



**The Trafalgar
School** AT DOWNTON



EXAMS

HANDBOOK

FOR STUDENTS PARENTS & CARERS

Should you or your parents/carers have any queries or need help or advice at any time before, during or after the examinations please contact:

**Exams Officer:
Jenna Young**

**Telephone:
01725 550300**

**Email:
exams@trafalgar.wilts.sch.uk**



**Jenna Young
Exams & Data Manager**

INTRODUCTION

It is the aim of The Trafalgar School at Downton to make the examination experience as positive and successful as possible for all pupils. Hopefully this booklet will prove informative and helpful for you and your parents. Please read it carefully and show it to your parents so that they are also aware of the examination regulations and the procedures to follow in the event of any problems occurring.

The awarding bodies (or examination boards) set down strict criteria which must be followed for the conduct of examinations and The Trafalgar School at Downton is required to follow them precisely. You should, therefore, pay particular attention to the regulations that are printed in this booklet.

Some of the questions you may have are answered in this booklet. If there is anything you do not understand, or any question that has not been addressed, please ask!



GET REVISING!

Students often say they “don’t know how to revise”. An important first step is to get organised by making a plan. This should be a timetable setting out when you will revise, what you will revise and for how long.

The most effective, and ultimately successful, students revise frequently. This means not leaving revision until the last minute, but revising most days over a prolonged period of time. Under these conditions you are most likely to retain the knowledge and skills required in your exams.

Students often claim that they revise best in front of the television or when listening to music but in reality most people need a quiet place where they are able to concentrate free from distraction. If you plan to revise it is probably best that you leave your mobile phone in another room.

‘if you don’t revise effectively you have less of a chance!’



STAY IN CONTROL REVISION PLANNING

WHICH SUBJECTS WILL NEED MORE ATTENTION?

Identify how much time you have available until the exam. Allocate a set number of hours of revision to each subject. You may decide to give 20 hours to Maths but only 15 to English depending on your results in your PPEs. Are there any dates where it will be impossible for you to complete any revision? Make a structured revision timetable and cross out these dates.

We know you need to have a social life as well. Work out at which times you are likely to be ineffective e.g. Friday evenings but be sure to compensate for this perhaps by doing extra on Sunday mornings.



MANAGING YOUR TIME

Be in control of your revision by managing it sensibly and not leaving it until the night before. Control will enable you to remain calm and reduce your stress levels.

PRIORITISE

Make revision a priority. Work with your teacher to understand where you need to focus your energy. Where are your strengths and weaknesses? Do not revise what you already know.

GOAL SETTING

Set manageable goals – decide what it is you hope to achieve on any given day e.g. *"today I am going to get to grips with percentages."*

Revise in 20 minute stints. If the topic you are revising is particularly complicated it is often wise to take a break. Many people learn in short bursts so remove yourself from your revision and go and do something less stressful like making a drink or snack. Return to your revision with a clear head.

Work with friends or in small groups. Working with others can help reduce stress levels and increase your effectiveness. Quizzing each other is fab!

THE SKILLS OF LEARNING

A useful starting point for those who struggle to know how to revise is to use this guide. This has been written by the teachers for students.

CONDENSE

You are more likely to retain information if you condense information into note form. Flashcards can be really useful for this purpose and are really handy the night before or on the day of the exam.

MIND MAPS

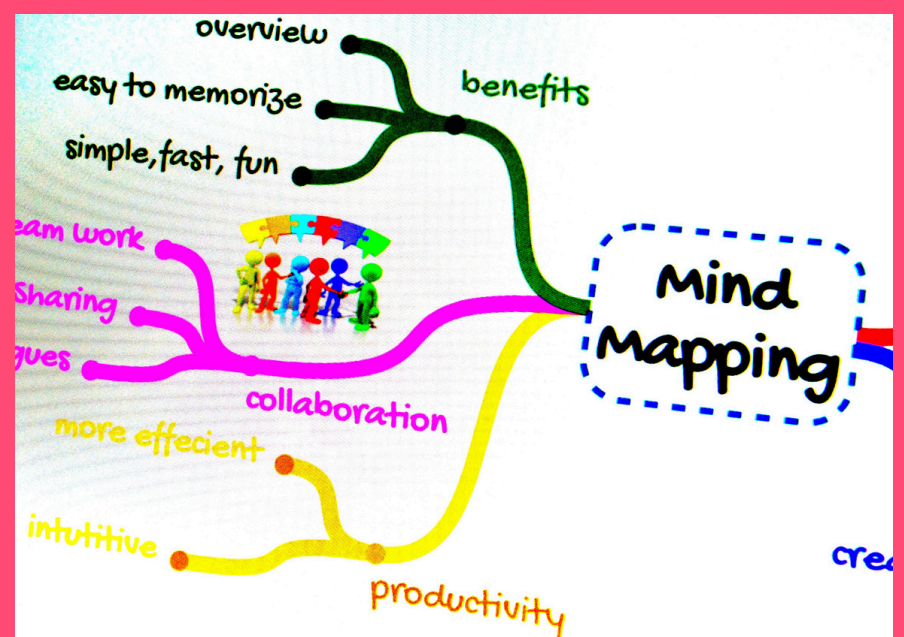
Mind maps are an excellent visual tool for condensing complex topics into revision notes. Your Knowledge Organisers hold all the key information you need to remember. Remember LOOK, COVER, WRITE, CHECK.

REVISION GUIDES

We advise you to purchase revision guides and/or revision workbooks for every GCSE subject. Practising questions with books closed is a good means of testing yourself. Ask your teachers which are best.

PAST PAPERS

Teachers will also provide you with past papers or skills checks. Completion of past paper exam questions is an excellent form of revision; students become more confident and familiar with the structure of the exam while revising their knowledge and skills.



THE INTERNET

USE IT

Many students enjoy using IT to revise. Students can access a wide range of websites. Click on the buttons to go straight to the websites if you are reading this electronically.



SPARX MATHS

Quizlet

S-cool

the revision website

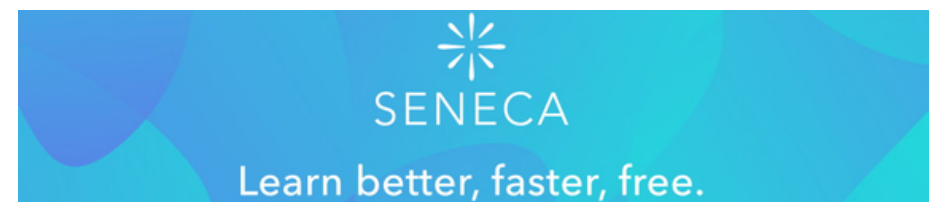


Mr Salles teaches English



GetRevising

learn together



THE SKILLS OF LEARNING

MEMORY TESTS

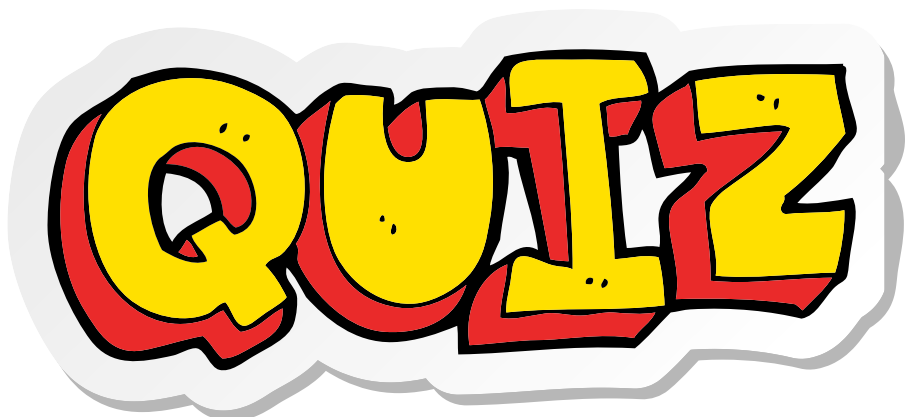
Give yourself quick memory tests. Using mnemonics will help you recall key words, terms or ideas e.g. SMART targets should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-related.

READING GUIDES

Use a reading guide when reading information e.g. a pencil or a ruler. This will keep your eyes from wandering and therefore help you maintain focus and concentration.

QUIZZING

Adopt active techniques – remember that copying is passive, note taking is active and discussing, asking and answering questions is interactive. Active and interactive revision will produce better results.



LEARN TO SKIM AND SCAN

Skim reading can be useful when trying to identify keywords or ideas. Create headings, labels, graphs and symbols. Highlighter pens are also a worthy investment. Also, try using bullet points to summarise what you have just read. Read your summaries back to a friend or family member.

BRING YOUR NOTES TO LIFE

Try different techniques when note taking. Again the use of colour can be effective, but also use annotations, make timelines, diagrams and drawings. Use whatever might be appropriate to bring your revision to life.

CHECKLISTS

Make checklists to ensure that you have covered everything that you need to revise. **REMEMBER TO TEST YOURSELF** to see what information you have retained and what you need to re-visit.

EXAM BOARD SPECIFICATIONS

Use them as a checklist. They are all available [here](https://www.trafalgarschool.com/gcse-exams)
<https://www.trafalgarschool.com/gcse-exams>

DEALING WITH EXAM PRESSURES

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS, CARERS & YOU

Tests and exams can be a challenging part of school life for both children and parents/carers. But there are ways to ease the pressure.

WATCH OUT FOR EXAM STRESS

Children who experience stress may be irritable, not sleep well, lose interest in food, worry a lot, and appear depressed or negative. Headaches and stomach pains can also be stress-related.

Having someone to talk to about their work and revision can help. Support from a parent, tutor or study buddy can help children share their worries and keep things in perspective. If you feel your child is not coping, talk to their teachers at school.

MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD EATS WELL

A balanced diet is vital for your child's health, and can help them to feel well during exam periods. Some parents find that too many high-fat, high-sugar and high-caffeine foods and drinks (such as cola, sweets, chocolate, burgers and chips) make their children hyperactive, irritable and moody.

Don't forget to feed your child on the day of the exam. Exam pressure can lead to a lack of appetite but concentration can be affected by simply missing a meal.

HELP YOUR CHILD GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Good sleep will improve thinking and concentration. Most teenagers need between 8 and 10 hours' sleep a night. Allow half an hour or so for children to wind down between studying, watching TV or using a computer and going to bed to help them get a good night's sleep.

Cramming all night before an exam is usually a bad idea. Sleep will benefit your child far more than a few hours of panicky last-minute study.

BE FLEXIBLE DURING EXAMS

When your child is revising all day, do not worry about household jobs that are left undone or untidy bedrooms. Staying calm yourself can help. Remember, exams do not last forever.

HELP THEM TO STUDY

Help your child revise by making sure they have somewhere comfortable to study. Help them draw up a revision schedule or ask the school for one.

TALK ABOUT EXAM NERVES

Remind your child that feeling anxious is normal. Nervousness is a natural reaction to exams. The key is to put these nerves to positive use. Being reminded of what they do know and the time they have put into study can help them feel confident.

ENCOURAGE EXERCISE DURING EXAMS

Make sure your children are active. Exercise can help boost energy levels, clear the mind and relieve stress. Walking, cycling, swimming, football and dancing are all effective.

DON'T ADD TO THE PRESSURE

Support group ChildLine says that many of the children who contact them feel that the greatest pressure at exam time comes from their family. *"Keep things in perspective,"* says Rosanne Pearce, a senior supervisor. *"Listen to them, give support and avoid criticism."*

Before they go in for a test or exam, be reassuring and positive. Make sure they know that failing isn't the end of the world and that if things don't go well they may be able to take the exam again.

After each exam encourage your child to talk it through with you. Then move on and focus on the next test, rather than dwelling on things that cannot be changed.

MAKE TIME FOR TREATS

When the exams are over, help your child celebrate by organising an end-of-exams treat. Do not use rewards as bribes. Instead, encourage your child to work for their own satisfaction, offering small, frequent treats.

Acknowledgments – NHS - Coping with exam stress

"Keep things in perspective"



**If you have any concerns contact
Student Services**

Tel: 01725 550300

email:

studentservices@trafalgarsch.wilts.sch.uk

BEFORE THE EXAM

CANDIDATE NUMBER

Each candidate has a four-digit candidate number. This is the number you will need to enter on every examination paper you write. **DO NOT FORGET!**

TIMETABLES

You will receive an individual timetable showing examinations that you have been entered for with details of date, time, room, candidate number and duration of the examination. Please check it carefully. If you think something is wrong see the Exams Officer immediately. It is sometimes necessary to change the venue for an examination. Please check the seating plan on the notice board outside the main school hall on the day of the examination for confirmation. Sometimes candidates have an exam clash where two examinations are timetabled at the same time. The school will make special timetable arrangements for these candidates only.

If you think there is a clash on your timetable please see Mrs Young immediately.

CONTINGENCY DAY

For the Summer examination series “contingency” days have been arranged by the examination awarding bodies which all students need to be aware of. These days for GCSE examinations have been put in place *“in the event of widespread, sustained national or local disruption to examinations during the Summer examination series.”*

The decision comes following the tragic events of past summers, namely the Manchester attacks and the Grenfell Tower fire. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) have decided that they need the option to postpone an exam (or examinations) in the event of an incident and rearrange them for a later date to allow all students a fair and equal chance.

The dates will be issued as soon as the JCQ have confirmed them. This means that all candidates must be available to sit examinations from the date of their first examination until the last contingency date.



EQUIPMENT

It is most important that you are responsible for providing your own equipment for examinations. Please place all equipment in a clear pencil case.

You must not attempt to borrow equipment from another candidate during the examination.

ALL EXAMS

You should bring in a see through pencil case

- 2 x Pens (black biro pens only) - no gel pens
- 2 x HB Pencils
- 30cm Ruler (marked with cm and mm)
- Pencil Sharpener
- Rubber
- Highlighter Pen

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

All of above plus:

- Scientific Calculator – Lid must be removed and placed on the floor
- Compass
- Protractor

UNDERSTANDING THE QUESTIONS EXAM COMMAND WORDS

Question keywords are also called 'command' words. These are the words in your examination questions that tell you what the examiner wants you to do. By understanding these command words you are on your way to understanding your examination questions.

For example, you may be instructed in the question to **'describe'** something within your answer. If your answer **'evaluates'** rather than **'sets out the characteristics'**, you potentially haven't given the right answer.

The table over the page can be used as a guide.



EXAM COMMAND WORDS

Analyse

Separate information into components and identify their characteristics

Comment

Present an informed opinion

Deduce

Draw conclusions from information provided

Explain

Set out purposes or reasons

Summarise

Present principal points without detail

Argue

Present a reasoned case

Estimate

Assign an approximate value

Compare

Identify similarities

Assess

Make an informed judgement

Define

Specify meaning

Examine

Investigate closely

Illustrate

Present clarifying examples

State

Express in clear terms

Debate

Present different perspectives on an issue

Calculate

Work out the value of something

Contrast

Identify differences

Develop

Take forward or build upon given information

Consider

Review and respond to given information

Describe

Set out characteristics

Explore

Investigate without preconceptions about the outcome

Interpret

Translate information into recognisable form

Relate

Demonstrate connections between items

Give

Produce an answer from recall

Suggest

Present a possible case

Apply

Put into effect in a recognised way

Identify

Name or otherwise characterise

Criticise

Assess worth against explicit expectations

Discuss

Present key points

Evaluate

Judge from available evidence

Outline

Set out main characteristics

Review

Survey information

Justify

Support a case with evidence

Prove

Demonstrate validity on the basis of evidence

Complete

Finish a task by adding to given information

ABSENCE DURING EXAMINATIONS

Exam seasons are very important times in your life. The examinations that you will be taking this year will influence what you do in the future so it is very important that they run as smoothly as possible.

There are a number of rules and regulations for examinations that you must be aware of. These rules are set by the examination boards, not by the School.



**If you are going to be late
telephone:
01725 550300**

ABSENCE FROM EXAMINATIONS

You must attend all examinations that are allocated to you on your individual candidate timetable. Misreading the timetable will not be accepted as a satisfactory explanation for your absence.

ILLNESS

If you miss an examination due to illness, you **MUST** telephone the School on 01725 550300 as early as possible on the morning of the examination, and get a medical certificate/letter from a qualified medical practitioner. This must be sent to Jenna Young, Exams Officer within three days of the examination you missed.

What happens if a student has a valid reason for missing an examination?

The School can apply for **Special Considerations**.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A candidate's examination performance can sometimes be affected by circumstances out of their control. Special consideration is a post-examination adjustment to a candidate's mark or grade to reflect temporary illness, temporary injury or some other event outside of the candidate's control at the time of the assessment, which has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a candidate's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her normal level of attainment in an assessment.

Special consideration can only seek to go some way to assist a candidate affected by a potentially wide range of difficulties, emotional or physical, which may influence performance in examinations. It cannot remove the difficulty faced by the candidate. Only minor adjustments can be made to the mark awarded because to do more than this would jeopardize the standard of the examination.

Special Consideration can be applied when:

A student is fully prepared for the examination, sits the examination, but is disadvantaged due to illness or unavoidable circumstances beyond their control at the time of the examination or when they complete their coursework/controlled assessment.

In these cases, a maximum of 5% may be added to the raw mark. The percentage is determined by using the guidelines agreed by all the awarding bodies and published by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).

OR

A student is absent from an examination for a valid reason.

In these cases, a mark is calculated for the missing unit providing the pupil has completed enough of the specification to meet the minimum requirements specified by JCQ. The calculation of the missing mark takes into account the student's performance in the other comparable units of the examination and the national average for those units. This method is considered to be fair and consistent.

A close-up photograph of a yellow pencil with a sharpened lead tip. The pencil is positioned diagonally, pointing towards a multiple-choice question on a white test paper. The question has four options: A, B, C, and D, each enclosed in a circle. The pencil's tip is touching the circle for option C. The background of the test paper is slightly blurred, showing other rows of questions. The right side of the image has a solid yellow background with black text.

EXAM REGULATIONS

A copy of the JCQ “Warning to Candidates”, which is issued jointly by all the Examining Boards, is displayed in exam venues.

All candidates must read this carefully and note that to break any of these examination rules or regulations could lead to disqualification from all subjects.

The School will report any breach of the regulations to the Awarding Body.

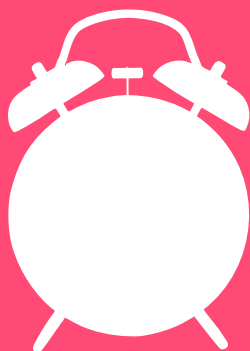


CONDUCT DURING THE EXAM

PUNCTUALITY

Candidates are responsible for checking their own timetable and arriving at school on the correct day and time, in full uniform and equipped. Candidates must arrive 30 minutes before the start time of their examination, and must wait quietly outside the venue, or in the Restaurant (AS INSTRUCTED) until invited to enter by the Examinations Officer or senior member of staff.

Candidates who arrive late for an examination **MAY NOT BE ALLOWED TO SIT THE EXAM** depending on the circumstances and the timing of the examination. If a candidate is allowed to be admitted they will be allowed the full time allowance. If the examination has finished then the candidate will not be allowed to take it. If Special Consideration applies then you must speak to Mrs Young.



EQUIPMENT IN EXAMS

All items of equipment, pens, pencils, mathematical instruments, etc., should be visible to the invigilators at all times. You must use a **TRANSPARENT** pencil case or clear plastic bag.

Pens should be black ink or ballpoint. No Tippex, correction pens or gel pens are permitted.

For Mathematics and Science exams, students should make sure their calculators conform to the examination regulations. If in doubt, check with your teacher or the Exams Officer. Remove any covers or instructions and make sure the batteries are new.



MOBILE TELEPHONES MUST BE SWITCHED OFF AND LEFT IN BAGS AT ALL TIMES AWAY FROM YOUR POSSESSION.

If a mobile phone or any other type of electronic communication or storage device, like MP3/MP4 Players, iPods, smart watches and digital cameras are found in your possession during an examination (even if it is turned off), it will be taken from you and a report made to the appropriate examination board. No exceptions can be made. The item will only be returned to a parent.

All watches must be placed in bags before entering the examination room.

Do not forget to empty your pockets.



Food and drink are not allowed in the examination rooms. Candidates may have a small clear bottle of water, with a sports cap, on the floor at the side of their desk. **LABELS MUST BE REMOVED.** Only water is allowed. If the label is left on the bottle it will be removed to the front of the room.

Please do not write on the examination desks. This is regarded as vandalism and you will be asked to pay for any damage.

Do not draw graffiti or write offensive comments on your examination papers – if you do the examination board may refuse to accept your paper. Examination papers are now scanned by computers so any graffiti or comments may stop your answers from being scanned properly.

Listen carefully to instructions and notices read out by the invigilators – there may be amendments to the examination paper that you need to know about.

Check you have the correct question paper – check the subject, paper and tier of entry.

Read all instructions carefully and number your answers clearly.

At the end of the examination all work must be handed in. If you have used more than one answer book or loose sheets of paper ask for a tag to fasten them together in the correct order.

Invigilators will collect your examination papers before you leave the room. Absolute silence must be maintained during this time. Remember you are still under examination conditions until you have left the room.

Question papers, answer booklets and additional paper must NOT be taken from the examination room.

Remain seated in silence until told to leave the examination room. Please leave the room in silence and show consideration for other candidates who may still be working.

Should the fire alarm sounds during an examination the invigilators will tell you what to do. Don't panic. If you have to evacuate the room you will be asked to leave in silence and in the order in which you are sitting. You will be escorted to the designated assembly point. You are not permitted to talk or communicate with anyone during a Fire Alarm.

INVIGILATORS

The school employs specially trained external invigilators to conduct the examinations. Students are expected to behave in a respectful manner towards all invigilators and follow their instructions at all times.

Invigilators are in the examination rooms to supervise the conduct of the examination. They will distribute and collect the examination papers, give out instructions relating to the examination, hand out extra writing paper if required and deal with any problems that occur during the examination, for example, if a candidate is feeling ill.

Please note that invigilators cannot discuss the examination paper with you or explain the questions.

Candidates who are disruptive or behave in an unacceptable manner will be removed from the examination room and reported to the examination board.

GRADES EXPLAINED

9 8 7	A* A
6 5 (Strong Pass) 4 (Standard Pass)	B C
3 2 1	D E F G
U	U

RESULTS

Students are expected to collect their results in person. However, if you are unable to collect in person you can either:

- Nominate a third party to collect your results; you will be required to complete, sign and return a permission form to the exams office, stating the name of the person who will be collecting on your behalf. The form has to be signed by the student, not the parent/carer. The nominated person, will need to provide identification when collecting your results.

Results will not be given out by telephone or via email under any circumstances. Results not collected will be posted to the student's home address we hold on file. This could take two or three days for results to reach you.

Examination certificates will be available for collection from November.

GCSE RESULTS DAY

Thursday 20th August 2026

OTHER KEY DATES

PPE Exams

Week beginning 10th November 2025

PPE Exams Results Day

Monday 15th December 2025

Exams Preparation Day - The Great Big Plan

Friday 9th January 2026

Final PPE Exams

Week beginning 23rd February 2026

Date of first GCSE exam

Monday 11th May 2026

Yr11 Prom

Friday 26th June 2026

Exams Contingency Days

Refer to the Summer Exam Timetable

Certificates available for collection

November 2026, you will receive a 'Save the Date' letter in your results envelope in August 2026







GOOD LUCK!

