



GCSE Tips for Success and How Parents can Help

HOW CAN PARENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Parental support is 8 times more important in determining a child's academic success than social class. The Campaign for Learning found that parental involvement in a child's education can mean the difference between an A* and below a D grade at GCSE.

The good news is that you don't need to be an expert in any of the subjects your child chooses to make a real difference. You also don't need to give up your life and other responsibilities – you just need to know how best to spend the time you do have.

One of the hardest demands on students is that of understanding the long-term importance of doing the best they can, and learning to shelve short-term fun at times in the interest of long-term benefits (not easy even for adults).

Children will also differ in their levels of maturity, their ability to take responsibility for their learning, organisational skills and levels of motivation.

This is where parents come in. Your support, encouragement and interest can make a spectacular difference to your child's motivation and ability to cope with the academic and organisational demands of the exam period.



KEEPING THE MOTIVATION UP

FOR STUDENTS

- ✓ Don't stop going to, or working in, lessons you find hard or dislike – talk to someone about any difficulties you are having – there is always a solution
- ✓ Revise your revision schedule if necessary and stick to it – even when you don't feel like it. Don't wait until you are in the mood – the further behind you get the less you will be in the mood (agree the schedule with your parents for a hassle-free life)
- ✓ Resist the temptation to bury your head in the sand if things are getting out of hand – talk to your parents/tutor/teachers/Head of House
- ✓ Ignore what friends and others are doing or saying – you are working for an easy life for **YOU** now and later – let your friends have the hassle of redoing coursework or even the full GCSE

FOR PARENTS

- ✓ Agree the balance between work and social life and stick to the agreement. Again, flexibility is the key – if a special night comes up, agree that they can make up the work at a specified time
- ✓ All students fall behind, feel demotivated or overwhelmed, or struggle with the balance of social, work and school demands at times. When your child feels like this, berating and threatening them will have a negative effect. Talk to them about the issues, acknowledge their feelings and adopt a sensible attitude in wanting to find a solution
- ✓ Be flexible – use the 80/20 rule. If your child is sticking to what they are supposed to be doing 80% of the time, they will be doing alright
- ✓ If your child asks for your support, encourage them by helping them to see the difficulties in perspective. Teenagers often take an all or nothing 'catastrophic' approach to difficulties – "I've messed up this essay, I might as well give up."



GETTING READY FOR REVISION

FOR STUDENTS –

- ✓ Start revision early. The sooner you start the less you will have to do each day and the less stressed out you will be
- ✓ The most important thing is to make a realistic revision timetable that you will stick to
- ✓ Get one good revision book or aid for every subject. They do much of the initial work for you by breaking the subject down into 'do-able' chunks

DOING THE REVISION

- ✓ Go to all lessons and make them work for you – especially the ones you don't like or find hard
- ✓ When your teachers tell you about exam technique – try them all out to see which one will work for you best (it might even be the one you thought wouldn't work). The key thing is to reduce the notes you work from to a single A4 by the night before the exam
- ✓ Match the revision notes you make to the sort of questions you will be asked. Get hold of old papers (ask teachers which websites to look at – they are also in your planner)
- ✓ Have a clear goal for each revision period. For example – 'at the end of these 2 hours I will be able to label a diagram of the heart and answer a question on how the heart works.' ✓
Have a start and finish time – and stick to it!
- ✓ Get into the routine of following your revision plan – if you really don't feel like it, tell yourself you will do 15 minutes and then decide whether to carry on. At least you will have done fifteen minutes. Set your aim for the session and get right on with it – ignore the impulse to suddenly tidy your room for the first time in 3 years!
- ✓ STOP and take a break if you are becoming frustrated, angry or overwhelmed. Put aside the problem
- ✓ Don't waste time struggling – note down anything you are finding hard and take it to your next lesson or if on study leave, phone friends or your teachers
- ✓ DO NOT BE INFLUENCED BY FRIENDS WHO TALK ABOUT HOW LITTLE WORK THEY ARE DOING
Get your head down – your results don't matter to your friends – but they are crucial to your future.
Tell yourself it's not for long and think about that long summer holiday
- ✓ Make yourself start however much you don't want to – the hardest bit is over with then.



KEY TASKS ON THE DAY BEFORE THE EXAM

FOR STUDENTS

- ✓ Make sure you know your timetable
- ✓ Get there early – only fools leave it too late and rush – catch the much earlier bus
- ✓ Allow time for your brain to wake up – have a shower, eat breakfast – take a banana with you
- ✓ Do a final check of the subjects you will be doing that day – know the structure and how many sections there are
- ✓ Make sure you have EVERYTHING you need and take spares – do not get into the stress of asking teachers for things you should have brought
- ✓ Take a pen you enjoy writing with – take 2 just in case

During the exam –

- ✓ Don't forget that it is natural to be nervous. It actually gives your brain the extra adrenalin it needs to make the final effort
- ✓ If your mind goes blank, don't worry. Look at the question again, write down some notes – it'll get your brain ticking over again
- ✓ Don't start writing until you know what the instructions are and you are ready to write sense
- ✓ Make and keep to a time scale for each question depending on the number of marks (you will have done this in revision classes – stick to it). If you only have 3 minutes left for a question, write the answer in note form – the examiner will give you marks for it
- ✓ Allow a little bit of time at the end to check through your work to see if any changes need making. Examiners have said that this can make the difference between a higher and lower grade

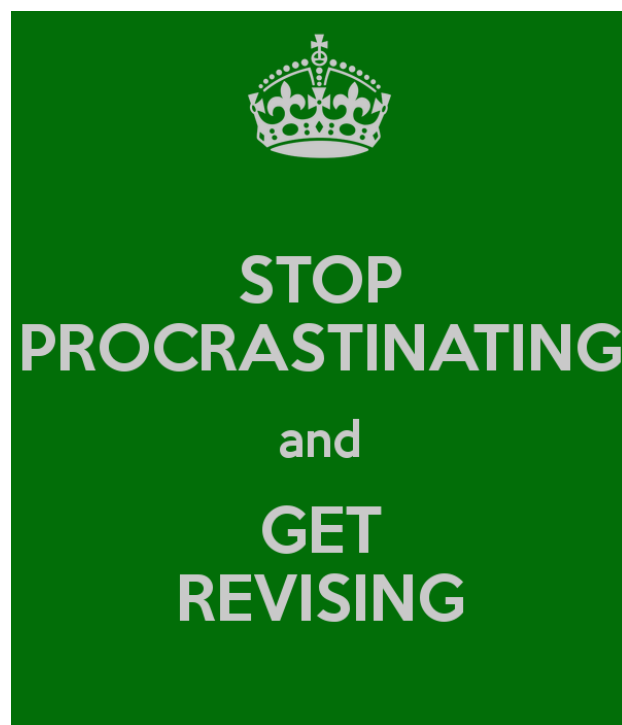
ON THE EVE OF THE EXAM FOR PARENTS –

- ✓ Try to avoid adding to the stress levels by 'rising to the bait' when your child pushes the boundaries. Shelve the battles that don't need winning just yet
- ✓ Help prepare your child for the exam – talk with them about when it starts, how long it lasts for, what are the main topics that might come up. Don't 'over egg' this – they may have worked all day and have come down stairs to relax

DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE LEFT IT TOO LATE TO REVISE?

One of the biggest mistakes that students make is not allowing enough time for revision. This usually results in demotivation and the attitude that there is no point in doing anything as the task is too big

- ✓ **IT IS NEVER TOO LATE UNTIL YOU ENTER THE EXAM ROOM** – with revision a little knowledge is better than none at all and could make the difference between a pass and fail.



Useful Websites

General support for teenagers:

www.projecteducation.co.uk/gcse

www.bbc.co.uk

www.childline.org.uk/explore/Pages/Explore.aspx

General parent Support:

www.parentlineplus.org.uk confidential helpline for parents 08088002222

www.projecteducation.co.uk

Exam Boards:

www.aqa.org.uk

www.edexcel.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

www.wjec.co.uk

Revision:

www.sparknotes.com

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

www.gcse.com