

MyTutor's Revision Handbook

Top study hacks, resource templates, exam techniques,
self-care tips and more



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Introduction

You've been hearing about it for months, and exam season is finally here! We know it can feel scary, especially when it's your first time sitting exams. But not to worry– we're here to support you every step of the way. First, we'll help get you organised with our top study hacks and resource templates. Then we'll zero in on sitting exams– giving you tips on answering questions, how to prepare the night before and what you can do in a moment of panic. And if you're still looking for ways to ace revision (and feel your best while you're at it), we've got loads of resources you can stash too.

Let's get started!

Chapter 1

Study hacks

These 6 study hacks will help you plan your study time, beat procrastination, memorise the info and get your notes in order. So whatever level of organisation you're at now, with a couple of these hacks you'll whip your revision into shape in no time.



Make a revision timetable

If you haven't already made a revision timetable, you can put one together now. Just follow these simple steps:

01 Use one planner.

The first thing you want to do is pick a planner– and stick to it. All things revision-related should go in the same place. Put the timetable somewhere visible like on a corkboard in front of your desk. Or if it's digital, set up notifications to help you remember what and when to revise.

02 Mark dates.

Jot down all deadlines for projects, tests and exams into your timetable. When you know what's coming up, it's a lot easier to plan out the rest of your revision schedule.

03 Prioritise.

When you're trying to work out what to do first, think about deadlines. Which projects are coming up? You should also consider how tough you find a subject. So, you might spend less time on English if it's easy for you, and more time on Biology if it's a trickier subject.

04 Chunking.

'Exams' can feel huge. But if you break down your revision for a subject into smaller chunks, it'll be much easier to tackle the work and to keep track of how you're doing. Break up your work by using a subject's topic specifications as a guide.

05 Time of day.

When you're scheduling study time into your timetable it's a good idea to know what time of the day you learn best. Are you a morning person or a night owl? Plan to do the more intense parts of your revising at the time of day when you're feeling most focused.

06 Be kind to yourself.

This means taking breaks, drinking water, eating healthy food, exercising and meeting up with friends. Have some go-to calming activities (like playing an upbeat playlist, or taking a bath), and use them when you feel exam stress coming on.

07 Check in.

Don't forget the timetable! Check in at least once a day to see what you planned. Set yourself reminders. And if your goals change a bit, be flexible and see how you can rework the timetable to still meet your deadlines.

08 Done and dusted.

Is there anything more satisfying than ticking off a job done? This is why breaking up your work into smaller chunks is a good idea. You can give yourself a big tick mark as you move through your timetable and feel good about it.

Use the Pomodoro technique

When it comes to revising—should you study for hours on end on just one subject? Or should you cover a few subjects on a Saturday afternoon? What's the best way to use your time? Pomodoro takes all that guesswork out. It's a way of time managing your revision, and it's recommended by [study experts](#). Pomodoro helps you break up your study time into doable chunks and gives you short breaks in between. Here's how it works:

- + **Step 1.** Choose a subject to revise in. For example, GCSE English.
- + **Step 2.** Set the Pomodoro timer (or pomodoro [app](#)) for 25 minutes.
- + **Step 3.** Revise the subject by choosing one study activity. For example, you can highlight key words in your notes or read texts from the English course list, or work with flashcards, or create a mind-map, or plan out how you'd answer an exam question from a past paper...
- + **Step 4.** End your work when the timer rings and take a short break (about 5 mins). Stretch, move, get a drink of water, have a snack. Try not to do anything that involves too much focus—really give your brain some down time.
- + **Step 5.** Repeat steps 2-4 for your second Pomodoro. Set aside at least an hour (so 2 Pomodoros) and stick to the same subject in that time. By revising the same subject, you can go deeper into the course specifications.



Tip: Do a different study activity in each Pomodoro round. So if you read 2 poems for your first Pomodoro round, for the second, create mind maps about the themes, characters and settings of those poems.



Make flashcards to test what you know

One of the best ways to learn a topic is by testing yourself. Flashcards help you find out what you know, and where you can spend a bit more time revising. For making your flashcards as useful as possible, here are six tips:

Mix pictures and words. Adding pics, diagrams and visuals in general can help you remember the info better.



Sort your cards into piles. Make 3 piles as you test yourself so that you know where you need to focus your revision. Sort them into:
a) topics you know well
b) topics that need a bit more attention, and
c) tricky topics

Use one idea on each flashcard. It's easy to overload your flashcards with information. That makes it harder to go deeper with your learning of a topic. Try breaking up topics into smaller chunks, and focus on one mini topic for each card.

Say your answers out loud when you study. When you're testing yourself, saying your answers out loud will help you remember them better because it's another way your brain takes in the information (by hearing).

Practice. Look away. Practice. Look away. It's important to take breaks between study time. Breaks help you feel fresh again. Plus your brain is still hard at work—yes, even when you're resting. It's busy making links between the topics you've just covered so that the info sticks better in your memory.



Draw mind maps to see the bigger picture

Mind maps are really useful when you want to see the bigger picture. Here are some benefits of using mind maps for revision—plus tips on how to make the most of them.

All on one page.

Mind maps make it easier for you to see how all the info in a topic connects. Start with a topic specification at the centre, and draw branches out to keywords. Fill in details from there.

Keywords.

Making a mind map helps you sort through what's important in your topic specifications. Tip: colour code your keywords to help jog your memory later.



Benefit of using mind maps

Make them eye-catching.

Use symbols, drawings and colours. All of this plus, the branching structure of mind maps make the topics stick better when you later test yourself.

Test yourself.

You can figure out how well you know a topic by only having the central topic specification filled out. It's up to you to remember keywords, subtopics and other details that branch out from there.

Use sticky notes to organise and remember

You might already use sticky notes to leave yourself reminders about things like homework deadlines. There are lots of ways you can use sticky notes to help you revise too.

Here are a few:

Create to-do lists.



Write out mini revision goals on stickies and leave them on your laptop screen or on the wall in front of your desk to remember. Tick off these mini goals as you get them done.

Get your notes organised.

Stickies are a great way to colour code sections of your notes (for example, into key themes).

Highlight what's important.



You can use the thinner sticky tabs to highlight key sections in your notes and textbooks.

Sum up long passages.

On your stickies, write short summaries of your notes.

Draw diagrams.

If you're looking over your notes and find inspiration for a pic or diagram that would help you remember better, use a sticky and make it happen.

Quiz yourself.



Cover up parts of your revision notes with post-its and write what you can remember on it.

Ace note taking with these 2 simple techniques

If your notes are scribbles that don't tell you much, it might be time to switch up your note-taking technique. Here, we include 2 examples that can help you keep all the important topics organised—and clear.

The Cornell technique

Title: _____ Subject: _____ Date: _____

Key words:

-Key questions: you might come up with these after the lesson

Class notes:

- Include info the teacher repeated a few times
- Use abbreviations and bullets
- Important dates, people, places
- Diagrams, formulas

Summary:

Sum up your notes in your own words. Do this after class to consolidate learning



What we love about this technique: The different sections help you work out what's important to add in. And the sum-up section is a great way to revise the day's lesson after class.

Amelia's technique

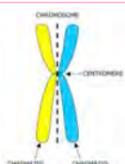
(our study hacks competition winner)

Subject: Biology Date: March 2022

Specification point:

5.1.1 Chromosome structure. Replication and division of nuclei cells.

Diagram:



Key Definitions:

Sister chromatids are the 2 identical halves of a single replicated eukaryotic chromosome.

PROCESS:

- Attachment between sister chromatids is tightest at the centromere (a part of DNA that's key for their separation in later stages of cell division)
- If the sister chromatids are joined at the centromere, they are still 1 chromosome. But as soon as they're pulled apart in cell division, each= a separate chromosome.



What we love about this technique: Like the Cornell technique, the different sections and box structure make it easier for you to organise the info from your lesson. The built-in diagram section is especially helpful for Science subjects.

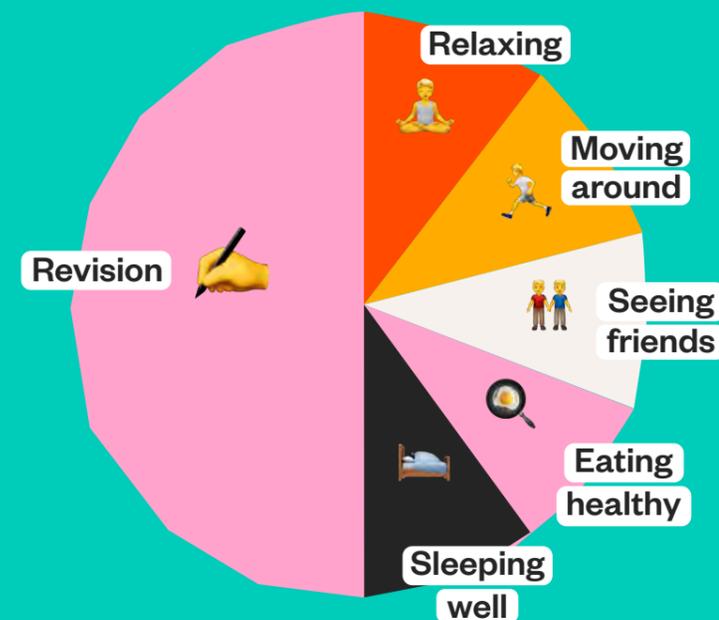
Chapter 2 Getting ready to sit exams

There's more to exam prep than memorising your topics. Below we've got tips that zero in on the exam paper itself. From answering questions, to ways you can keep calm if you start to panic in the exam hall— we'll take you through it all.

Finding the right balance

Revision is a bit like running a marathon—you don't want to run out of steam too quickly. It's important that you find the right balance between study and down time so that you don't burn out. That means making sure you're not just studying 24/7 (or doing no studying at all). There's a sweet spot in between. We've already looked at how a revision timetable and the Pomodoro technique can help you plan your study time better. Here we've got the ingredients that make up exam success.

Exam success is made up of...



4 ways switching off help with your revision

The next time your parent or guardian (or meddling sibling) asks why you're not revising, tell them about how switching off supports learning.

01 Breaks help boost memory. → 25-minute bursts of study (like with the Pomodoro technique), with 5-10 min breaks in between help you remember better. Your brain absorbs the info while you're on break.

02 Stepping back helps you find solutions. → If you're stuck on a tricky problem, looking away can help you find solutions. That's because your brain is still working out the problem, even when you're out on a walk.

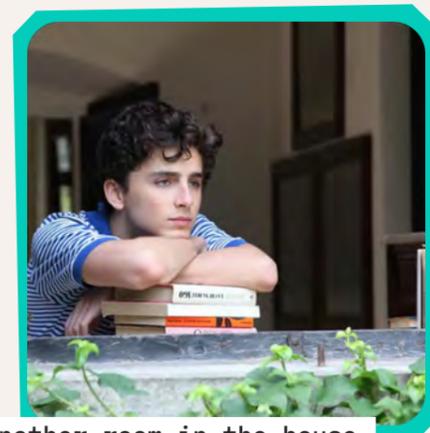
03 It brings stress down. → Revising can be intense. So that you don't burn out, make sure you're getting outside, eating healthy snacks, and seeing friends.

03 It's good for your body. → Sitting for hours can make your back and shoulders feel cramped. Use break time to stretch and move around.



6 places to study that aren't your bedroom

You might be thinking- "Why does it matter where I study?" Well, top education experts say where you study can affect how well you remember. It's a good idea to change where you revise since your brain gets used to certain things. If you're always studying in your bedroom, it could be harder to focus in a new place like in an exam hall. So studying in a new environment can actually help your brain get used to recalling info when you sit exams. Here are 6 places you can study (besides your bedroom):



Another room in the house



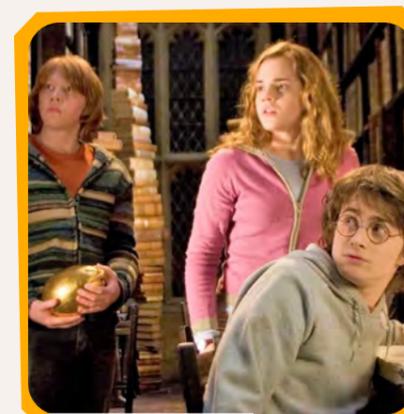
In school with a homework club



At the park (on a sunny day ☀️)



At a café



At a library



A friend's place

Answering exam questions

There's a skill to answering exam questions—and the good news is you can learn it here. Below, we'll go over some tips on how to read questions (yes-read) and then how to go about answering them. Let's dive in!

6 tips to help you ace exam questions

01 Read the question.

This might sound super obvious but a lot of students don't read exam questions carefully. Your eyes might skim over the question and miss what it's asking you to do.

02 Underline key words in the question.

To make sure you get what the question is asking you, underline key words. Exam question words might ask you to: describe, explain, analyse, compare, contrast, examine, discuss. We'll go over what these words mean on page 14.

03 Plan your answer and keep track of time.

You'd be surprised how quickly time can pass—even in a 2 hour exam. It's best you plan how long you'll spend on each question. Put aside a bit of extra time for trickier questions. With an essay, give yourself plenty of time to plan, write and review your draft.

04 Make sure you're backing your answer.

Almost every kind of exam paper question will ask you to back your answers. Even in Maths, showing your work is needed on some questions. So be ready to explain and give sources to show where you're coming from.

05 Come back to the question.

If you're stuck, skip the question and come back to it. And even if you've answered the question, come back to it again later. You might get inspired the second time around and see something you missed.

06 With multiple choice questions—get rid of wrong answers.

When it comes to multiple choice questions, read the question carefully and underline key words. Before looking at the options, guess the answer. Then, as you read through the different choices, get rid of the ones you definitely know are wrong. That way if you're guessing, the odds are more on your side.

Key words in exam questions (and what they actually mean!)

Whether you're answering a short question or an essay, you'll see a few of these words pop up. They mean different things, and we'll go through each of them below.

Question words		What they're asking you to do
Define	→	Tell us (explain!) what this means.
Describe	→	What is that? Give details about the topic so that we understand it better.
Illustrate	→	Explain with proof and details—this can be with diagrams and examples.
Compare and contrast	→	Show how the things in the question are alike and different.
Discuss	→	Go over a topic in detail. Explain the pros and cons—all sides of it.
Analyse	→	Break down the topic into parts. Then look at how those parts are connected. Think of the pros and cons of them, and use evidence to back up what you say.
Summarise	→	Give short and clear descriptions of the main points.

Exam checklist

Sitting an exam can feel overwhelming, especially when it's your first time. There are things you can do the night before so that you feel more relaxed on the day. Here's a handy checklist:

- Get your bag ready the night before.** It'll just give you one less thing to worry about on the day.
- Double check your schedule.** Look again to make sure you've got your exam timings right.
- Pack pens, pencils, rules, calculators**—whatever you need for your specific subject. Bring a few pens and pencils as back up.
- Wear a watch.** There might be a clock in the exam room, but just in case, you can wear a watch to keep track of your timing when you're planning out your answers.
- Lay out your clothes.** Have your clothes picked out—an outfit you'll feel comfy in.
- Water and snacks.** Take water with you to keep yourself hydrated during the exam. If snacks are allowed, pack a healthy one to fight off hunger pangs.
- Get a good night's sleep.** You've revised and the best thing you can do now is go to bed early. Sleep will help you feel fresh and ready to go.



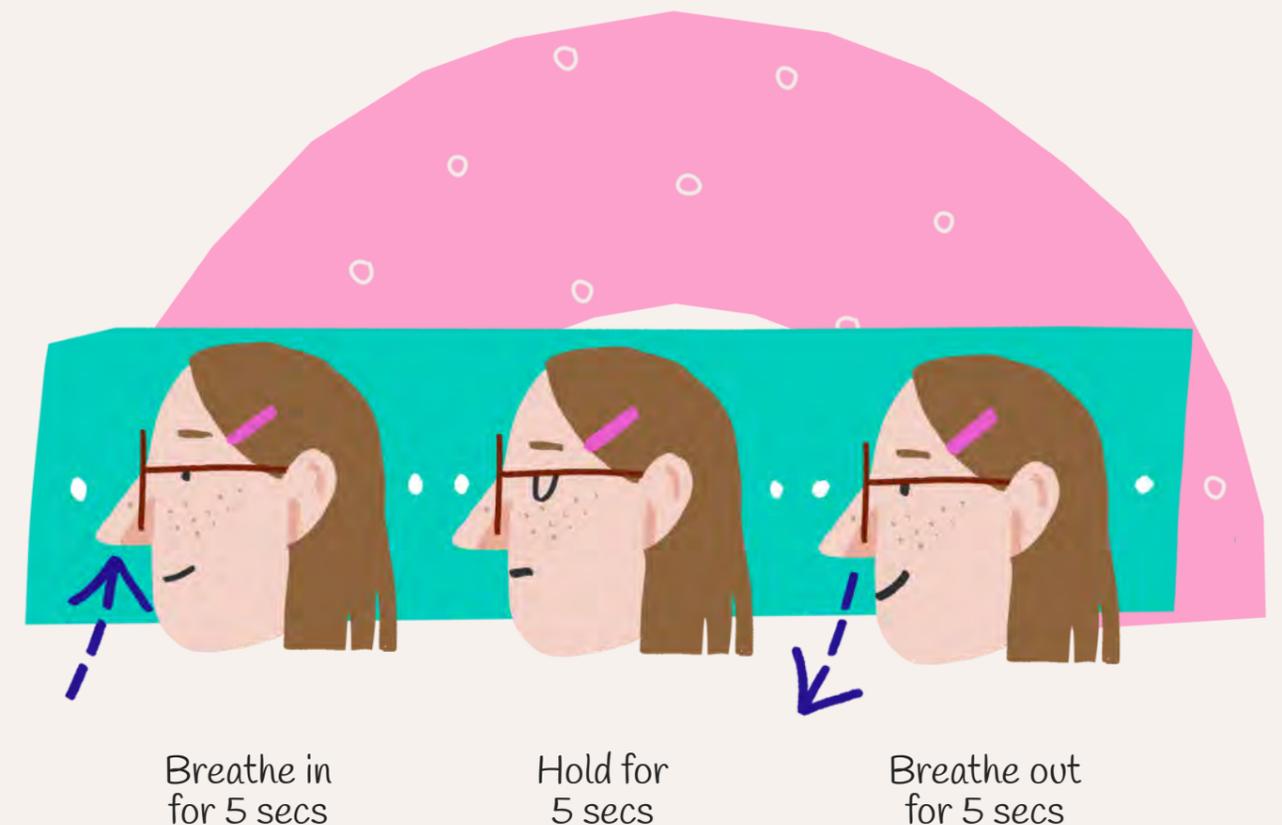
If panic strikes in the exam hall...

We know it can be overwhelming to sit exams. And you've been revising and hearing about them for ages—so it can feel like a big pressure moment. If your heart's racing and you can't focus on the questions in front of you—here's something that might help.

Take a moment to breathe. Education expert Prof Barbara Oakley says breathing is super powerful when you're feeling panicked. You're probably thinking— I breathe all the time! But this is a slow deep breathing technique that gets oxygen moving around while helping calm your mind. It's called boxed breathing and here's how it works:

Breathe in for 5 seconds. Hold for 5 seconds—and then breathe out for 5 seconds.

Try practising it while you revise so that it feels natural when you do it in the exam hall.



Chapter 3:

More resources

Where can you find more tips on revising and self-care?

With all that's going on in school, you might be looking for regular tips on revising and self-care advice. So to help you get through the stress of it all, here are 9 resources we've got that you can tap into.

1.) Study hacks and self-care tips on Instagram [@MyTutor](#)

Over on our Instagram, you'll find loads of study hacks and self-care tips. You can learn how to make a revision timetable and even download free resources like a study planner. Or when exam stress is at peak levels, have a look at some of our top tips on looking after yourself. And if you're stuck on a study question, just ask one of our expert tutors at our live 'Ask me anything' events. They'll help get you unstuck in no time.

2.) Free ebooks planning your future

Like this revision guide, we've got other ebooks to give you a hand. Thinking of life after school can be exciting– but also confusing. For a deep dive into careers, uni life and apprenticeships– you can download our free ebooks. We break down all the info you need into digestible chunks–whether it's university applications, tips on building up your CV or acing a job interview. With everything in one place, you can easily check back.

Here are two ebooks you can download now:

[The MyTutor Guide to University](#)

[The MyTutor Guide to Apprenticeships](#)

3.) Explainer videos and self-care tips on [@MyTutorUK](#) TikTok

TikTok isn't just for launching your music career. Over on our account, tutors break down tricky topics in GCSE and A-level subjects. They also share tips on how they revise and manage their study time since they're students themselves at top UK unis. And if you've ever wondered what it's like to study a subject like Psychology or English at uni– our tutors fill you in with a glimpse into their busy uni lives.

4.) 1-1 tutoring when you really feel stuck

Sometimes you just need someone to help you work out problems in a tricky subject. And we know it can feel intimidating sometimes to ask in class. [Our online](#) tutors are just a few years ahead in their education, so they know what you're going through. Since they sat their exams a

short while ago, they're experts at knowing what it takes to get better grades. In lessons, tutors go through any problems you've got in a subject. And they move at your speed so that you're getting the most out of your sessions.

5.) Free webinars to help you plan your future

Our [student webinars](#) cover loads of topics to help you plan your future. In our careers festival, young professionals talked about what it's like to do an apprenticeship. In another webinar we had about university, uni students went over how they got into their degree programmes.

If you don't want to look too far into the future since there's enough going on as it is!– you can join a study skills webinar. An expert tutor gives their top tips on how to make the most of revision before exams kick off.

And if you can't make it to the live webinars, you can watch them all back on our [YouTube channel](#).

6.) Get creative with short courses at Fire Tech

If you're into gaming, tech or design, we've got lots of fun courses for you to get stuck into. You can learn a new skill or build on one you've already got. The courses cover game design, coding, AI and lots more. If you've ever dreamed of being the next Grand Theft Auto designer, our courses can steer you in the right direction.

7.) Group courses to make the most of revision

In small groups of up to 6 students, you can brush up on any subject you find tricky. You'll be led by a tutor who knows their stuff and can answer questions when you're stuck. Plus, you'll feel relaxed knowing you've got your study time covered. So you can go to the cinema, see friends and just relax after. Learning in a group is fun (especially if you love games), and other teens will be there to cheer you on.

8.) Student blog

Here on our [student blog](#), you can read about how to make the most of your study time. There are also lots of self-care tips too because we know it's hard to be a teen and juggle school and other life stuff. Learn 7 ways to remember, or watch a video of [puppies napping](#) to unwind from exam stress.

9.) 10,000 + study notes to help you get unstuck

Last but not least, if you're stuck on a study question, you can look through our study notes on our MyTutor website. We've got over 10 000 study notes–with the trickiest GCSE and A-level topics answered for you.

And there you have it– 9 resources to help you study. And when you feel like you've got revision covered, don't forget to relax.

My weekly planner

Monday	Tuesday	Goals
Wednesday	Thursday	
Friday	Notes	

Every day is a fresh start.

Goal:

When I'll start: _____

Deadline: _____



Why it's important to me:



How it'll help me grow:

Steps to get me there:

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Notes

Reflections

How it went and what I learned for next time:



Good luck!

Remember, you should feel proud of yourself just for doing your best.