



2023/24

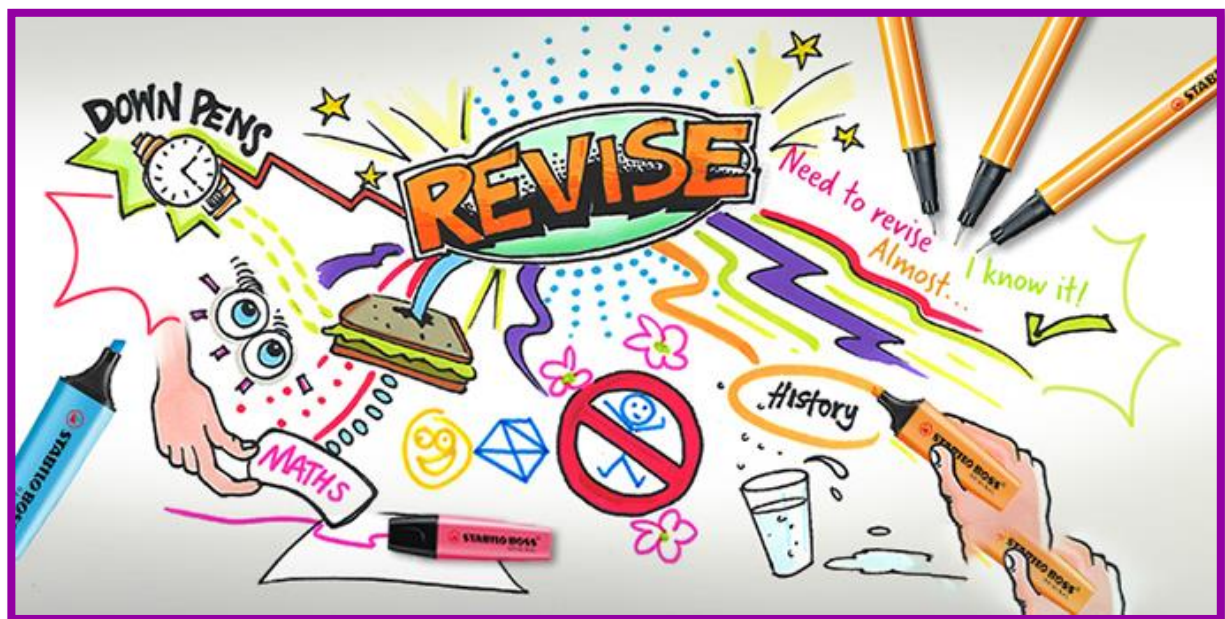
**Year 9 Assessment
Preparation Guide**

What kind of support might pupils need?



Our young people can rarely achieve their best independently; best results are always achieved when a partnership is formed between pupil, family and school, and your support as parents and carers is fundamental to this success.

The aim of this booklet is to provide you, as parents, with key information to help support your child in preparing & revising for the forthcoming assessments. It is also a source of ideas for how to revise and provides some top tips to help beat assessment stress. Assessments can be a challenging time for us all but hopefully, by working in partnership, we can ensure that pupils are as supported and prepared as they can be for any assessments they need to sit.



Coping with Assessment Stress (for parents/carers)



How can I help my child to deal with assessment stress?

- Encourage them not to be frightened of assessment stress, but to see it as a positive force - after all, it keeps them on their toes mentally, and can help them focus on the task in hand.
- Learn to recognise when they are stressing out and understand its causes. Often, a break or a chat with someone who knows the pressure they are under will get things into perspective.
- Make sure that they get plenty of sleep during the assessment window - it will be much easier for them to concentrate during an assessment if they are not feeling too tired.
- Encourage them to eat healthily during their revision and assessments: Plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Avoid caffeine and energy drinks, they can make stress worse and dehydrate the brain.

Useful equipment

Making sure your child has all the right equipment, so they can get ready for their assessments, is also something you could really help with. Some things that your child could find very useful during their revision:

Fine-point coloured pens

Post-it notes

Folders and files

Highlighters

Note or record cards

Revision guides

Textbooks

Notebooks

Watch/timer

Access to a computer/ printer

Calendar /revision timetable

Coping with Assessment Stress (for pupils)



1. Keep it in perspective

- Lots of people will tell you this, because it's true - exams aren't everything. Whatever happens in your assessments, you can still be successful in life afterwards. So, if you don't do as well as you'd hoped, try to keep things in perspective.
- Assessment success doesn't define you as a person. Everyone copes differently in different situations and there's so much more to your personality than how well you can respond to an assessment.
- Think about how far you've come already.
- Once you've done an assessment, try to forget about it. There's nothing you can do about it and worrying won't change your mark. Try to resist asking other people what they wrote for a particular question or checking other peoples' answers.

2. Get that organised feeling

- Picture your assessments as a time-bound project so that there's a definite end point.
- Break your revision down into small chunks and form a plan.

3. Get into some good habits

These habits will help you concentrate as well as reducing stress:

- Eat well. Keep a good blood sugar level to avoid highs and lows of energy, by eating slow release foods like bread, rice, pasta, fruit and veg.
- Drink lots of water. People often underestimate how much hydration helps!
- Keep active. Even a short walk will do. Exercising is one of the quickest and most effective ways to de-stress. Fresh air will clear your head and perk you up.
- Try to get about 8 hours' sleep a night. If you're stressed about not being able to sleep, there are lots of ways to aid a good night's sleep.

Coping with Assessment Stress (for pupils)



4. Avoid bad habits

- Don't set yourself ridiculous goals. Nobody can revise 10 topics in a day!
- Don't cut out all the enjoyment from your life. It's tempting to decide you'll just knuckle down to work and "focus", but this is counterproductive - it's impossible to focus without giving your brain rest by doing other activities.

5. Get support from friends and family

- Don't be put off by friends saying that they are doing huge amounts of revision. As already mentioned, that's probably not actually a productive or efficient way of working long term. One of the key reasons people feel stress during assessments is due to comparing themselves to other people.
- If you can, discuss with your parents what they are expecting you to achieve. It's helpful to let them know what you think you have the capacity to achieve, and to insist that the best way to get there is to have support from your parents, not pressure.
- If you're feeling really worried or anxious, chat to a good friend, family member, or tutor. It helps to get it out of your system, and they may well be able to help think about practical strategies to deal with assessment stress.

What's the best way to revise?

Research by Bjork, Dunlosky and Kornell (2012) demonstrated that pupils don't always tend to use the most effective revision techniques like self-testing, using flashcards and quizzing. Instead they default to less effective techniques such as rereading their class books and highlighting their notes. Applying these ineffective techniques over long periods means they clock up hours of revision in the belief that time spent equates to assessment success but, actually, a lot of this time is wasted.

Revision Strategies



Improving Memory

'Chunking'

As the average person can only hold seven 'items' in short-term memory, grouping items together into 'chunks' can increase capacity. This is generally used for remembering numbers (think of how you remember phone numbers by grouping the seven digits into 2 or 3 chunks) but can be applied to other listings in various subjects.

Repetition

Studies indicate that 66% of material is forgotten within seven days if it is not reviewed or recited again, and 88% is gone after six weeks. Don't make life harder for yourself - build in a brief daily and weekly review of material covered. It will save you having to re-learn material from scratch!

Application and association

The best way to channel material to long-term memory is to organise it into meaningful associations. Link it to existing information and topics and create vivid personal examples which act as 'mental hooks' or 'cues' for recalling material in the future. Thus, new items are put in context. If you learn a new formula / verb / rule, try to put it into practice immediately with a relevant example.

Use of mnemonics

These are various word games which can act as memory aids and which allow personalisation and creativity. Think of stalactites (**c**ome down from the **c**eiling) and stalagmites (**g**o up from the **g**round); the colours of the rainbow - Roy G. Biv ('Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain' to remember red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet); the seven characteristics of living organisms - Mrs. Gren (Movement, Reproduction, Sensitivity, Growth, Respiration, Excretion, Nutrition). You can devise many more of these to aid your personalised recall of items in your subjects.

Mind Maps

Mind Maps are useful for:

- Summarising information and note taking.
- Consolidating information from different research sources.
- Thinking through complex problems.
- Presenting information in a format that shows the overall structure of the subject.
- Studying and memorising information.

Using Mind Maps Effectively:

Once you understand how to take notes in Mind Map format, you can develop your own conventions for taking them further. The following suggestions can help you draw impactful Mind Maps:

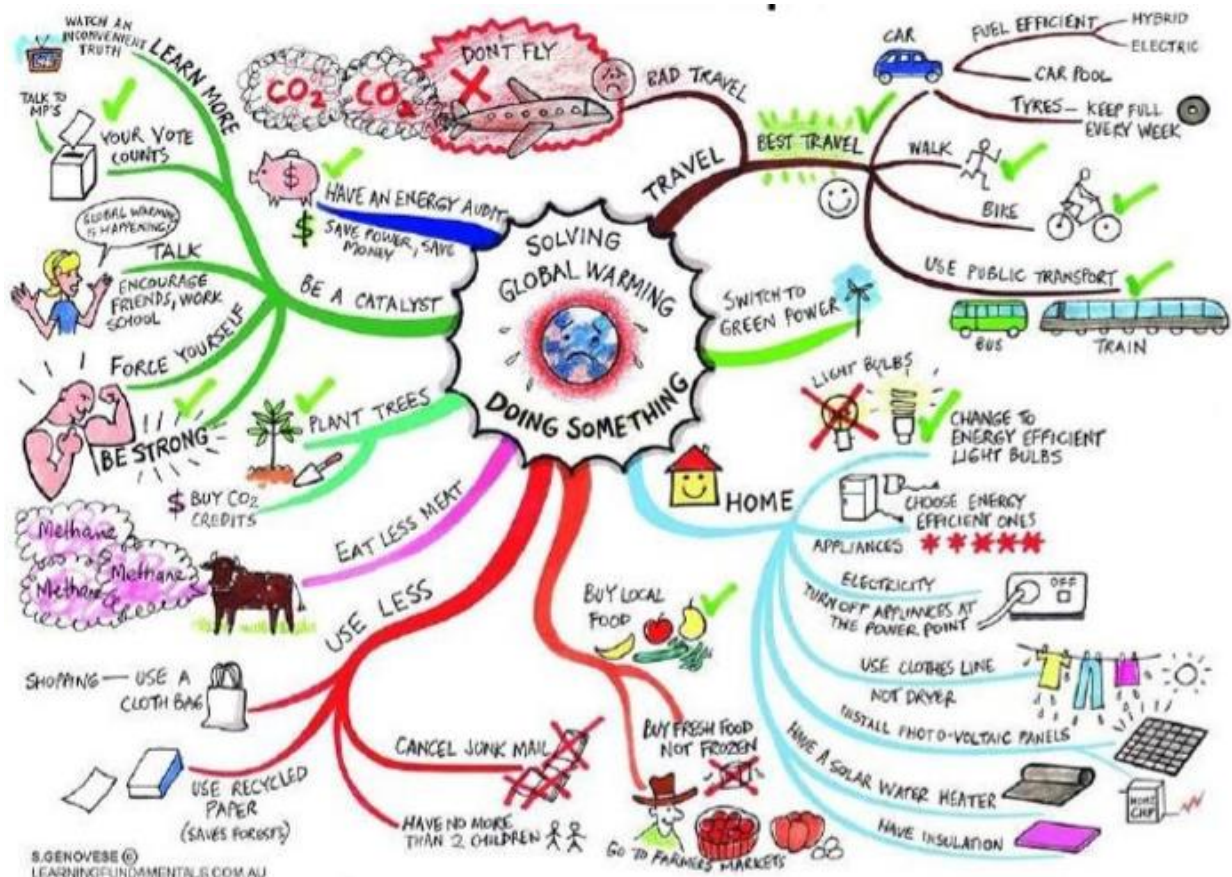
Use Single Words or Simple Phrases – Many words in normal writing are padding, as they ensure that facts are conveyed in the correct context, and in a format that is pleasant to read. In Mind Maps, single strong words and short, meaningful phrases can convey the same meaning more potently. Excess words just clutter the Mind Map.

Print Words – Joined up or indistinct writing is more difficult to read.

Use Colour to Separate Different Ideas – This will help you to separate ideas where necessary. It also helps you to visualize the Mind Map for recall. Colour can help to show the organisation of the subject.

Use Symbols and Images – Pictures can help you to remember information more effectively than words, so, where a symbol or picture means something to you, use it. You can use photo libraries like iStockPhoto to source images inexpensively.

Using Cross-Linkages – Information in one part of a Mind Map may relate to another part. Here you can draw lines to show the cross-linkages. This helps you to see how one part of the subject affects another.



Assessment Practice

Some of the main reasons why pupils fail to gain marks on assessment papers they hoped for:

- Misinterpreting the question, perhaps because they misread the instruction words or specialist terms.
- Not reading the instructions carefully.
- Not writing answers in the way they are required.
- Running out of time, so that the final question is not answered in enough depth.
- Not checking through the paper carefully to avoid obvious mistakes, such as dates or simple mathematical calculations.
- Writing long, complex sentences where the meaning gets lost

Discuss these with your child and keep an eye out for them when they are practising.

Look, cover, write, check

- This is an old and trusted technique that still works for many people:
- Revise a section of work
- Cover it up or put it aside
- Write down or record as much as you can remember
- Check against the original
- Highlight anything you got wrong or forgot
- Prioritise these areas for future revision

Record

Try recording important points, quotes and formulae. If your child hears them and reads the notes as well, they're more likely to sink in.

Video

Use short videos from YouTube, Corbett Maths etc. to help to understand difficult concepts.

Talk

Encourage your child to read their notes out loud; it's one way of getting them to register.

Test

See what they can remember without notes, but they should avoid testing themselves on subjects they know already. You can help by testing them.

Time

Do past assessment papers against the clock; it's an excellent way of getting up to speed and of checking where there are gaps in knowledge.