

# STUDY SKILLS

This booklet is designed to help you develop your study skills, from revision techniques to essay writing.



## WELCOME TO STUDY SKILLS!

This resource has been created by Shaping Futures to support learners from Year 9 upwards in developing their skills to prepare them for GCSE, Further Education and even Higher Education level of study at a pace that is suited to you.

For those supporting young people in their life, you can work through this booklet with them and support them with the activities throughout. Some parts of this resource may not yet be relevant for your learner depending on what stage they are in. You can check out what areas are focused on what stage in the contents below!

If you would like any additional support or have any questions you can speak to a member of our team at any time **here**.

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## Study Skills Audit

Look at the skills below and tick which ones you think you have.  
Try again at the end of the week to check your progress.

**Before** you begin any activities

### Y9-11

Yes No

I know how to revise effectively		
I know how make a revision timetable		
I know where to find reliable online materials		
I know how to make a plan for an essay		
I recognise command words in exam questions and know what they mean		
I know how to take notes effectively in class		

### Y12 & 13

Yes No

I understand the importance of taking notes effectively		
I know a number of techniques to help me make notes		
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**After** you have completed all of the activities

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**Remember to share the completed form with us!**

email [admin@shaping-futures.info](mailto:admin@shaping-futures.info)  
[www.shaping-futures.org.uk](http://www.shaping-futures.org.uk)



Tell us what you think ...  
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# REVISION TECHNIQUES

**Here we will be looking at some revision techniques, including highlighting, note-taking, mind maps and flash cards.**

We recommend having some equipment on hand such as:

- Different coloured pens
- Highlighters
- Paper
- Flash cards

# HIGHLIGHTING

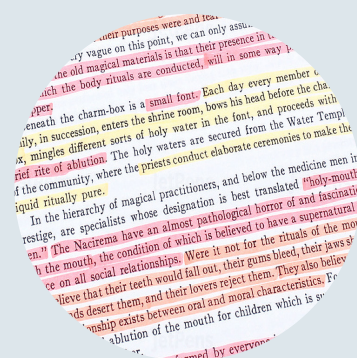
Highlighting text may be something you do often, but highlighting as a revision technique requires a few top tips to be as effective as possible. Next time you pick up the highlighter keep these tips in mind.

## Try to avoid highlighting everything:

Read the **whole text once** before you pick up the highlighter. By reading it multiple times you know what matters the most, and can highlight accordingly.

## Try colour coding:

Colour code your highlighting by using different colours for different things. You can create a key in the corner of your page so you know what each colour is for.



# NOTE-TAKING

Note-taking is another way of revising information, and you can add comments of your own. You can rewrite the information in ways you understand best, too!

## Key words:

Pick out key words that will trigger your memory.

## Main ideas:

Include the main ideas from each section!

## Vocabulary:

Make sure you note the definitions of new or difficult words.

## Examples:

Write down your own examples that link to the text.

## Tailor it to you:

Add pictures or diagrams, use colour - these notes are for you!



# MIND MAPS

Mind maps are a great tool for everybody, but they're especially useful if you're a visual learner. Displaying information in a new way helps boost creativity and remember information!

**Here's our top tips:**

## Break information into small chunks:

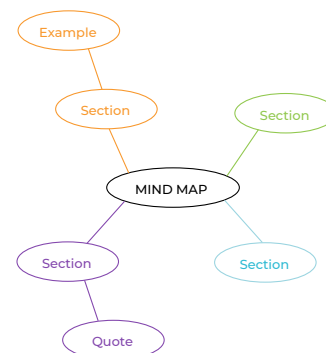
You want to be able to see everything on one page, so break the information up in easy to read parts.

## Use lots of pictures and colour:

You can colour code sections or the types of notes, like having one colour for quotes and another for examples!

## Link ideas together where possible:

Having all that information on one page and linking ideas together helps you process the information and can also help you with future essay or exam planning!



# FLASHCARDS

Flashcards are an extremely effective revision technique with multiple uses. Just creating flashcards can help you retain that information and then you can use them time and time again!

## Use them for quizzes:

Write a question on one side of the flashcard and the answer on the other. You can test yourself, or do it with somebody else!

## Make them yours:

Use pictures, diagrams, colour - even highlight them. They're for your revision, so make them something that works for you.

## Create sets:

Flashcards are bitesized chunks of information, so create sets of flashcards for each topic to cover them all.

# ACTIVITY

**Using a short excerpt from a speech by Greta Thunberg, we're going to try out some revision techniques and see how you score on a quiz. You may want to use a technique you haven't used yet, or try a few and see how that works!**

Read the excerpt, take a few minutes to revise and then put your materials away before trying out the quiz.

During the last six months I have travelled around Europe for hundreds of hours in trains, electric cars and buses, repeating these life-changing words over and over again. But no one seems to be talking about it, and nothing has changed. In fact, the emissions are still rising. When I have been travelling around to speak in different countries, I am always offered help to write about the specific climate policies in specific countries. But that is not really necessary. Because the basic problem is the same everywhere. And the basic problem is that basically nothing is being done to halt – or even slow – climate and ecological breakdown, despite all the beautiful words and promises.

The UK is, however, very special. Not only for its mind-blowing historical carbon debt, but also for its current, very creative, carbon accounting. Since 1990 the UK has achieved a 37% reduction of its territorial CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, according to the Global Carbon Project. And that does sound very impressive. But these numbers do not include emissions from aviation, shipping and those associated with imports and exports. If these numbers are included the reduction is around 10% since 1990 – or an average of 0.4% a year, according to Tyndall Manchester.

And the main reason for this reduction is not a consequence of climate policies, but rather a 2001 EU directive on air quality that essentially forced the UK to close down its very old and extremely dirty coal power plants and replace them with less dirty gas power stations. And switching from one disastrous energy source to a slightly less disastrous one will of course result in a lowering of emissions. But perhaps the most dangerous misconception about the climate crisis is that we have to “lower” our emissions. Because that is far from enough. Our emissions have to stop if we are to stay below 1.5-2C of warming. The “lowering of emissions” is of course necessary but it is only the beginning of a fast process that must lead to a stop within a couple of decades, or less. And by “stop” I mean net zero – and then quickly on to negative figures. That rules out most of today's politics.

# QUIZ

Put the speech and any revision you have done - it's time to test your knowledge!

1. What method of transport had Greta Thunberg been using during her 6 months around Europe?
2. According to the Global Carbon Project, what percentage of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were reduced in the UK in 1990?
3. What CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were not included in that data?
4. To stay below 1.5-2C of warming, what must change?
5. The "lowering of emissions" must stop within...

## ANSWERS

1. Trains, electric cars and buses
2. 37%
3. Aviation, shipping and those associated with imports and exports
4. Our emissions have to stop
5. 2 decades or 20 years

# EFFECTIVE NOTE-TAKING

**This section will focus on developing effective note-taking skills which will help you identify what's important for your assignments in Higher Education.**

One of the major differences between studying in school and studying in Higher Education is the amount of responsibility you have over your own learning. This means you have to be active, rather than passive, during lectures where taking notes effectively will be key.

*What's the point in taking notes, can't you just access lectures online after they've been presented?*

This isn't always the case, but even where presentations are available later they won't include everything the lecturer is saying which is the key information.

Taking notes benefits your learning, too; the process helps you understand and retain the information better!

Practice makes perfect and will also help you find the best method for you!

Once you become confident in your note-taking skills and find the method that suits you, you will find it easier to focus on the most important information and find it doesn't require lots of writing.

*But I don't like writing, and taking notes takes me too long!*



# THE CORNELL METHOD

The Cornell note taking system is a way to format and organise notes without having to do lots of rewriting by simply dividing the paper into specific sections.

There are six main parts to the system:

## 1. Name, Date, Title

Every time you start a new set of notes you should record all this information (i.e. Lecture or Textbook Reading titles)

## 2. Record

Divide your paper into three sections (see right). While you're making your notes put them in the main space, and when there's a new main point skip a few lines before continuing your notes.

## 3. Cues and questions

Using your cue column write down any questions or thoughts you have once you have written your main notes. This could be things you don't understand yet, what you need more clarity on, or just something that came to mind for later!

## 4. Recite

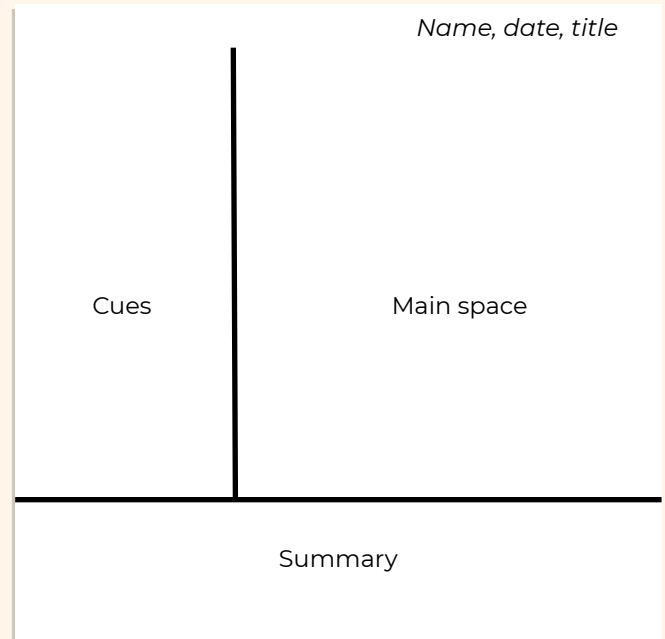
Cover the main section of your page so you can only see your questions and cues. Using the cue section, try and repeat the main notes you have written down in your own words. This helps your brain retain the information!

## 5. Reflect

Think about the material for a few minutes, and ask yourself some questions like "what is the significance of these facts?" and "how do these ideas fit in with what I already know?"

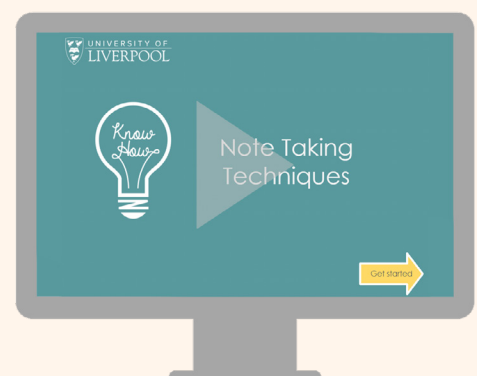
## 6. Review

Use the summary space at the bottom to condense it all. Now you have a summary, you can use this to review your notes without having to go through everything you have written!



Check on the University of Liverpool's online course focusing on note-taking techniques.

You can complete this before or after finishing this resource.



# MIND MAPS

A mind map is a visual way to represent ideas and concepts. It's a diagram displaying ideas and theories around a central idea. Check out our revision techniques resource to see more tips on mind maps!

## How to create a mind map:

### 1. Pick your focus

Pick the central idea you want your mind map to focus on. You can draw a picture or write a keyword/phrase, and then place that in the centre of your blank page.

### 2. Identify key themes

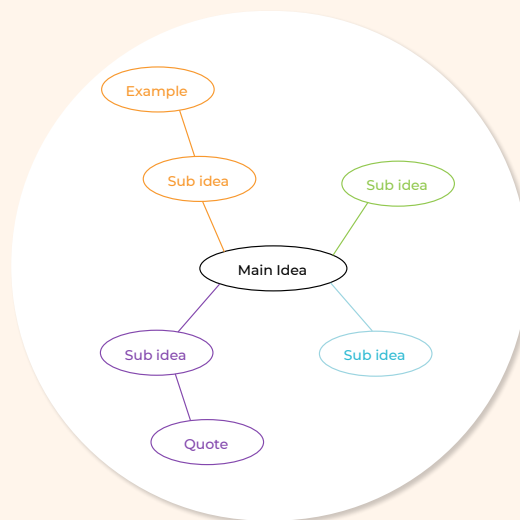
Decide on the most important words or phrases that relate to your central idea. Add these to the page and connect them to the central idea with thick lines - these are your branches!

### 3. Expand

From your key themes, identify keywords, phrases and chunks of information that relate to these. Link these to your sub-ideas with more branches. These could be important dates, authors, models, theories, examples, strengths and limitations or even diagrams.

### 4. Identify gaps

Take a step back and check what's on your mind map, and then fill in any gaps where you think additional information is needed and link them where you think is best. You may want to also add lines to show connections between ideas.



## OTHER METHODS TO RESEARCH

There are lots of different methods of note-taking available online. If the ones covered here don't work for you, do some research!

Check out the links on the signposting page at the end of this resource to start with. These will provide you with lots more detail and include real examples of how they can be used.

# ACTIVITY

Let's test some note-taking methods with an activity!

Watch *The colossal consequences of supervolcanoes* and make notes throughout using one of our methods or a method you have researched.

Then, try and answer some of our questions.



1. What are the consequences of 1815's eruption?

2. What causes a "volcanic winter"?

3. What causes an "explosive caldera"?

## ANSWERS

1. Heavy rain and colds - floods; odd coloured snow; famine; disease; NE strange fog - June frozen ground; Year without summer
2. Volcanic ash blankets sky; Sulphur dioxide in the stratosphere blocks solar rays and cools
3. Volcan/Mountain collapses in previous eruption; No escape for magma or gases; Magma/gas accumulates and eventually booms

# ONLINE LEARNING TIPS

Online learning can be a difficult to adjust to, so here are some tips to help you make the most of online learning and taking care of you!

## 1. Start really small

If you find you are unable to concentrate or get started, doing the smallest of tasks such as writing a to-do-list of what you want to get done can be the catalyst to sparking your productivity.

## 2. Go easy on yourself

This is new for all of us! We are all learning as we go, so it will take time and some things will work, and some things won't. Don't put too much pressure on yourself: if it doesn't work out, dust yourself off and try again.

## 3. Think about your work space at home

As best you can, try to create a tidy space with room for your work materials - with minimal distractions. If possible, have a separate space to where you spend free time to play games, listen to music etc. This will help your mind separate the two and reduce temptation to stop working!

## 4. Take regular breaks

Taking regular breaks during the day keeps your mind fresh and is one of the easiest ways to ensure you don't burn out. It is now more important than ever when you are studying in your living space.

Step away from your laptop every hour or so and do something you enjoy, whether it's reading a chapter of your book, watching a little TV, or playing a game. Try to get out at least once a day for a walk (if you are able to) and give yourself things to look forward to each day.

## 5. Routine

Have a shower, get dressed, grab a cup of coffee, do a quick workout, have a decent breakfast, do some meditation, watch a funny Youtube video – whatever it is, create a routine that starts your day positively, and ends with you doing work. Sticking to a regular schedule for the rest of the day comes next. Installing an automatic time-tracking app, such as RescueTime, lets you check in on whether you're sticking to your schedule.



# PRESENTATION SKILLS

**Some people are terrified at the idea of speaking in front of others, but being able to give a presentation is something you may need within Higher Education, and a useful skill to have throughout your career.**

**Here's a few places that can help:**

- Check out the **University of Liverpool's** Know How guide on preparing and delivering presentations.
- Have a look at **Liverpool Hope University's** Presentation Skills workshop which takes you through every step and even looks at presenting online!
- **Youth Employment UK** have an **online course** that looks at speaking, teamwork and creativity skills plus much more.





# ESSAY WRITING

**Today we are looking at writing essays, we will:**

- Learn how to construct an essay – planning and structure
- Learn to recognise different command words
- Learn some top tips for essay writing



# HOW TO PLAN AN ESSAY

**What is the purpose of your essay?** Your essay must always stick to a purpose- what's the point of writing it? What are you trying to achieve? An essay without purpose is likely to become unfocused and not make much sense.

## Activity

Pick two essay questions from the following list and, in **ONE** sentence, sum up the purpose of the essay.

**Example – Should school should start at 10am?**

Answer – School should start later because it will improve the concentration and wellbeing of students.

**Argue why Liverpool/Everton/other team will win the league.**

**Fortnite is the best game in the last 10 years, discuss.**

**Critically discuss the following statement “Facebook is bad for young people's self-esteem and confidence”**

**Explain the main themes in Riverdale.**

**Justify the claim that Cheerleading is a sport.**

**Contrast the arguments for and against school starting at 10am.**



# COMMAND WORDS

The wording of essay questions is very important. Each question will have a command word: this gives you a clear idea about how to answer the question. Remember, it's all about answering the question how the examiner wants it to be answered.

## Activity

Try and match these command words to the correct definition

**A) Contrast**



Evaluate or estimate the nature, ability, or quality of something.

**B) Explain**



The state of being strikingly different from something else, typically something in juxtaposition or close association.

**C) Describe**



Show or prove to be right or reasonable.

**D) Justify**



Make an idea, situation or problem clear (to someone) by describing it in detail revealing relevant data or facts.

**E) Assess**



Give an account in words of (someone or something) including all of the relevant characteristics, qualities or events.



# COMMAND WORDS

## Answers!

### Explain

Make an idea, situation or problem clear (to someone) by describing it in detail revealing relevant data or facts.

### Describe

Give an account in words of (someone or something) including all of the relevant characteristics, qualities or events.

### Assess

Evaluate or estimate the nature, ability, or quality of something.

### Contrast

The state of being strikingly different from something else, typically something in juxtaposition or close association.

### Justify

Show or prove to be right or reasonable.

**How did you do?**

Here are the correct answers. How many did you get correct out of 5? Now we have the definitions, but what does that mean for your essay? When you see one of these words in your essay question, this is what the assessor is looking for:

Command word	What assessors want
<b>Explain</b>	The marker wants you to demonstrate your knowledge on a subject
<b>Describe</b>	The marker wants you give detail and "paint a picture" of the subject
<b>Assess</b>	The marker wants you to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a subject
<b>Contrast</b>	To discuss the differences between two subjects – for example contrast two different poems but two authors.
<b>Justify</b>	The marker wants you to argue FOR a particular position, using evidence to back up your argument.



# STRUCTURE

There is no single way to structure an essay; different structures will work better for different subjects. The most important thing is for the essay to have a structure, and you try to stick to it throughout! Here are a few examples of basic structures;

## ① DISCUSS

Introduction  
↓  
Theme one  
↓  
Theme two  
↓  
Theme three  
↓  
Conclusion

## ② CRITIQUE

Introduction  
↓  
Argument one  
↓  
Critique of argument one  
↓  
Argument two  
↓  
Critique of Argument two  
↓  
Conclusion

## ③ CRITIQUE

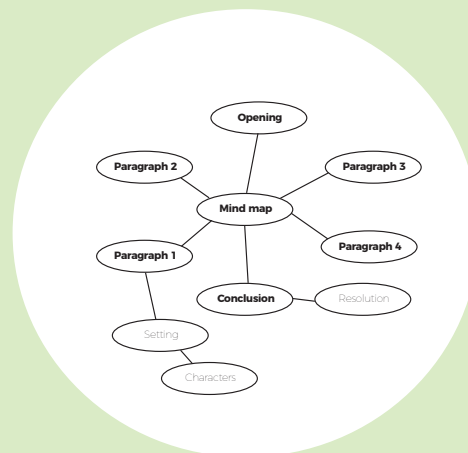
Introduction  
↓  
Argument one  
↓  
Argument two  
↓  
Critique of argument one  
↓  
Critique of argument two  
↓  
Conclusion

# STRUCTURE

Whichever way you decide to structure your essay, just making the decision is the most important thing. Take the time to make a clear plan before you start writing it. There are multiple methods of doing this and we will briefly touch on some of them now.

## Mind maps

A mind map is a visual way of planning where keywords are used to connect ideas with lines. Mind maps are a flexible way of jotting down ideas and making links. You can easily add to a mind map as you go along.

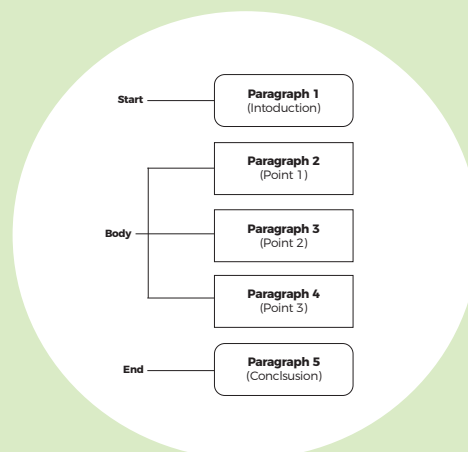


## Bullet Points

When you plan with bullet points, you essentially make a list. This can be good to make sure you are not missing anything. You could list all of the sections of your essay with what you want to include.

## Flow Chart

A flow chart is like a mind map that provides a visual structure for planning. It helps you to order your ideas and paragraphs into an effective structure. Some writers find a flow chart helps them focus on each important stage of the writing process.



# TABLES

Evaluation tables help students to critique or make a detailed assessment of the material. An example is given below. This is taken from A Level Psychology. The study could easily be replaced by an interpretation of a historical event, a philosophical argument, a scientific experiment and so on.

Study	Strengths	Weaknesses
'Bobo Doll' study	Control group used	Potentially unethical
	Pre-screening for aggression; children sorted into groups containing similar mixtures of personalities	May have shown behaviour imitative of adults rather than simply aggressive
	Findings corroborated by greater amount of male than female violence in society	Sample lacked variation

## Activity

Here are some essay titles – try and plan your essay using one of the methods outlined above.

1. Argue why Liverpool should/shouldn't be crowned champions.
2. Fortnite is the best game in the last 10 years, discuss.
3. Critically discuss the following statement – "Facebook is bad for young people's self esteem and confidence".
4. Explain the main themes in Riverdale.
5. Justify the claim that Cheerleading is a sport.
6. Contrast the arguments for and against school starting at 10am.

## Top tips! Do's and Don'ts

**Do** – plan your argument before you start writing

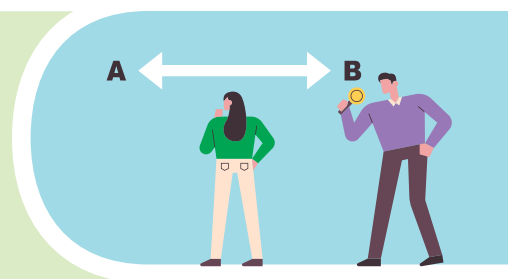
**Don't** – waffle to fill up space: keep it to the point

**Do** – answer the question you are being asked – take notice of the command words

**Don't** – just scribble down anything and everything you can remember about the topic

**Do** – write an introduction and a conclusion

**Don't** – think you have to write the introduction first and the conclusion last!



# CRITICAL READING

No matter what subject you study at university you'll be required to read a great deal of books, journals and articles.

During your time at university, you'll learn that you read for a number of various purposes:

- For specific information
- For understanding – to get a general overview of a topic
- For analysis – thorough critical analysis of sources helps you get higher marks

Complete **this** tutorial to understand what critical reading means and learn strategies that will help you with critically evaluating an academic source.



# REVIEW



**Using the skills you have learnt this week, have a go at reading one of the articles below and answering the questions:**

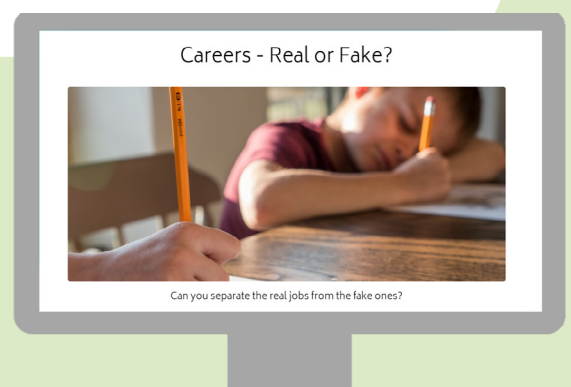
Read the following **History** article on the **Nuclear Bomb** then answer the questions below. Keep your answers to below 200 words. Alternatively, make a presentation reviewing the piece.

1. Why did the government produce Civil Defence Handbook No. 10?
2. Is the advice outlined in the pamphlet valid? Explain your answer.
3. Was the 'York Experiment' a success?

Read the following **Psychology** article on **Brainwave Analysis** then answer the questions below. Keep your answers to below 200 words. Alternatively, make a presentation reviewing the piece.

1. In what ways could the EEG analysis described in the article be valuable for law enforcement?
2. Why has this technology not been used more widely by prosecutors so far?
3. Does the author think the technology will be used more extensively in the future? Do you agree?

You can also take **this quiz** to test your knowledge!



## Study Skills Audit

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**Remember to share the completed form with us!**

email [admin@shaping-futures.info](mailto:admin@shaping-futures.info)  
[www.shaping-futures.org.uk](http://www.shaping-futures.org.uk)



Tell us what you think ...  
Click here to fill in our survey



# OTHER RESOURCES

**Here's a list of resources we can recommend to support you developing your study skills further!**

- **BBC Bitesize**  
Check out their **revision top tips** and download their app so you can take your revision tools wherever you go!
- **UCAS**  
UCAS have produced a series of study skills guides to help you successfully make the transition to higher education.
- **The Open University**  
This online help centre has a detailed section on preparing for and completing exams as well as various other useful resources.
- **The Brilliant Club**  
The Brilliant Club have tones of videos on the difference between school and university and the skills needed to succeed.
- **Liverpool John Moores University**  
Liverpool John Moores have a comprehensive online delivery programme for students with lots of useful information and support.
- **Edge Hill University**  
Edge Hill has a huge amount of resources and tips focusing on Higher Education study skills, which are great if you're preparing to study at that level soon!

# SHAPING FUTURES

The Merseyside Collaborative  
Outreach Programme



Tell us what you think ...  
**Click here to fill in our survey**

## Contact us

You can contact us by  
email [admin@shaping-futures.info](mailto:admin@shaping-futures.info)  
or [www.shaping-futures.org.uk](http://www.shaping-futures.org.uk)

## Chat to us!

Got questions? **Click here**  
chat to one of our team,  
we are here to help.



@shapingfutures\_

