

# A Parent's Guide to Study Skills and Revision



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

**The toughest job in the world is being a parent - we never know if we are getting it right, and our children will like to tell us every time we get it wrong (in their eyes)!**

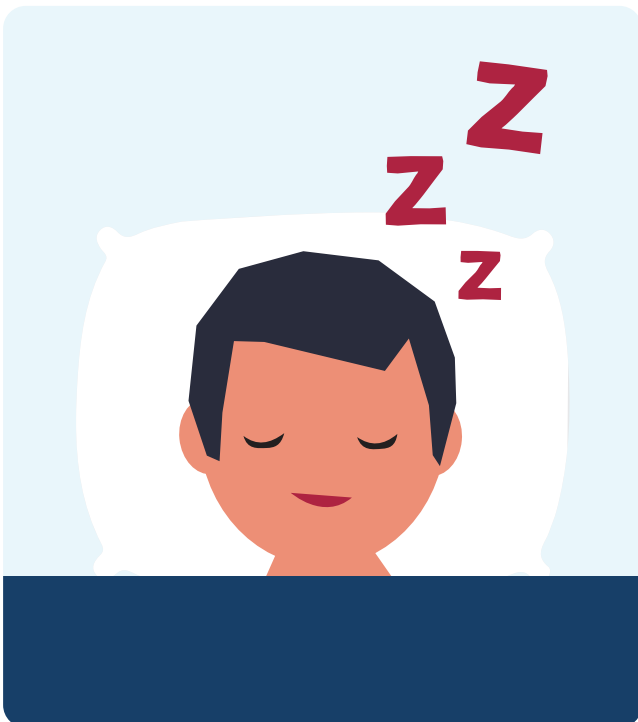
**It should really get easier as they get older, we've survived teething, tantrums and Tellytubbies - what can be tougher than that?**

Well, all of a sudden they are teenagers - older and sometimes grumpier and as parents we are left scratching our heads wondering what to do with this child we sometimes no longer recognise. With that in mind I thought it would be useful to share some of the challenges you may be facing and give some hints and tips (many magpied from other parents) that may help. It is important to remember that none of these challenges are in isolation - many of them are inter-dependent and many solutions are beneficial across the board.

## Sleep

Remember the days when you craved for your child 'to sleep through the night'? And now you don't see them before midday at the weekend and you hear them creeping about until the wee small hours. Irregular sleep patterns are often the source of issues we deal with here in school. It is common for students to sleep for 6- 7 hours a night during the school week and then bulk sleep at the weekend - often for twice as long.

What we then notice is a batch of sleepy and grumpy students on Monday as they try to re-adjust their body clocks. We know that teenagers need around 9 hours sleep every night and the advice is to keep it consistent - not 6 hours one night and 12 at weekends. It is also important to remove phones from bedrooms - when I speak with students, most have them under their pillow, not just in their room. Invest in a cheap alarm clock, remove the phones from the bedroom, along with any other temptations (games consoles, laptops etc)



## Exercise and Fresh Air

Fling open the bedroom curtains and open the window - particularly now the weather is getting better. As you know, we have no outdoor space in the building but many of our students walk, get the bus or the train to school every day. For many students, outside school clubs and activities stopped during lockdown, I would encourage you to consider picking them back up again. If not, go for a walk in the evening together - and insist phones and earbuds are left at home.

## Food Glorious Food

Eating patterns are really interesting in the building. We have some students that skip breakfast and think a slushie and a cookie is a substantial lunch. Others feel uncomfortable eating in the dining room and so we have a small room for them to use. We have others who are spending their money on the way to school on energy drinks, coffee and bags of sweets and many, many more that enjoy the free breakfast (cereal and bagels) and the wonderful, freshly prepared meals. Of course, you may choose to go for a packed lunch option, which is absolutely fine.

My advice would be if possible have some breakfast before leaving the house. A slice of toast, some cereal or a crumpet will be a good start, particularly if you are travelling a long way.

If you think your child is buying junk food on the way to school, you can always top up your wise pay account from home - you can see what has been bought via the wise pay website too. Also, avoid sugary snacking and caffeine late into the evening. This links back to the sleep paragraph above.



## Studying

**I have attached a really useful guide for parents to help with studying but here are some useful tips based on lots of observations.**

- Studying is best done little and often. Have a plan for what is to be done during the week and stick to it. When it comes to exams [www.getrevising.co.uk](http://www.getrevising.co.uk) creates brilliant revision plans linked to exam boards and resources.
- Technology is not always the answer. Students are the experts in procrastination and technology is a great distractor. Consider some of the brilliant paper based books to help your child to focus - and you can check how much work they have done. CGP do great subject specific books, Collins have books on study skills and the booklet attached should give you some ideas too.
- Create a space where your child can study. This might be a dining room table, a space in the kitchen or in their bedroom. If it is in their room, they will not need their phone whilst studying - when they do exams it will be in silence and it is good for them to get used to that.
- Ask your child to show you what they have completed in their study time. If they are not working in a communal part of the house, check in and see how they are getting on. Ask questions about their work and test their knowledge.
- Does your child have jobs to do around the house? Do the dishes, put the recycling out, walk the dog or look after siblings? It could be that you consider exchanging some jobs for excellent studying or revision.
- Talk about the motivation for studying - we speak a lot in school about destinations, it helps to remind them that all of the work they are doing now will help in the journey towards their desired destination.
- Read - lots! There is so much research that proves the power of reading in all elements of academic success. This can be fiction or non-fiction, linked to their studies or not. Model this for your child. Pick up a book and read in the room where they are studying and you will both feel the benefit

## Constructing a Revision Timetable

It is important when constructing a revision timetable to consider the following issues:

- Be realistic - you will know how much your child can be pinned down, so build up their stamina. Some students are good at managing their time and need far less 'checking up' on Remember sessions should only be for 30 - 40 minutes with 10 minute breaks
- During holidays/study leave, revision should be far more intensive
- Try and get a variety of subjects across each day
- Have they built in slots to review the learning of the day? Remember to include review slots for the work covered last week
- Build in rewards
- Offer as much praise as you can

## Breaking It Down

If your child says to you, "I'm doing Maths for 40 minutes and then half an hour of French", alarm bells should go off in your head. It means your child has not broken the subject down into key areas to tackle their work in an organised manner; e.g. "I'm doing algebra and irregular verbs." They should have a list of topics, but if not, a list is provided in the 'Subjects' section of this booklet.

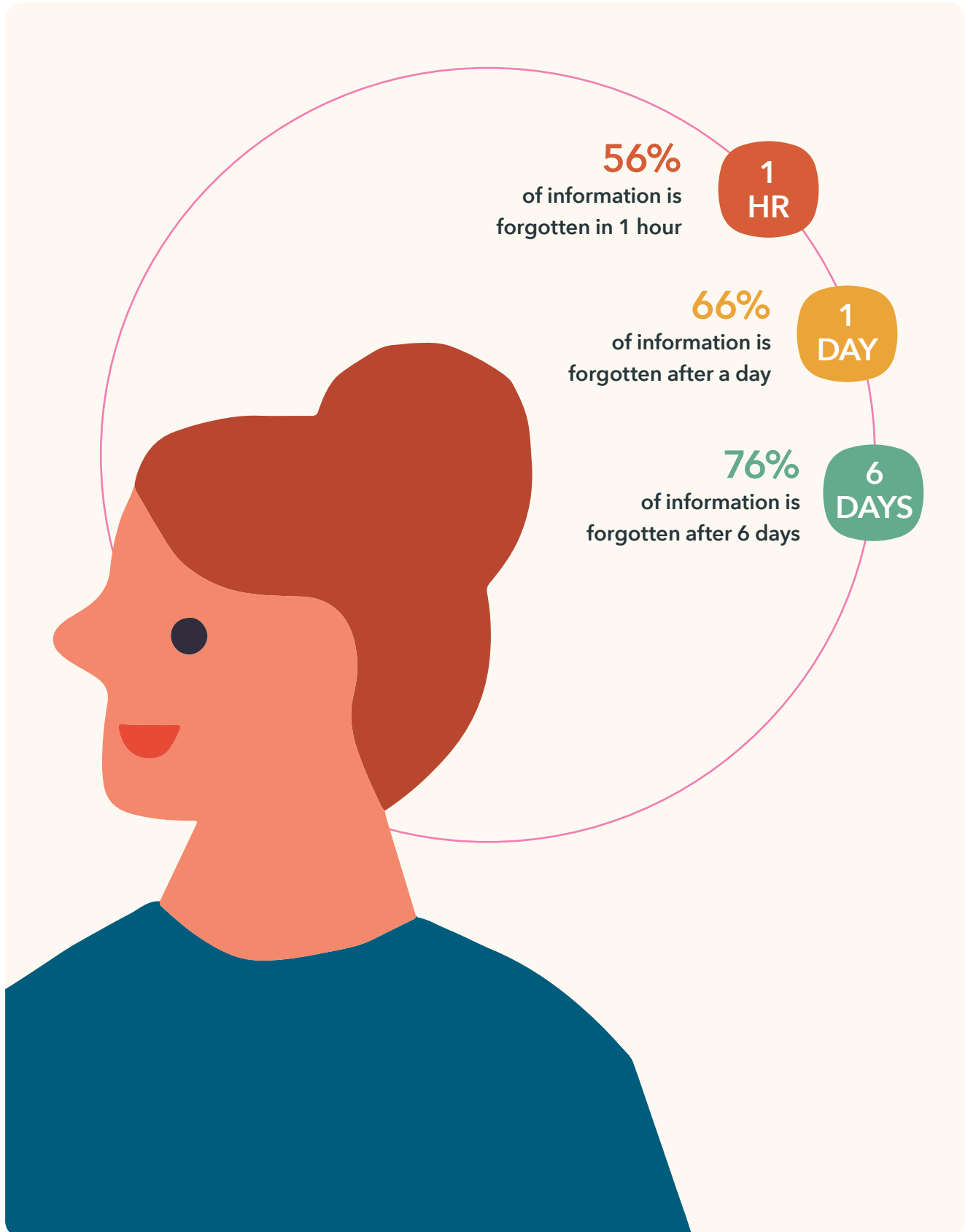
They should use the key heading to identify those topics they feel weak in - the danger is that we push these to the back of our mind! Using each heading then helps to break the topic down further. On the next page is a framework for doing this.

At first, the big picture may look and feel totally overwhelming to your child. Be as positive and as supportive as you can in helping them to prioritise their workload. But they also need to be aware of the fact that revision takes time and for a few months, the social life has to give a bit. This can be alleviated slightly, if friends set time off sessions in tandem.

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Review Points
Saturday	English - War poetry inferring meanings	Maths - Quadratic equations	Football	Review quadratics
Sunday	Review Saturday's English revision History - USA Student Movement	Spanish - Holiday vocab	Relax	
Monday	Gym	Biology - Respiration	Maths - Quadratic equations	

## The Forgetting Curve

The 'Forgetting Curve' means that students need to 'go over' topics frequently to make them 'stick'. When creating your revision / study plan build in times to re-visit topics - don't assume that doing it once will be sufficient.



## Items for Success

**Once a revision timetable has been produced, students can still waste hours organising themselves.**

It may be the only time they choose to tidy their room or offer to take the dog out! It is important that they maximise their time for actual revision, not sorting out what they need. A lot of this can be done prior to getting started.



### Equipment

- Highlighters
- Coloured pens
- Post-It notes for formulas/key words
- Different types or colours of paper for different subjects.
- Computer for revision  
Students can access revision material via the internet BUT students need to be very selective in what they use

### Where to Revise

- Not in front of the TV
- At a table, preferably in a quiet place
- It's worth sorting the bedroom out
- Get rid of clutter, so a desk is empty enough to have proper space to work
- Lay out all the materials for each subject to save time

### What Do They Need to Revise?

- Revision timetable
- An up-to-date set of class notes
- Any revision materials given out by departments
- Revision Lists
- Lists of exactly what is in each exam
- Any Study Guides which have been bought (but students need to treat them with caution - check they are covering what is in their course)

## Ready

Throughout their time at school students should have been collating a set of notes ready to use for revision. Students need to make sure that their exercise books and notes are up to date and organised. Students need to talk to their subject teachers NOW if they worry they are missing notes/material.

Revision material can be purchased at student services, and some have already been given to your child. Purchasing revision books from here will ensure they are the correct material, for the correct exam boards.

### RAG your notes

**RED** I don't know this information

**YELLOW** I am insecure about this information

**GREEN** I am fairly confident with this information

## Go

This is the most VITAL stage, but the one students often forget! This is where students need to actively engage with this material so that it STICKS!

### Ideas on how to do this are:

- e-create a mind map from memory, check what is missing and repeat
- Ask someone to ask you the questions from the flashcards (the answers are on the back so this can be someone who isn't an expert)
- Read the answer from the flashcard and guess the question
- Create a Concept map to see whether you can link ideas together
- Answer past questions (if available use the mark schemes to check your answer)
- Create questions to pass to your friends, they do the same and the swap back and mark them
- Place keywords posters and post-it notes around your room / places where you spend a lot of time so you are constantly seeing them

## Steady

Students need to make their notes as accessible as possible, suggestions on how to do this are:

- Create a Mind-map (see below for details)
  - Make a chart to fit the information
  - Make key words
  - Post-It Notes
  - Make up tests to try later
  - Put notes onto revision cards
  - Make your own flashcards - questions one side/answers on the back
  - Use colours to represent different things
  - Use Mnemonics for difficult spellings/sequences (e.g. Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain- colours of rainbow)
  - Make a flow chart/timeline
  - Use pictures to represent key ideas
  - List two sides of an argument
  - Identify similarities/differences
  - Create a dictionary for each subject
  - Turn headings into questions
  - Create posters for key ideas
  - Make up cartoons
  - Label pictures
  - Record key quotations
- 
- Interleave your revision – don't spend a long time on one subject, it is much more effective to spend 30 minutes on algebra , 30 minutes on WW2 and then go back and re-visit algebra.
  - Remember the spelling strategy of look, cover, write, check? You can use this same strategy for revision – read the notes, hide them away, write what you can remember and then check to see what you missed.
  - Transform your notes - so you made a mind-map, now change this into pictures, now change it into a table, not break it down into bullet points, now explain it verbally to someone. This "use" of the material will help make it stick.



## Active Revision

To maximise your learning, we use a variety of revision techniques. Choose ones which favour your learning styles.

## Mind Mapping

Try making mind maps rather than normal notes. A mind map makes the best use of your memory, allowing you to put a lot of information onto one sheet of paper.

### STRUCTURE

CLEAR  
RADIANT  
ASSOCIATIONS

**MIND  
MAP**

### PAPER

BLANK  
LANDSCAPE

### STYLE

FUN  
PERSONAL  
EMPHASIS

### USE

IMAGES  
WORDS  
COLOUR

### To create a mind map:

- Place your page in landscape position
- In the centre, words or an image which stands for the whole topic
- Between 5 and 9 factors on a mind map to create a good mind map
- Only use keywords
- WRITE IN CAPITAL LETTERS
- Write on top of the lines and make your words fit the exact length of the line  
Spread your branches around the map  
- make them an ORGANIC shape
- If you can, put pictures or diagrams in your map. This helps to use both sides of the brain

## Summarising Text

Who, what, where, when diagrams could be useful for summarising a text, creating an over view of a topic.

WHO

WHAT

WHERE

WHEN

## Split Lists

These can be used to show the two sides to an argument, showing for and against points or to show similarities and differences between things. E.g. to compare the two types of blood vessel.

### VEIN

Tubular

Transports blood

Thin wall

Pocket valves

Can't constrict

Blood to the heart

Low pressure

### ARTERY

Tubular

Transports blood

Thick wall

No valves

Can constrict

Blood from the heart

High pressure

## Word Patterns

Using word patterns can help to jog your memory, particularly using the initial letters of each word to form a new word.

E.g. The principles of training can be remembered as **SPORT**

Specificity

Progression

Overload

Reversibility

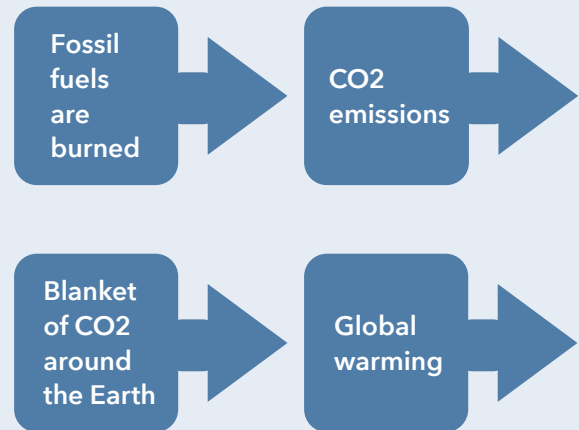
Tedium

## Key Points

Using revision cards to write down key points or to write questions on one side, answers on another. The writing of the cards will help your recall. Google 'Quizlet' to make online revision cards or use PowerPoint to create Q+A revision.

## Flow Chart

These can help to revise a sequence of what happens next and why. This flow chart shows how global warming takes place.



## Explain to Someone Else

Talk through a mind map or your revision notes to your parents or a friend.

Explaining a topic clearly to someone who doesn't know about it can help your recall.

## Concept Maps

Concept maps differ from mindmaps as they have words linking them (usually verbs) to see the relationship between them. They're actually very difficult to make as it's easy to over complicate straight away and there are so many links between concepts it can become spaghetti like.

CONCEPT

LINK

CONCEPT

# Productive Revision

## 1. Focus

Under no circumstances should a student revise in front of the TV or when streaming videos on a device. The only exception is if they are watching a revision video.

## 2. Distractions

Revising whilst at the same time checking social media, texting, instant messaging or watching video clips are not compatible activities. When revising, your child needs to find a way of avoiding constantly checking their phone.

## 3. The Sound of Silence

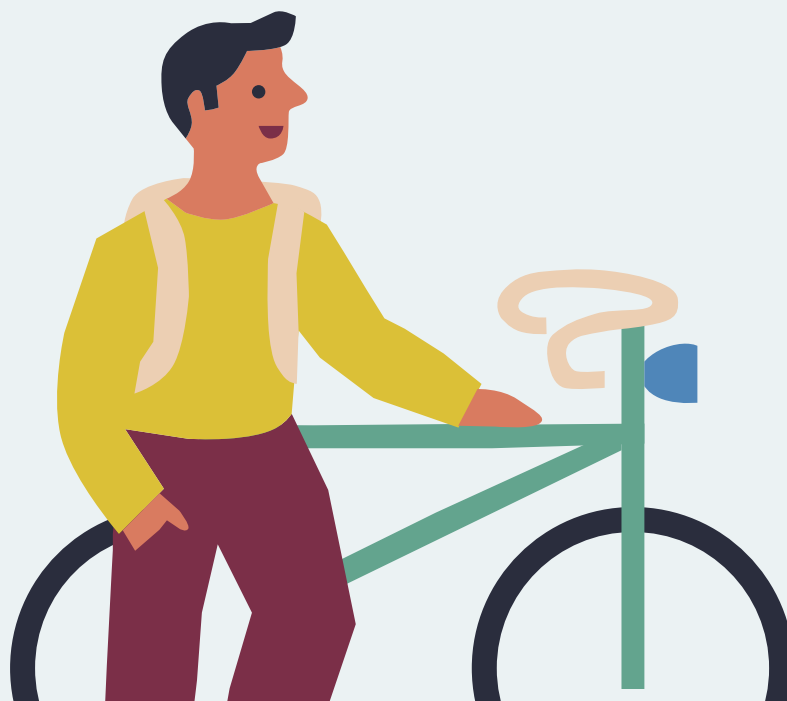
Attempting to memorise facts and information or working through exam papers under exam conditions should be done in silence. If occasionally students are going to listen to music, it should be played at low volume and they should choose something that doesn't distract them. Students need to get used to working in silence, their exams will be from 45 minutes to 2 hours 15 minutes long so working for extended periods of time in silence is essential.

## 4. Healthy Body and Healthy Mind

Having a good night's sleep is vital when studying hard, so having a regular time when they switch off lights and sleep is important.

It is also important that they do something when they have finished studying for the evening to help them relax such as catching up with friends on social media, watching videos/TV, reading, listening to music, gaming etc.

Eating well reduces overall stress on the body and can also make a person feel good about themselves. Exercising helps to clear the mind and provides a way of releasing a great deal of the muscle tension which stress produces.



## 5. Friends

Students can help each other revise but this is only useful at certain points in the revision process. Effective ways that students can help each other are:

- Testing each other verbally, but only once students have spent time alone memorising the content.
- Swapping tests, based upon the content they have learnt and marking each other's answers. This way they are having to re-visit the material in order to be able to do this effectively.

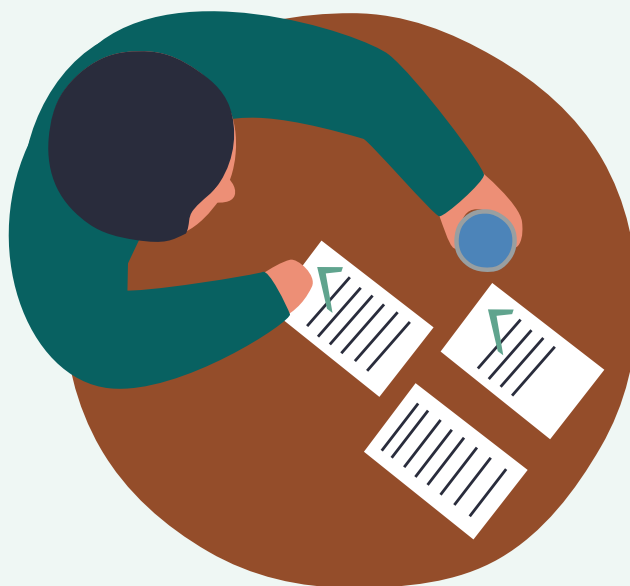
Friends also can also help students keep exam stress to a minimum by arranging their social arrangements around their revision...let's revise Saturday morning and then meet up to play football at 12.00 etc.

## 6. Working Environment

Ideally, when they are studying at home, they need a permanent, quiet, well-lit place to study with very few interruptions or distractions. The best set-up is probably to have a flat surface such as a desk or table in their bedroom. The problem with using other spaces, such as the living room or kitchen, is that they are more likely to be interrupted from their studies.

However, students like to work in different places, in different ways and working at a desk or table isn't always possible, practical or even preferable. Instead, some students do like to work in the kitchen or living room or if they do study in their bedroom, prefer to lie on their bed rather than sit at a desk.

When studying, they should make sure that the desk or table they are working at is clear of everything except for relevant material and equipment and free from anything that might distract them. It is a good idea for them to get into the habit of tidying up their workspace at the end of each revision session so that it is clear when they start again.





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