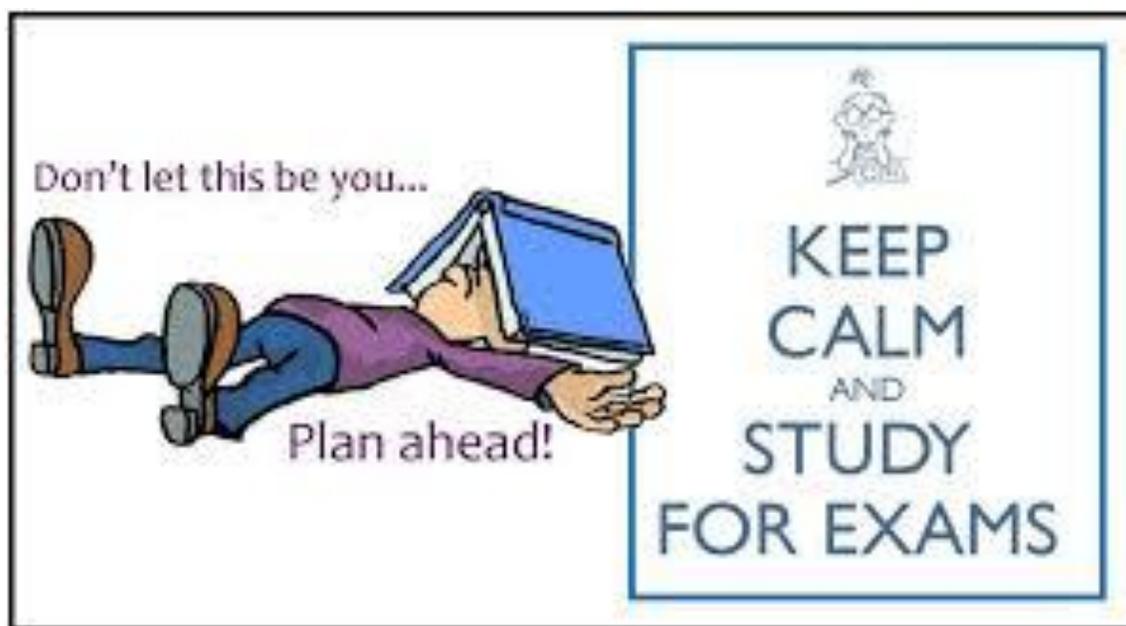


# GCSE STUDENT GUIDE

## REVISION TIPS FOR SUCCESS



**Todmorden**  
SPECIALIST VISUAL ARTS COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL



# 1. Do you want to revise?

## Excuses, Excuses

Let's start with all the reasons for not preparing for exams.....



Get the idea?!?! No-one can make you revise. We all make excuses when we don't want to do something. Your teachers and parents can tell you how important your exams are (and you already know this) but how much revision you do is totally and utterly...

## UP TO YOU !

## Let's be honest.

On a scale of 1 (not bothered) to 10 (strong desire) how much do you want the following

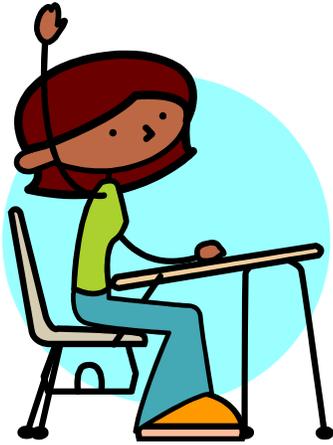
How much do you want....	Rating (out of 10)
1. Good exam results?	
2. The first choice of future courses?	
3. Rewards for achieving success?	
4. To do your best?	
5. A career you are happy with?	

Your desire to do well is going to influence your likelihood to revise. If you answered 8 or above to all of the questions then you are already well on the way to achieving success. Now try the statements below.

On a scale of 1 (very unlikely) to 10 (very likely) how likely is it that you will do the following things

I am likely to...	Rating (out of 10)
1. Go onto the computer to revise but end up on Facebook, Twitter etc.	
2. Start revising for exams before Easter	
3. Leave revision to the night before each exam	
4. Ask teachers for extra help when I need it	
5. "Revise" with friends but end up doing very little	
6. Draw up a revision plan	
7. Stick to a revision plan	
8. Make excuses for not revising	

If you answered 8 or above to questions 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9, then you are already well on track. If you answered 8 or above to any of the other questions then you have identified your weaknesses- now you've done this at least you can be prepared for them and try to set up plans to avoid falling into common traps. E.g. allow yourself time on Facebook as a reward for revising for 2 hours, only revise with one friend at a time who you know is going to help you focus, get someone to help you stick to a revision plan by signing it or showing it to them every week.



## 2. Starting revision

### How much should I do?

Sometimes it's really difficult to get out of bed in the morning. You press the snooze button a couple of times just to have a few more minutes, then eventually you get up because you know you have to. It's the same with revising, you can keep putting it off but eventually you'll have to do some because you want to do well. How much you do is entirely up to you. You will do some revision activities in lessons and there may be an opportunity to revise in organised after school sessions but you should also be revising at home. Ideally you should be looking to revise for a few hours every day from now until your GCSE exams. There are benefits in starting early...

1. It will **help to relieve any stress and panic** because you will feel more prepared as the exams get nearer.
2. You will have **plenty of time** to ask teachers for help if you are struggling with something or not sure what to revise
3. You will soon **realize if you have missed any work** and will have time to catch up on it.

What ever you do, delegate equal time to all subjects. Don't see one subject as being more important than any other.

Also, when you are creating a revision plan, make sure you plan in suitable breaks from work. Your brain needs time to relax and store the information you have learnt. Typical suggestions are a break every 40 minutes but I would suggest you find out what works for you. Sometimes you will feel great, other times it will be a real struggle, just see what works for you but ensure you do plan in breaks.

### What do I revise?

You know what options you have taken but you should also know the specification requirements for each subject. These can be found at the examiners websites and (usually) good revision guides use these as a starting point to make sure they include all the necessary information. The information on the following pages summarise the exam boards used by your subjects, has recommendations about suitable revision guides and where to purchase them, a list of exam board websites, and school based support. Remember to try before you buy any revision guide, even if they are sold in school, have a look at them in a book shop to see if it suits you.

**Speak to Faculty Leaders if you struggle to get copies of exam specifications.**

### 3. Let's get started!

The first thing you need to do is get organised and make a revision programme. If you follow the step-by-step guide below you will find this simple;

#### Overview map

**Step 1:** Get the A3 copy of your revision map (an A4 copy is on the next page) and your exam timetable. (The overall exam timetable is on the next few pages).

**Step 2;** Mark on the map all of your exams including whether they are a morning (9.00) or afternoon (1.30) start.

**Step 3;** Now mark on the map any weekends or evenings when you cannot do any revision e.g. are you away for a weekend, do you have extra curricular activities. If you have a part time job make sure you also write on any times you are working. **It may be necessary to reduce the working hours of your part-time jobs nearer to your exams.**

**Step 4;** Next write on the map any revision classes you regularly attend or could regularly attend.

**Now you have a personalised overview. You can add more details to this later as you start your weekly maps.**

#### Weekly maps

**Step 1;** Find your weekly revision maps for week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> March (at the end of this booklet) and transfer any evening revision classes/work commitments/etc. onto it.

**Step 2;** Look at your overview map and exam timetable. What is your first exam? (don't forget to include oral exams). What is your second exam? What is your third? Typically you will need to devote about 10 hours towards preparing for your exam. Use your overview map to work backwards from your exam and plan in 1 or 2 hour slots to accommodate about 10 hours revision. Write this on your overview map. You can add more hours if you feel you need it later.

**Step 3;** Transfer the information to your weekly map. Now you know how much revision you are going to start doing this week and when you are going to do it.

**Now you need to decide how you're going to revise!**



## 4. Revision Techniques

There are lots of techniques to use which will help you revise. A combination is often best as you are still finding out how your brain learns best. To store information you need to move it from short term to long term memory. Scientists have found that there are 4 main ways of doing this.

- Chunking- taking small bits and learning these a bit at a time before piecing it all together
- Repetition (speaks for itself really, speaks for itself really, speaks.... get the idea!?!)
- Finding patterns- linking together ideas so you can recall it more easily
- Linking to strong stimuli- using pictures, colour, stories, etc.

Use as many of these as possible to achieve maximum success.

### What are the techniques?

#### A. Concept maps

##### What to do;

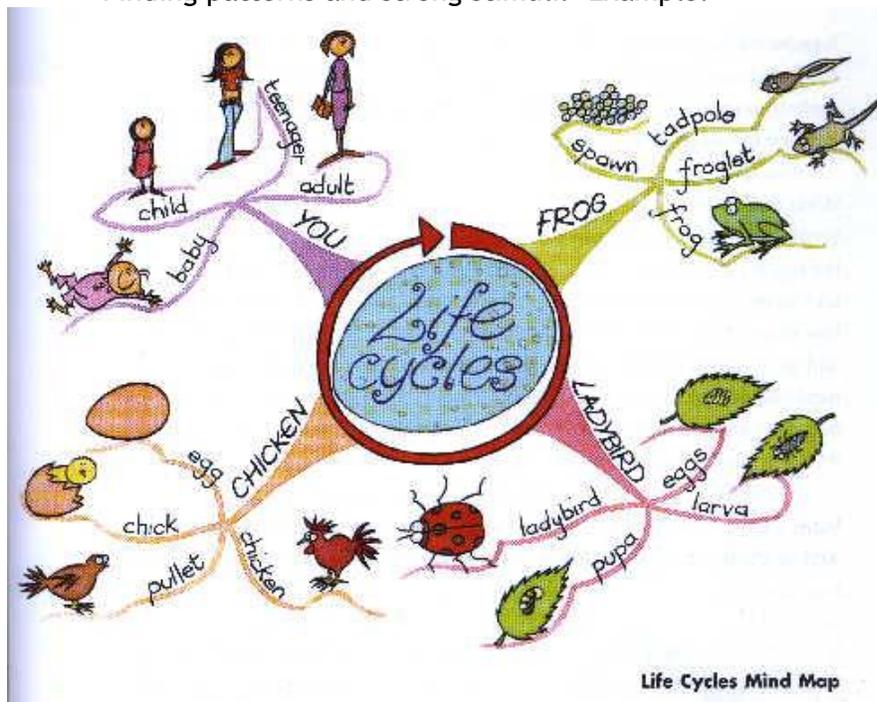
Write important keywords and link them together with a sentence to explain their relationship along an arrow.

##### When to use it;

When you need to summarise and review a topic.

##### Storage method used;

Finding patterns and strong stimuli. Example:



## B. Diagram annotation

### What to do;

Make a copy of a diagram that is important to your understanding and write on it as much information as you can.

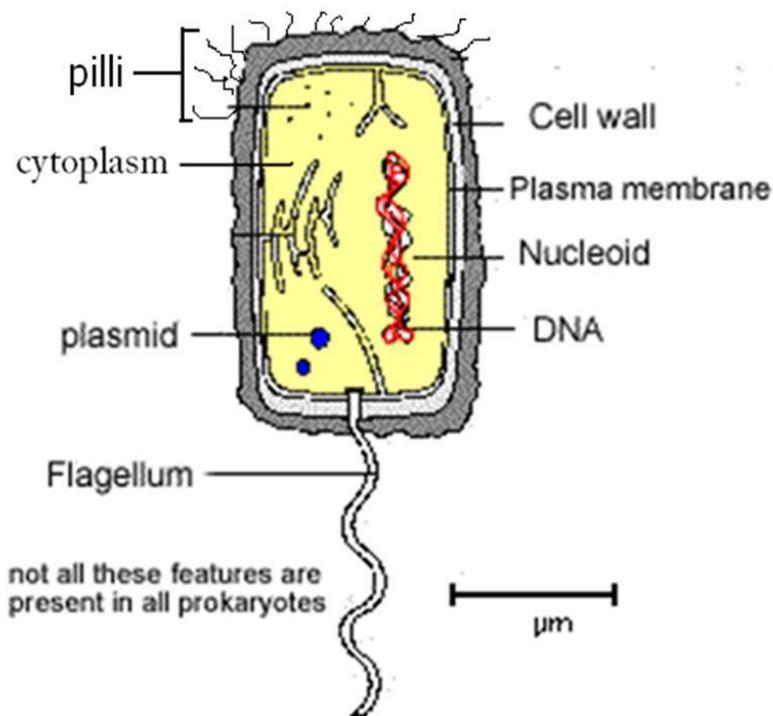
### When to use it;

When you need to learn an important diagram or information which could be applied to a diagram.

### Storage techniques used;

Strong stimuli, chunking

### Example:



### C. Cartoons/stories

#### What to do;

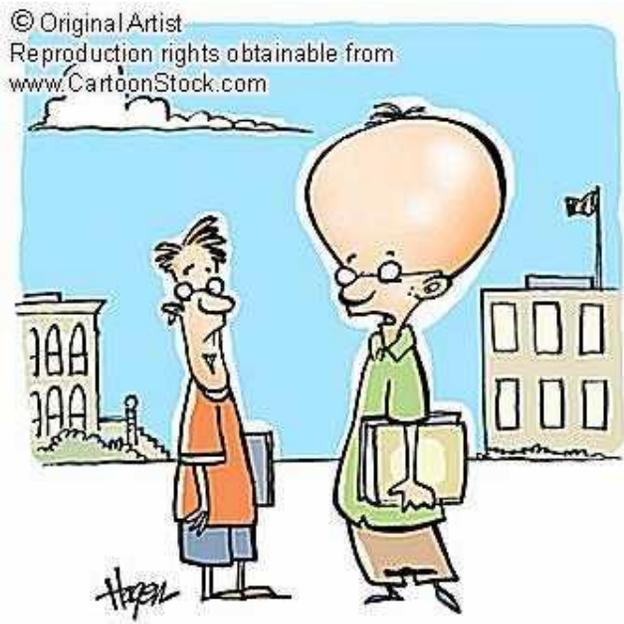
Make a cartoon character to show something you need to remember. Draw a sequence of frames in a cartoon strip to show a process or story.

#### When to use it;

If you need to summarise a process or story.

#### Storage technique used;

Strong stimuli, finding patterns.



I REALLY CRAMMED LAST NIGHT.

### D. Creative writing

#### What to do;

write a poem, rap or story to describe something you need to remember.

#### When to use it;

Whenever you need to remember things that are happening in sequence of key facts

#### Storage method used;

Strong stimuli, finding patterns



## E. Revision cards

### What to do;

Make yourself cards with questions on one side and the answer on the other or key facts that you need to make sure you remember. Try to have no more than 5 facts per page.

### When to use it;

Whenever you need to remember key facts

### Storage method used;

Chunking, repetition.

## F. Keyword lists

### What to do;

Write a list of keywords and write a definition for each of them. Then cover up the keyword and try to work out what it is from the definition.

### When to use it;

Whenever you come across words you are unfamiliar with

### Storage method used;

Chunking, repetition.

### *Example...*

<b>Word</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
green chemistry	Attempts by the chemical industry to become more environmentally friendly.
neutralisation	The reaction of an acid with an alkali to form a neutral solution (pH 7).
raw materials	Naturally occurring substances from which chemicals are made.
acid	A chemical that will neutralise a base. Acids produce hydrogen ions in water.

## G. Here's the answer, what's the question

### What to do;

Use keywords lists to write one word answers on one side of a piece of card. Try to think of a question to write on the other.

### When to use it;

For important subject specific keywords that you need to use in answers to questions, or for key characters traits or events that you need to remember.

### Storage method used;

Repetition, finding patterns

## H. Venn Diagrams/comparison circles

### What to do;

Draw 2 circles which overlap in the centre. Give each circle a topic area or theme and add keywords to each one, write any which overlap the key themes in the middle.

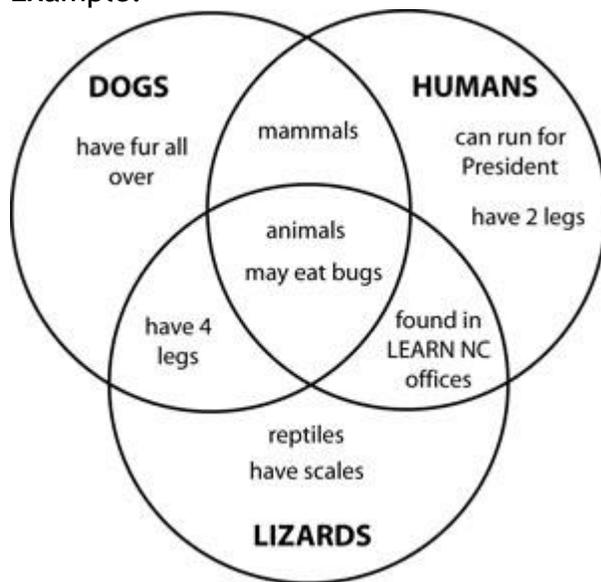
### When to use it;

Whenever you have two topics which have similarities but also have key differences.

### Storage method used;

Finding patterns.

Example:



## I. Practise exam technique

### What to do;

Download practise exam papers and the mark schemes from the relevant exam board website or get some from your teacher and do the questions!

### When to use it;

When you've done a little bit of revision and want to assess your progress.

### Storage method used;

Repetition.

## J. Formula summary

### What to do;

Write a list of any formula you need to learn and sketch a diagram to support what it says.

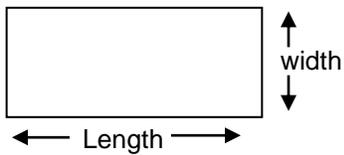
### When to use it;

Whenever you need to learn equations

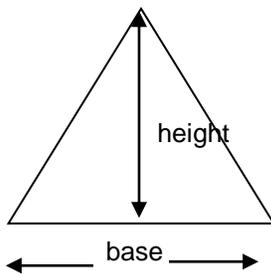
### Storage method used;

Repetition, strong stimuli, finding patterns

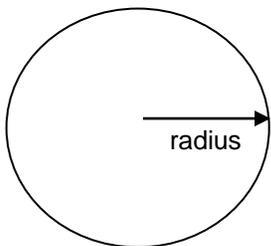
### Examples...



Area of a rectangle = length x width



Area of a triangle =  $\frac{1}{2}$  x base x height



Area of a circle =  $\pi$  x (radius)<sup>2</sup>

## 5. Incorporating techniques into your revision plan

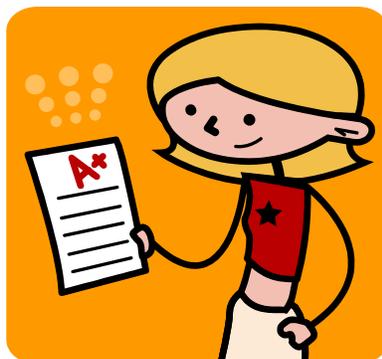
Now back to your weekly revision plan. Add exactly what you are going to do to revise for each of the timeslots allocated. Take a look at this example of a weekly revision plan

WEEK COMMENCING ...18<sup>th</sup> May.....

DAY	After school	At home	Techniques used	Completed?
MON	Maths revision class (3-4)	French oral (5.30-7.30)	Make cards with questions on one side and sentences to learn on the other. Ask mum to test me after coronation street.	
TUES		Maths (3-5) Dance (6-8)	Complete maths homework. Do "fractions" pages in workbook.	
WEDS	ICT (3-4.30)	French oral (5-6)	Practise using cards made on Monday.	
THURS		English (4-6) Maths (7-8)	Collect together notes. Draw a concept map of characters. Do "percentages and decimals" pages in workbook	
FRI	Science revision? Ask miss to go through this weeks work (3-4)	NIGHT OFF!!! (cinema?)		
SAT	Work (9-4)			
SUN	French oral (2-3) English (3-4) Science (4-5)		Test using revision cards. Concept map of storyline. Review weeks work using revision guide.	
<b>No of hours studied</b>	French - 4 hours Maths- 4 hours Extra homework- 3 hours.		Science- 2 hours English - 3 hours	ICT- 1 1/2 hours  Total = 17 1/2
<b>Comment</b>	Mum paid for cinema as I had stuck to my plan! Thanks mum x			

**Each week you will need to add different subjects to your overview map and plan your weekly revision sessions.**

**You need to keep on top of this to achieve success.**



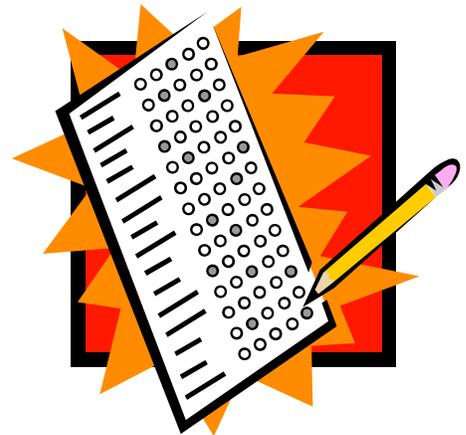
## 6. Exam technique

Finally the exams are here! If you've stuck to your plans you'll be feeling confident and maybe even excited. It's your chance to show exactly what you've been working so hard towards. Plus you'll soon be able to have a well earned rest.

However you can't let your technique let you down. In year 9 you had some top tips for each other.....remember??

### TOP TIPS FOR TEST TAKING

1. Mention all things in compare questions
2. Use graphs/diagrams to answer questions
3. Don't rush
4. Check spelling and punctuation
5. Underline keywords to help
6. Bring right equipment
7. Draw on graphs to give accurate results
8. Use keywords in your answers
9. Read questions more than once
10. Try to explain answers in detail (use PEE)



Now you're doing GCSEs, different subjects will have different styles of exam. If you want more specific advice then make sure you go to after school revision classes but basic good exam technique is;

1. Answer every question.
2. Read each question carefully (twice if you have to)
3. Circle the keywords which describe what you need to do to answer the question
4. Look at the number of marks available and make as many points.
5. In some exams you may be able to use bullet points for longer answers. Don't get hung up on writing good paragraphs unless it's your English exam!
6. If you need scrap paper, ask for it.
7. If it says "show your working" show it. If it says "give the unit" give it. Exams only say this when marks are available for it so don't lose out.
8. Stay calm. If you don't know the answer, leave it and do the rest but don't forget to come back to it later (see point 1)
9. If you need to cross out do it with a single line. Don't cross out unless you think of a better answer though.
10. Write clearly. If you can't read it the examiner won't be able to!

## 7. Performing in exams

You've revised, you've practiced exam technique, now you've got to perform!

Before your exam make sure you are;

**Feeling alert;** your brain works best when it's rested. A good nights sleep (at least 8 hours) before your exam will do your brain more good than last minute cramming. If morning revision classes are on then try to get to them- this gives your brain plenty of chance to warm up and the brisk walk to school early in a morning will get the oxygen pumping.



**Well fed and hydrated;** your brain needs to be functioning properly so make sure you are hydrated before the exam and don't forget to have a healthy breakfast or lunch. Ideally with slow release carbohydrates and protein (e.g. poached eggs on brown bread toast or a tuna sandwich/pasta).



**Comfortable;** We know uniforms can be uncomfortable but you are expected to wear this for every exam. In the summer it will be warm so be prepared to take your blazers off. Don't start exams off with aggravation from teachers for not having correct uniform- it won't help your stress levels in the slightest!

**Aware of the time;** Check what time your exam starts before you go to bed. Set your alarm to give you plenty of time so you are not rushing about in the morning. Another good idea is to have a back-up plan, get someone to make sure you are up and about by a certain time- this could be your mum/dad (ideally with a healthy breakfast if she feels like spoiling you!) or one of your friends texting you.

**Aware of your goal;** Remember, once the exam is done that's it. Have some time to relax and focus on the next one. Each exam is one step closer to achieving those great results on results day.

**Well equipped;** Have a few pens, pencils, pencil sharpeners, coloured pencils, scientific calculators, protractors, compass....etc. If you need to ask for equipment in exams it can hold you up from completing it in time. Get organised and you can relax.

## **DEFINITIONS.**

The following may be helpful to students in correctly analysing the examination questions.

**Compare:** Are the things very alike (similar) or are there important differences?

**Contrast:** Look for differences.

**Criticise:** Use evidence to support your opinion on the value or merit of theories, facts or views of others.

**Define:** Give the meaning.

**Describe:** Write in detail.

**Differentiate:** Explain the difference.

**Discuss:** Write about the important aspects of the topic, are there two sides to the question? Consider the arguments for and against.

**Distinguish:** Explain the difference.

**Evaluate:** Judge the importance or success.

**Illustrate:** Give examples which make the point clear.

**Interpret:** Explain the meaning in your own words, for example you may be asked to interpret a graph.

**Justify:** Give reasons to support an argument or an action.

**Outline:** Choose the most important aspects of a topic. Ignore the minor detail.

**Relate:** Show the connection between things.

**State:** Write briefly about the main point.

**Summarise:** Bring together the main points.

**Trace:** Show how something has developed from beginning to end.

**WEEK COMMENCING .....Monday .....**

<b>DAY</b>	<b>After school</b>	<b>At home</b>	<b>Techniques used</b>	<b>Signed</b>
<b>MON</b>				
<b>TUES</b>				
<b>WEDS</b>				
<b>THURS</b>				
<b>FRI</b>				
<b>SAT</b>				
<b>SUN</b>				
<b>TOTAL No of hours studied</b>				
<b>Comment</b>				

WEEK COMMENCING .....Monday .....

DAY	After school	At home	Techniques used	Signed
MON				
TUES				
WEDS				
THURS				
FRI				
SAT				
SUN				
TOTAL No of hours studied				
Comment				

WEEK COMMENCING .....Monday .....

DAY	After school	At home	Techniques used	Signed
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TUES				
WEDS				
THURS				
FRI				
SAT				
SUN				
TOTAL No of hours studied				
Comment				

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TUES				
WEDS				
THURS				
FRI				
SAT				
SUN				
TOTAL No of hours studied				
Comment				

WEEK COMMENCING .....Monday .....

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WEDS				
THURS				
FRI				
SAT				
SUN				
TOTAL No of hours studied				
Comment				

WEEK COMMENCING .....Monday .....

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TUES				
WEDS				
THURS				
FRI				
SAT				
SUN				
TOTAL No of hours studied				
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WEDS				
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SAT				
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TUES				
WEDS				
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SAT				
SUN				
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Comment				

WEEK COMMENCING .....Monday .....

DAY	After school	At home	Techniques used	Signed
MON				
TUES				
WEDS				
THURS				
FRI				
SAT				
SUN				
TOTAL No of hours studied				
Comment				

# Useful Websites

## General support for teenagers

- [www.projecteducation.co.uk/gcse](http://www.projecteducation.co.uk/gcse) offers links to GCSE chat forums.
- [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)
- [www.childline.org.uk/explore/Pages/Explore.aspx](http://www.childline.org.uk/explore/Pages/Explore.aspx)
- [www.youthaccess.org.uk/](http://www.youthaccess.org.uk/)

## General parent support

- [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk) confidential helpline for parents on 0808 800 2222
- [www.projecteducation.co.uk](http://www.projecteducation.co.uk)

## Exam boards

- [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk) the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)
- [www.edexcel.org.uk](http://www.edexcel.org.uk) Edexcel
- [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk) Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
- [www.wjec.co.uk](http://www.wjec.co.uk) the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC)

## Coursework and revision

(Please read notes on the use of essay banks in 'revision').

- [www.coursework.info](http://www.coursework.info)
- [www.sparknotes.com](http://www.sparknotes.com)
- [www.gcseguide.co.uk](http://www.gcseguide.co.uk) – Use the 'bookshop' option to see what revision guides are available in each subject area.
- [www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize)
- [www.gcse.com](http://www.gcse.com)