



Study Skills

A Guide for Parents



Assessment Preparation

Preparing for assessments and exams is often something that some students only begin to think about in the last few weeks (and sometimes only days) before the event. But successful preparation means that learners need to **attend all lessons, actively take part in discussions**, make **notes** and start their **revision** well before the actual date. In other words, it's part of a long-term plan.

Teachers can teach, but for real success in exams, students have to take responsibility for their own learning and planning.

Below is some information on activities that need to take place throughout your child's Post 16 course. You might like to work through this information to see what kind of advice your child is being given and to understand what is involved. You can help your child by showing an interest in what they have learnt and by helping them to get organised.

Adequate Study Conditions

If you can, make sure that they have a **quiet space** to study on a regular basis. Research indicates that **listening to music does not aid study**. All potential **distractions should be removed** from the study area e.g. mobile phone; Internet (in general); TV; friends calling (especially girlfriend/boyfriend); Xbox etc.

Before an assessment or exam, help them to make a checklist of equipment that they will need, and to make sure that they know the date and time of an exam.

Time Management

For your child to be successful at school, they must learn how to carefully manage their time. Part of being young is that there is always something interesting or exciting waiting to be done. There are so many calls on a young person's time that it is often difficult for them to decide where to start and what to do next. Studying and learning can be a long way down the list of things that are essential on the list of 'must dos', often resulting in a panic when exams approach.



You can help your child by suggesting that they make a **calendar** and a **timetable** for the term. Also, each evening, it is useful to prepare a **daily organiser** for the next day. Tell your child to place a \checkmark next to each thing to do as they accomplish it. Advise them to make time to do other things apart from study as they will need a balance. Try not to seem over anxious yourself, and help them to remain calm and organised.

Independent learning and note taking

Really good learning takes place when a student recognises that learning is not just about what the teacher has to say, but also about how they can **take charge of their own learning**. Often, obtaining the top grade in a subject involves going beyond what is in the course specification! Encourage your child to use the library and other sources of information outside of what the teacher has prescribed.

Good note taking is an essential skill. It's surprising how many young people go on to higher study, including university, without ever having learnt how to make good notes.

Remind your child that it's not enough just to take notes in lessons: they also have to **organise, review and regularly re-read the notes** for best results. You can offer to help them prepare for exams by going over their notes with them. Ask them to explain what they have learnt to you. **Explaining things to others is a good way of improving and reinforcing learning**. Preparing for and understanding lessons, making good notes and organising them can take much of the panic out of approaching class tests and external exams. For making notes from a textbook, ask them to consider using a KWL table.

In the K column they note down what they already **know** about the topic, in the W column what they **want** to know and in the L column, what they have **learnt** as a result of reading through the sections of the textbook. See an example of this below:

K	W	L
<p>A desert is a dry area of land that is typically very hot.</p> <p>More than 1/5 of the world is desert.</p> <p>Hard for plants to survive in the desert.</p> <p>Hard for animals to survive in the desert.</p>	<p>Are there any areas of water in a desert?</p> <p>Are there cold deserts?</p> <p>What is the largest desert?</p> <p>How do plants survive?</p> <p>How do animals survive?</p>	<p>There are areas with water in a desert that are called an oasis.</p> <p>They are found by an aquifer or an underground stream. Aquifer is an underground bed or layer that yields water.</p> <p>You'll find more plants and animals by an oasis than in any other part of the desert.</p> <p>The Gobi Desert can get as cold as -40° in the winter because it is far north of the equator.</p> <p>The Sahara Desert is more than 3 million square miles in area.</p> <p>Mostly by using their long roots to get to water below the ground.</p> <p>They avoid the heat of the day and come out only at night.</p> <p>Mammals such as camels and rodents can go for long periods without water. So can many birds and insects.</p>

Types of Reading

In any one day, we can do many different types of reading. You may glance at a newspaper, skimming the headlines to find out what has been going on in the world, or read the instructions for using a cleaning fluid carefully and in detail to make sure that you use it safely. At work, you may have to read reports and make decisions based on what you have read. Mostly, you will have worked out that you do not always have to read every word on every page - except when it matters. But how do you decide when you should read every word, and when a quick glance will do? Very probably, you will make this decision automatically from experience and practice. But this is a skill that students have to learn.

At school, your child may be expected to do **independent research** for a topic or a lesson. This means that they will have to find and select information from a large number of sources - quite a difficult and scary task if you think that you will have stacks of reading to do.

Revision

Effective revision is the best way for your child to avoid some of the stress that surrounds tests and exams. Exam stress can affect everyone in a household, so anything that helps to control this is bound to be a good thing!

Learners are reminded that revision means just that - returning to things that you have learnt, read or looked at several times before. It should not be a last-minute panic to try to learn in a couple of evenings all the things that should have been learnt during the year.

Planning is the key to good revision. You can help your child by looking at some of these tips:

- Make sure that they have a quiet, well-lit place in which to work. Sometimes the kitchen or dining room table is better than a young person's bedroom where they may be surrounded by distractions.
- The television should be kept in another room, or turned off while they are working if at all possible. Mobile phones should be switched off and left out of sight.
- Encourage them to make a timetable. But remember, you cannot concentrate on academic work all the time. There should be some balance between working and relaxation. A tired mind is not effective.

Memory Tips

We all have to learn new things all the time. Think of the first time you learnt to use the digital recorder or used your DIY skills. Usually, we take similar learning experiences and using the instructions and a little bit of practice, we can manage to

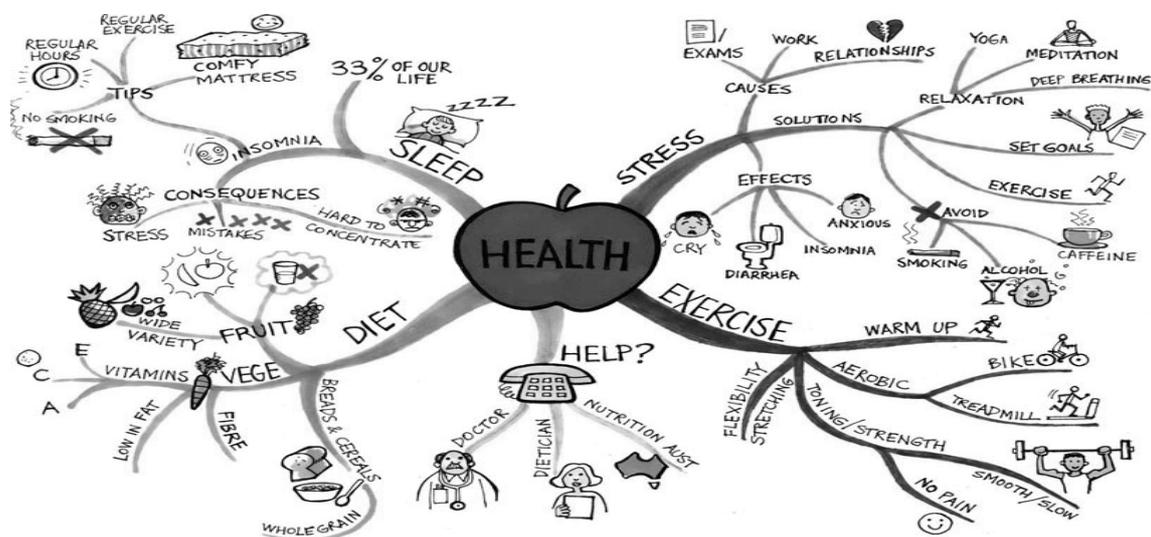
work things out. However, there are certain tasks where the learning is entirely different. You just have to learn and remember something as a string of dates or facts or events.

Learning new sets of dates for History or the names of scientific formulae can be a difficult task for students, especially when it comes to remembering all this information for a test or an exam.

Using **diagrams**, **different shapes**, **colours** and making up silly sayings called **mnemonics** out of the first letter of each word on the list, are all used as a way of making learning fun and different.

Mind Maps

Mind maps are now a common tool in education which you may have used yourself at school. They are a way of organising information and ideas in a graphical way. The idea is to 'free-up' your thoughts and put them down in the order in which they occur, and to look for links as you go along. Mind maps can be used to plan a project or an essay, or they can be used as part of revision to check what you know.



Mind maps can be particularly helpful to children who are dyslexic and to those who **'think visually'**. You can help your child by asking them to show you how to make a mind map. If they are stuck for a topic, think of some questions to ask them where they can explore ideas, for example, what jobs they might want to do when they are older, what the advantages and disadvantages of each one are, and what qualifications they might need for each one.

Other Key Ways to Support

Attendance

Ensure your child has high attendance – one of the main causes of underachievement at any level is poor attendance. Please try to ensure that **all appointments, driving lessons etc are arrangement outside college hours**. Teachers are continually preparing students for examinations or working on coursework modules and every lesson is vital. The college strongly disapproves of holidays arranged during term time.

Part- Time Work

Post 16 courses are very demanding and students need to spend a minimum of two hours on independent learning at home every day. Students who hold part-time jobs must ensure that their job does not interfere with this set requirement of study time. Part time work should not exceed eight hours a week during term time.

Organisation

Post 16 students need to organise their time effectively to prevent underachievement and alleviate stress. This should include making time for hobbies, sporting and social activities. Encourage your child to prepare a revision timetable well in advance of all class tests and external examinations.

Communication

Please keep the lines of communication open at all times. Encourage your child to talk to their teachers if they are struggling with any aspect of their school work. **Don't hesitate to contact a member of the Post 16 Pastoral Team if you have any concerns about your child progress or wellbeing**. Young people who are unhappy will find it difficult to achieve their potential. The sooner a problem is identified, the easier it is to address. But it's never too late to begin to sort out any issue or difficulty. Teach your child that seeking help is not a sign of weakness but rather a sign of strength.

Advice and resources provided at GCSE

In Year 12, your child attended the Tree of Knowledge one day workshop which was aimed at helping them to adopt a more positive attitude to exams, cope with stress, and set goals for the future. Also, your child received a study skills booklet in Year 12 providing guidance on dealing with exam nerves and how to adapt study habits to suit individual learning styles. Encourage them to refer back to this material as the advice is still pertinent at Post 16. The College will provide ongoing support for your child in this area in Post 16.

