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PORTLAND PLACE SCHOOL

REVISION AND STUDY GUIDE

NAME _____

CLASS _____

This study guide will hopefully give you some support in preparing for the National Exams. The guide contains some ideas to help you revise. It is important to choose methods of revision which suit your individual needs, and that you approach your revision in a systematic way.

ORGANISATION

“A thousand-mile journey begins with a single step.” (Chinese proverb)



The biggest exams of your life are approaching! Don't panic and pretend they'll go away - they won't. However, if you're organised you'll find the exams won't be the nightmare experience that you feared - and if you go about things the right way, you'll also have time for a social life.

“Several weeks of intensive study to achieve success in examinations will make each student’s future more secure and give them a greater degree of choice in what they want to do when they leave school.”

You therefore need to build up steadily your knowledge and skills in the period prior to the exams. **The night before the examination is too late.**

In addition to this "Revision and Study Guide"

Your teachers will be...

- Running extra revision classes. Make sure you attend them
- Providing course-content checklists
- Giving instructions on tackling the exam papers
- Setting you aspirational targets
- Helping you access past exam papers on the GCSE website

The revision and study guide will...

- Help you devise a study schedule
- Provide revision tips
- Remind you of your preferred learning style
- Give you strategies to deal with stress
- Help you identify your strongest and weakest subjects
- Explore a variety of techniques, i.e. post-it notes, flash cards, audio recording, mnemonics, mind maps, etc.



TEN STEPS TO REVISION SUCCESS

1. **Revision Space:** Find a good place to work. It should be quiet and uncluttered.
2. **Revision timetable:** Draw up a revision timetable – it's crucial! It should be realistic, cover all subjects and allow you time off to relax. (30-40 min bursts) are more effective. Your concentration lapses after about an hour.
3. **Make Notes:** Don't just read through your classwork, make notes. Gradually condense your notes so they fit on the back of a postcard.
4. **Revision guides:** Get a recommendation from your teacher as to which are most useful and then make sure you use them.
5. **Questions & answers:** Write out some questions and answers to see how much you are actually remembering.
6. **Listen in:** Record your notes onto a mobile phone, iPod or MP3, and then play them walking down the street or whilst you are in bed.
7. **Prompts:** Put key words and phrases on sticky Post-it notes around the house, so you'll see them often.
8. **Seek help:** Don't go it alone; get friends and family on board to help you revise. If you don't understand something, ask your teacher!
9. **Past papers:** Make sure you get hold of some past papers, they're a really good way of knowing what to expect in the exam (SQA website).
10. **Relax:** If you panic you're lost! The exams are going to happen so you might as well give yourself the best chance.

EFFECTIVE REVISION

To be effective, revision must be:

Active - always work with a pen and paper, look for key points, test yourself. Never just sit down and read for a set period. Focus on tasks, not time. If you just read notes you'll only retain about 10% of the information.

Organised - always ask yourself at the start of a study session "what do I want to have completed in this session?" Have a plan for what you want to cover this week and this month. Have an overview of the priority areas in each subject.

Know yourself

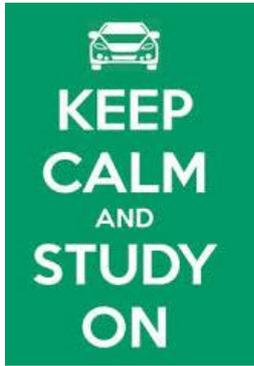
Think about how these factors apply to you

- What is your best time to work?
- What is your worst time?
- Where do you work best?
- What is the maximum time you can keep your concentration?
- How easy is it to motivate yourself to start and to keep going?
- What about your anxiety levels?
- What feelings, generally, does revision generate for you?
- Do you give yourself a treat after revision?

GETTING STARTED ON REVISION

Where?

Find a fixed place to study (a particular desk/room at home, a spot in the library, etc.) that becomes firmly associated in your mind with productive work. All the equipment and materials you need should be within reach, and the room should be well lit and ventilated, but not too comfortable! Music is fine as long as it helps you to study and blocks out distracting noises.



REVISION THE DO's AND DON'Ts

DO

1. Make a list of all the topics you need to revise:

List all the topics on the course and use this as a 'revision checklist' for the subjects. Tick off topics as and when you have learned them.

2. Create a realistic schedule:

Block the waking part of each day into three portions. Allow yourself one portion a day off and allocate subjects and topics to the remaining two. Put the schedule on display so that your family can see when you are available. It will also reassure your parents that you are in control.

3. Revise using your preferred learning style.

Have you tried...mind maps; diagrams; colour; mnemonics; recording yourself and listening back to it?

DON'T



Just keep going! The body and the mind need regular 'time-outs'. When you are tired, concentration is more difficult. You can be distracted much easier and learning and memorisation is less effective. There comes a point in an evening study session when it is counter-productive to stay at the desk - nothing is going in and you are only tiring yourself further. Use breaks effectively, particularly after completing a task.

YOU CAN NOW PLAN YOUR REVISION SCHEDULE

1. Decide on your time slots.
2. Work out how many weeks there are before the examinations begin.
3. Look at which exams are first and last.
4. Work out how many weeks and sessions to allow for each subject.
5. Work out how many sessions to allow for each topic.
6. Do you need to spend the same amount of time on each topic?
7. Write in the work you are going to do in each session.
8. Be specific and try to balance your time between your subjects.

PERFORMING ON THE DAY

- Get a good night's sleep
- Arrive in plenty of time
- Have your equipment ready
- Positive thinking
- Maintain your focus
- Beware of post-exam analysis



Know How You Learn: How does memory work?

Your memory...

- Retains beginnings and endings best, therefore
- ... prefers short sessions with breaks
- Needs to make links
- Remembers bizarre or outstanding features
- Needs structured reviews:

Learning session



Review 10-15 minutes later



24 hours later (test for 5 minutes)



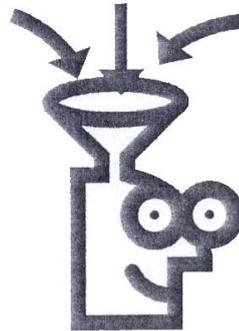
1 week later (test for 3 minutes)



1 month later (test for 3 minutes)

Your memory works best when you:

- are ready to learn – so have regular breaks
- have the right location – avoid distractions
- are focused – avoid 'just' reading for things to 'sink in'
- have an overview of the bigger picture
- break material in small chunks and group related pieces of information
- can visualise associations between pieces of information
- use multi-sensory techniques – make use of a range of strategies to reinforce learning
- regularly review what you are learning



Be active with your material, and be aware of your own preferred learning style for getting the information into your head.

Know How You Learn: Thinking about how you learn

Thinking about how you learn can help you identify effective strategies for revision. Although we often use a variety of strategies, understanding your 'learning style' may alert you to your preferences and habits.

For example:

Do you learn visually?

- Do you remember faces rather than names?
- Do you prefer film to radio and enjoy descriptive scenes in books?
- Do you use words like 'see' ("I see what you mean") and 'picture' ("I can picture that")?

You may be a visual learner



Do you learn by listening?

- Do you prefer the telephone for important conversations?
- Do you find verbal instructions helpful?
- Do you use words like 'say', and 'hear' ("I hear what you're saying" to mean 'I understand')? Or use phrases like "that sounds right"?

You may be an auditory learner



Do you learn by doing things?

- Do you prefer to jump in and try it when faced with a new task?
- Do you watch for body language?
- Do you use words like 'touch' and 'hold'? Or phrases like "that feels right"?
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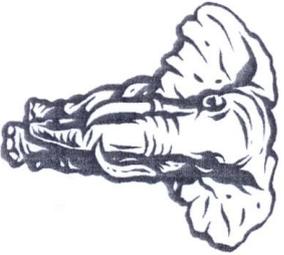
You may be a physical learner (kinaesthetic)



There is further information on strategies associated with particular learning styles in the section 'How not to forget'.

Do remember that when thinking about how you learn, ask yourself:

- have you used certain strategies in the past?
- have they worked?
- what effect did they have? (how well did they work?)
- do they still work? (sometimes a different strategy may be most effective when dealing with a certain type, level or quantity of information to be learnt)



How not to forget

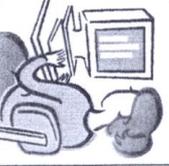
Know your preferred learning style

Use your 5 senses

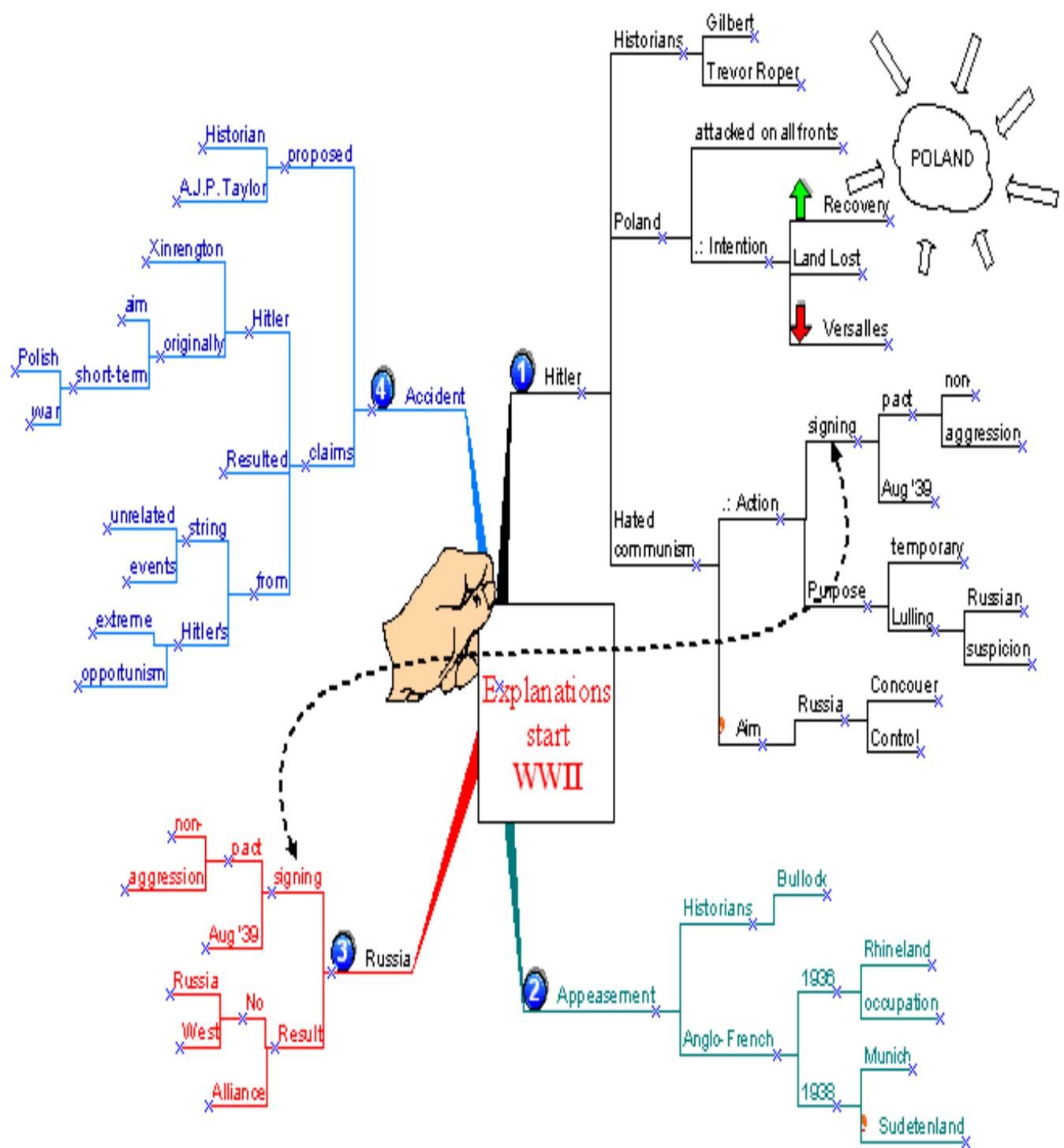
Link your knowledge



Academic Support, Student Services

VISUAL (spatial)	AURAL (auditory- musical)	VERBAL (linguistic)	PHYSICAL (kinaesthetic)	LOGICAL (mathematical)	SOCIAL (interpersonal)	SOLITARY (intra- personal)
						
posters	audio tapes	summary cards	hands-on role-play (group)	mnemonics patterns	tell or teach others	self-reflection set goals aligned with your beliefs
pictures	talk to yourself	key words	flash cards (include visuals)	go beyond planning – “do it now”	question others	project journal
mind maps	question yourself	active reading	posters	diagrams	discuss	role-play (individual)
videos / tv	talk to others	SQ3R*			argue	
diagrams		practice exam questions				
colour						

* Survey – Question – Read – Recall – Review (see our advice on Reading Strategies on the Academic Support website)



MEMORY CARDS

Memory cards are a great way to condense your revision notes and help you remember all those important facts for the exam.

SUMMARISE: Once you have written out your revision notes, it's time to condense that information into small manageable facts. This is where memory cards come in to play.

WORD POWER: For each topic, write bullet points of key facts on a set of index cards.

ORGANISE: Categorise the facts so that you can understand how they all link together.

LINK: Don't just remember the key facts on the card. They should act as prompts for all the other revision facts you've been learning.

PORTABLE: The great thing about small index cards is that you can take them anywhere.

MIND MAPS

Make mind maps or association maps rather than taking linear notes. This will harness the power of both sides of your brain - creative and logical.

1. Start with the theme in the middle of the page.
2. then develop your main idea.
3. Each branch must relate to the branch before it.
4. Use only key words and images.
5. Key words must be written along the branches.
6. Printing your key words makes them more memorable.
7. Use highlighters and coloured markers to colour code branches.
8. Make things stand out on the page so they stand out in your mind.
9. Brainstorm ideas – use images which will help you remember key information.

OTHER LEARNING STRATEGIES

There are lots of different ways to learn and understand and memorise information. Your learning style may mean you have certain preferences. However, do remember that multi-sensory learning can help reinforce what you are learning.

MNEMONICS: these rely on using easy-to-recall phrases that match the initial letters to the information you want to remember.

You have probably heard of some common ones – this one helps list the colours of the rainbow

Richard Of York Gained Battles In Vain - or the name - **ROY G BIV**

Red Orange Yellow Green Blue Indigo Violet

RHYMES AND SONGS: setting information in poetic or song-form can also help – especially if you can ‘sing’ it to yourself.

Thirty days hath September, April, June and November. All the rest have 31 except February alone which has 28 days clear but 29 in each Leap Year.

POSTERS / DIAGRAMS / COLOUR: why not try creating images, visualising sequences of actions or processes, and even adding colour to information. You may want to select a colour to be associated with a particular topic so keywords connected to that topic are always visualised in that colour in your revision materials.

AUDIO MATERIALS: listening back to information whilst doing other things may also help you learn. For example Audiobook versions of key texts / performances. There are also lots of Apps you can use for study.



THE EXAMINER'S VIEW

The job of examiners is to give you marks, not to take them away, but they are powerless to help you if you fall into the most common traps. These are the biggest pitfalls they have identified:

Not reading the paper correctly

Examiners say that this is one of the most regular and fatal errors. They call it the 'triggered answer'. You have your pre-prepared answer ready but you don't look at the exact terms of the question and therefore supply the wrong information in your answer.

Not finishing the paper

Mismanaging your time within the exam can easily cost you a full grade. The biggest exam 'crime' is to leave suitable questions unanswered. Do not spend your time perfecting one answer. Move on to other questions, even if your attempt is in bullet point form. If you have answered only three questions instead of five, the highest mark you can get is 60%.

Ignoring the marking scheme

You must take the marking scheme into account when you allocate time to each question or part of a question. Avoid the temptation of writing everything you know about a topic – just give the appropriate amount of information.

Repetition

Make the point once. There are no extra marks for restating facts, even if you phrase them differently.

Missing part of a question

Sometimes, part of a question can be carried onto the next page and, in the pressure of the moment, you don't see it. Be careful. Familiarise yourself with the whole paper before you start your answers.

Irrelevant quotations

In literary subjects, don't use irrelevant quotations you may have learned, as it only irritates the examiner.

Rough work

Include your rough work with your exam script – you might get some credit for formulae or calculations contained therein.

IN THE EXAM ROOM

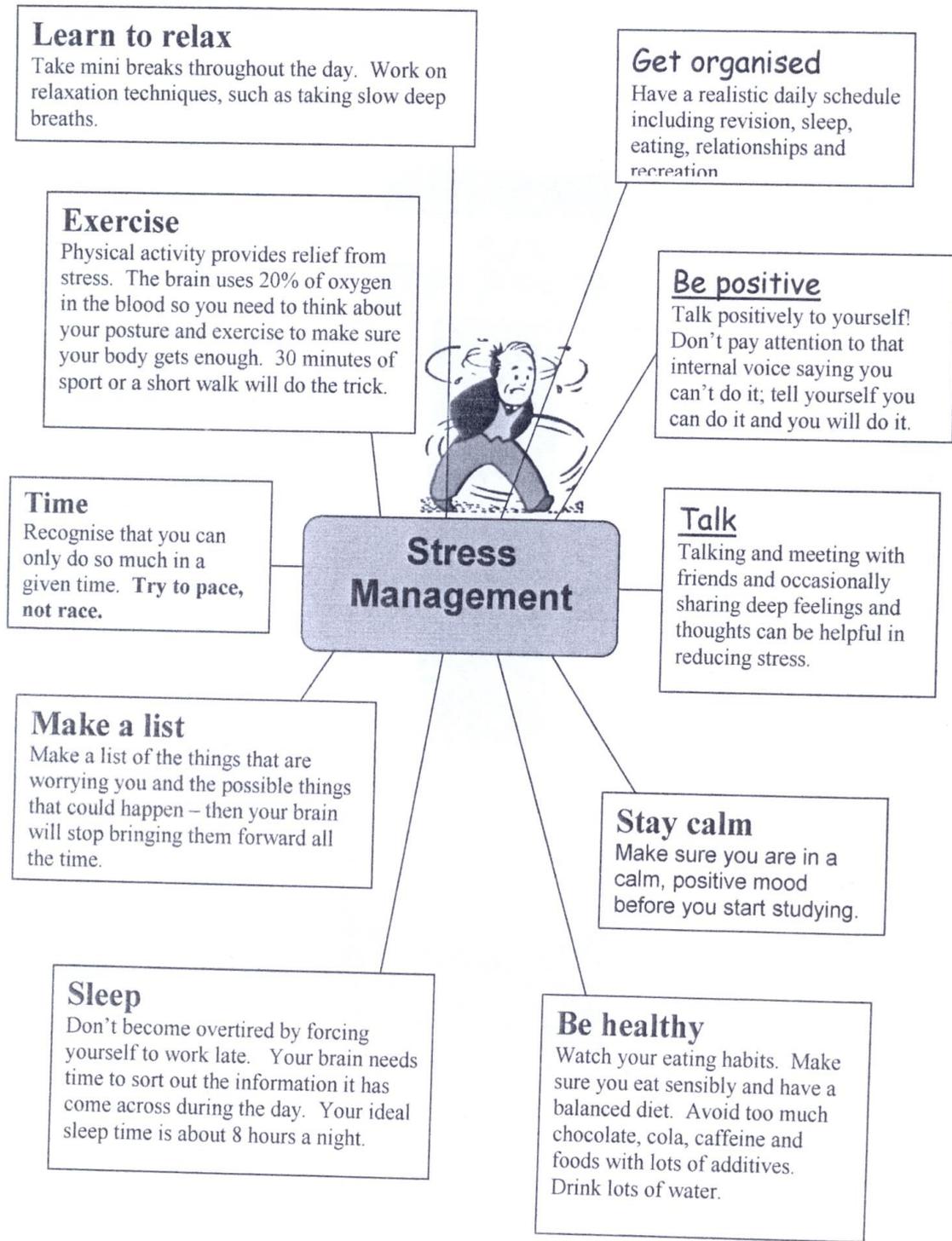
You'd probably be mad if you weren't a bit nervous – everybody will be.

Action checklist to calm your nerves!

- Do get out all the equipment that you will need for this exam and arrange it on your desk.
- Do take your watch off and check the time against the exam room clock; put it on your desk so that you can easily see it.
- Do fill in the relevant sections on the front of your exam script, including your centre number and candidate number in the boxes provided for them.
- Do read your exam paper. Make sure that you read the instructions – underline important points.
- Do read the exam paper twice over. Ten minutes now can save errors later on.
- Do underline important words, in the questions.
- Do work out how much time you have for each question.
- Do decide which question you can do best and do it first – this helps to boost your confidence.
- Do make sure that you have at least five minutes at the end of the exam to go over what you have done.
- Don't panic if your mind appears to go blank. Once you start answering questions your memory will start to work again – look at key words in the question, this will help.
- Don't waste time thinking and worrying about losing an odd mark in part of a question you don't know the answer to. Leave it. Come back to it later, if you have time.
- Don't forget to include all your workings – you could get plenty of marks for them.
- Don't let your handwriting let you down – if they can't read it, examiners can't give you marks.

KEYWORDS EXPLAINED

Compare:	Are the things very alike (similar) or are there important differences? Which do you think is best? Why?	Explain:	Make clear.
Contrast:	Look for differences.	Illustrate:	Give examples which make the point clear.
Criticise:	Use evidence to support your opinion on the value or merit of theories, facts or views of others.	Interpret:	Explain the meaning in your own words, for example you may be asked to interpret a graph.
Define:	Give the meaning.	Justify:	Give reasons to support an argument or action.
Describe:	Write in detail.	Outline:	Choose the most important aspects of a topic. Ignore the minor detail.
Differentiate:	Explain the difference.	Relate:	Show the connection between things.
Discuss:	Write about the important aspects of the topic, are there two sides to the question? Consider the arguments for and against.	State:	Write briefly the main points.
Distinguish:	Explain the difference.	Summarise:	Bring together the main points.
Evaluate:	Judge the importance or success.	Trace:	Show how something has developed from beginning to end.



OTHER BITS

Food for thought Healthy Body = Healthy Mind

Eating a variety of healthy foods doesn't just give your body a boost, it also benefits your brain cells. Skipping meals can also leave you hungry and unable to concentrate. So, eat regularly and sensibly.



Brain Fuel:

- Bread, pasta, cereals and potatoes are filling and packed with starchy carbohydrates, which release energy slowly, meaning you can keep going for longer.
- Fruit and vegetables give you essential vitamins and minerals. Aim for at least five portions a day.
- Food like pasties, chips and crisps are high in fat; try and avoid them.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Dehydrated brains don't think clearly.
- Meat, fish, pulses, milk and dairy foods are good sources of protein. Moderate amounts are essential for a healthy diet.
- Make sure you eat breakfast on the day of an exam.
- If you're not getting enough iron then you'll damage your ability to concentrate for long periods of time and your energy levels will begin to drop.

Exercise: Staying in your room can seem like the best option when revision time is short. But a bit of exercise can help you relax. If you can't get out, at least get up and out of your chair and stretch. Better still, go for a swim or a jog.

USEFUL WEBSITES (Check the school study site)

<http://www.portland-place.co.uk/upload/documents/%7B606f0d4e-c138-42f7-b9ac-0506fd176c6f%7D/Revision%20Web%20Sites.pdf>

<http://www.how-to-study.com/>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/websites/11_16/site/study_skills.shtml

<http://www.childline.org.uk/explore/schoolcollege/pages/beatexamstress.aspx>

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/sqa-my-study-plan/id419308081?mt=8>

<http://www.studyskills.soton.ac.uk/studytips/exams.htm>

WEEKLY REVISION PLAN

Name:	Form:	Week Beginning:
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	Time:	Time:	Time:	Time:
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				



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