flashcards for Definitions:** Memorise key technical terms, material properties, manufacturing processes and mechanical systems.
- **Apply Your Knowledge:** Practice explaining why materials, components and manufacturing processes are suitable for specific products and users.
- **Command Words:** Understand *describe*, *explain*, *compare*, *evaluate* and *justify*, ensuring your answers match the question.
- **Exam Practice:** Complete AQA past-paper questions under timed conditions. Use mark schemes to understand examiner expectations and improve your answers.
- **Correction:** Record mistakes, write improved answers and revisit weaker topics, particularly systems, stock forms and material management.
- **Calculations and Drawings:** Practice using formulas accurately, including units, and interpreting technical drawings such as isometric, oblique and orthographic projections.

Remember: Learn the knowledge, apply it to the context, use accurate technical terminology and practice past-paper questions regularly.

WJEC Construction:

- **Prioritise Key Topics:** Revise the main construction trades, including carpentry, plumbing and electrical installation, alongside tools, materials, building methods and health and safety.
- **Flashcards for Technical Vocabulary:** Learn key definitions, tools, materials, components, equipment and construction terminology.
- **Apply Your Knowledge:** Practice explaining how tools, materials and techniques are selected and used for specific construction tasks. Understand the importance of sustainability, recycling and waste management.
- **Health and Safety:** Revise hazards, risks, PPE, safe working practices and relevant control measures.
- **Exam Practice:** Complete WJEC past-paper questions under timed conditions. Use mark schemes to identify missing knowledge and improve your answers.
- **Correction:** Record mistakes, write improved answers and regularly revisit weaker topics.
- **Practical and Technical Knowledge:** Revise construction processes, plans, measurements, calculations and the correct use of tools and materials.

GCSE Food Preparation & Nutrition:

1. Prioritise Topics Using Your PLC (25 minutes)

Use your Personalised Learning Checklist to identify topics you are less confident with (red or amber). Select one topic from Food, Nutrition and Health, Food Science, Food Safety, Food Choice or Food Provenance.

Use your CGP Revision Guide, Knowledge Organiser or revision resources on Teams to revise the topic. Complete the corresponding questions in your CGP Workbook and update your PLC as your confidence improves.

2. Flashcards and Retrieval Practice (25 minutes)

Create flashcards using your CGP Revision Guide, Knowledge Organiser or resources on Teams. Focus on key terminology, definitions and scientific processes, such as gelatinisation, dextrinisation, denaturation, coagulation, emulsification and the functions of nutrients.

Test yourself without looking at your notes. Revisit any flashcards you answer incorrectly until you can explain the information accurately from memory.

3. Brain Dumps and Revision Clocks (25 minutes)

Choose a topic from your Personalised Learning Checklist and spend 5 minutes writing everything you can remember without using your notes.

Use your CGP Revision Guide or Knowledge Organiser to check your answers and add any missing information in a different colour.

Alternatively, complete a Revision Clock by dividing a topic into smaller sections and recalling key facts, explanations and examples. Repeat the activity a few days later to check how much you have remembered.

4. Apply Your Knowledge to Food Preparation and Nutrition (25 minutes)

Practise applying your knowledge to food related scenarios using questions from your CGP Workbook or revision resources on Teams.

Focus on explaining the functions of ingredients, food science processes, nutritional needs of different groups and food safety procedures.

For example, explain how gelatinisation takes place when making a roux sauce or suggest suitable dietary adaptations for someone with specific nutritional requirements.

Use accurate subject terminology and explain what happens, why it happens and how it affects the food or consumer.

5. Timed Exam Questions and Corrections (25 minutes)

Complete AQA past-paper questions or exam-style questions from your CGP Workbook and Teams under timed conditions.

Pay particular attention to command words such as *describe, explain, analyse, evaluate* and *justify*. For longer questions, develop your answers using accurate technical vocabulary, relevant examples and clear explanations.

Use mark schemes and teacher feedback to identify missing knowledge, correct mistakes and rewrite weaker answers. Record topics requiring further revision on your PLC.

GCSE Drama

- **Focus on one exam question per 25-minute block:** Practice answering Eduqas GCSE Drama questions on set text, live theatre evaluation or theatre roles and design.
- **Use active recall:** Spend 25 minutes testing yourself on key terminology, set text characters, themes, staging and performance/design choices without looking at your notes.
- **Practise timed exam responses:** Answer past-paper questions within the recommended time, using subject-specific terminology and clear examples to support your points.

- **Revise live theatre evaluation:** Use a 25-minute block to recall specific moments from the performance you watched, explaining the impact of the design choices on the audience.
- **Take a 5-minute break between blocks:** Then move on to a different question type or topic, returning to any areas you found difficult.

GCSE Media Studies

- **Flashcards and Retrieval Practice**: Create flashcards for key topics and theories, themes, Key terminology and each CSP. Reduce each CSP to two flash cards to learn the important content.
- **Mind Maps and Brain Dumps:** Spend 5 minutes writing everything you remember about a CSP. Organise this information into memorable sections for your mind map and link a colour to a key theory that interacts with the CSPs that you study.
- **Timed Analytical Writing (exam focus):** Practise planning and writing responses to exam questions. Use key theoretical focuses to develop thoughtful analysis. Link the key theories that allow you to analyse each strand of the possible questioning: Media Audiences, Media Representations, Media Industries and Media Language. Develop longer responses for the twenty-mark questions using formative assessment with your teacher from the mock exams.
- **Feedback and Improvement:** Complete timed exam questions and use mark schemes, model answers and teacher feedback to identify improvements. Redraft a paragraph or section, focusing on developing analysis, using precise theoretical frameworks (such as Blumler and Katz Uses and Gratifications theory or Todorov's Narrative theory) and communicating ideas clearly.

GCSE Computer Science

- **Prioritise Topics Using Your PLC (25 minutes):** Use your Personalised Learning Checklist to identify weaker topics (red or amber). Choose one area from Paper 1 or Paper 2 and revise it using your knowledge organisers, Craig and Dave videos, CGP revision guides or CSNewbs.
- **Flashcards and Retrieval Practice (25 minutes):** Create flashcards for key definitions and concepts, such as CPU components, network protocols, RAM and ROM, programming constructs and searching algorithms. Test yourself without notes and use the Leitner Box system to revisit difficult cards more frequently.
- **Brain Dumps – Test Your Memory (25 minutes):** Spend 5 minutes writing everything you remember about a PLC topic, such as network topologies, secondary storage or binary search. Check your knowledge organiser, correct any gaps, then test yourself again. Use Isaac Computer Science for additional retrieval questions.
- **Practise Calculations and Programming (25 minutes):** For Paper 1, practise binary conversions, binary addition, left shifts and sound file-size calculations. For Paper 2, practise trace tables, flowcharts, Boolean logic, searching and sorting, and writing short algorithms. Check your working and correct mistakes.
- **Timed Past Papers and Corrections (25 minutes):** Use the 2022 and 2023 OCR past papers to practise questions under timed conditions. Mark your answers using the mark schemes, identify missing technical vocabulary or steps, and rewrite incorrect answers. Focus particularly on extended explanations in Paper 1 and writing accurate algorithms in Paper 2.

Creative iMedia

- **Prioritise Topics Using Your PLC (25 minutes):** Use your Personalised Learning Checklist to identify weaker topics (red or amber). Focus on areas such as media sectors, job roles, pre-production documents, client briefs, legal and ethical issues, and distribution platforms. Revise one topic using the lesson PowerPoints, knowledge organisers or CGP revision booklet.
- **Flashcards and Retrieval Practice (25 minutes):** Use the keyword bank on Teams to create flashcards for key terminology, such as target audience, client requirements, mood boards, storyboards, copyright and file formats. Test yourself without notes and use the Leitner Box system to revisit difficult definitions more frequently.
- **Brain Dumps – Test Your Memory (25 minutes):** Spend 5 minutes writing everything you remember about a PLC topic, such as pre-production documents, stages of media production or legal and ethical issues. Check your knowledge organiser, correct missing information and test yourself again. Use KnowItAll Ninja for additional revision videos.
- **Apply Your Knowledge to Client Briefs (25 minutes):** Practise identifying explicit and implicit requirements in a client brief. Choose suitable pre-production documents, file formats or distribution platforms for a given audience and purpose. Explain and justify your decisions using accurate media terminology.
- **Timed Past Papers and Corrections (25 minutes):** Use the R093 past paper to practise questions under timed conditions. Focus particularly on the 9-mark question requiring improvements to pre-production documents. Use the mark scheme to identify missing explanations and justifications, then improve your answers using specific examples and technical vocabulary.

Child Development:

1. Brain dump — remember without notes
Choose one topic and write everything you remember without looking at your notes. Then check your PLCs/revision booklets/PowerPoint and add missing facts in another colour.

Use for: antenatal care, signs of labour, tonsillitis symptoms and the menstrual cycle.

Example task: List three signs that labour has started, then check and correct the answers.

2. Flashcards — question on one side, answer on the other
Create cards for key terminology, definitions and facts. Test yourself regularly and give extra practice to cards that you answer incorrectly. Use the PLCS to create flashcards.

Use for: health professionals, reproductive anatomy, amniocentesis, episiotomy and contraception

Example task: “Which part of the male reproductive system carries urine and semen?”

3. Draw, label and sequence
Draw diagrams or arrange information in the correct order, then explain each stage aloud.

Use for: the menstrual cycle, stages of labour, reproductive anatomy and newborn development.

Example task: Put the four descriptions of the menstrual cycle in the correct order, or sequence the three stages of labour

4. Practise exam questions

Answer questions from the exam revision PowerPoint, paying attention to command words and marks available.

Example task: Explain how smoking and weight can affect the pre-conception health of women and men (2 marks).

5. Teach a partner — explain it simply

One student explains a topic while their partner listens, asks questions and identifies missing details. They then swap roles. Use the revision booklets with the answers in the back and the revision PowerPoint with practise questions.

Use for: supporting new parents, preventing household accidents, caring for a sick child, reducing the risk of SIDS, screening and diagnostic tests, postnatal care

Example task: Explain three ways parents and carers can reduce the risk of SIDS when babies are sleeping.

GCSE REVISION PLAYBOOK

THE PARENT'S SUPPORT GUIDE TO REVISION

As a parent during GCSE season, your role shifts from instructor to coach, nutritionist and emotional anchor. Teenagers during exam season experience immense biological and psychological pressure.

PARENT SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

1. Create an Environment Conducive to Focus
• Minimise Distractions: Help establish a quiet study zone free from bedroom distractions where possible. Encourage phone parking outside the study room during Pomodoro sessions.
• Stock the Fuel Station: Brains burning glucose need healthy fuel - nuts, fruit, water and slow-release carbohydrates rather than energy drinks and sugar spikes.

2. Coach Through Procrastination and Overwhelm
• Break Down the Mountain: When a student says 'I have too much to do,' they are paralysed. Help them break revision down into tiny, actionable 25-minute chunks.
• Focus on Process, Not Grades: Praise effort ('I noticed how focused you were during that history block') rather than outcomes ('You need to get a Grade 8').

3. Protect Sleep and Mental Well-being
• The 9-Hour Rule: Adolescent brains require 9-10 hours of sleep for memory consolidation. Enforce a 'screens off 45 minutes before bed' rule.
• Active Decompression: Encourage physical exercise, family walks, or social time to prevent burnout.

Final Word: Consistency Beats Intensity

GCSE revision is a marathon run in sprints. By combining structured Pomodoro blocks, active recall, subject-specific tactics and unwavering parental support, students can walk into exam halls calm, prepared and confident.