



A-Level Revision Guide

GORDON'S SCHOOL SIXTH FORM REVISION

INTRODUCTION

This booklet contains important information regarding study tips and should be used as a starting point for your revision preparation. Each department has explained what they require of you over the holidays, and has set you structured work to complete. Using this booklet as a guide will help you revise effectively.



ORGANISATION

If you break this down into manageable blocks you will find that you can work through everything more effectively. You will need to spend **at least 6- 8 hours** on **each** of your subjects **per week**. The most important starting point is to **be as organised as possible** – this means organising your folders, books, notes and any additional resources or revision material you have gathered over the course of the year so far. Once you have done this, you can begin to think about setting out a revision timetable and working through the different topics in each of your subjects.

In your **student planner** you will find the guidelines of how your folders should be organised.

There are several revision timetables in your planner. When you make your **revision timetable**, think about setting it out to **match the school day** as this is a familiar working routine for you – give yourself 2 'lessons' in the morning and then have a break, follow this by another 2 and then lunch etc. You can even give yourself a 5 minute break between 'lessons' to get up and move about – it is important not to remain sat at your desk too long; your mind will work more effectively if you exercise and energise yourself at regular intervals. Don't forget to also consider sleep and food as important companions to effective learning and ensure that you drink plenty of water whilst you revise.

Revision Timetable

| Time | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|---------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| 8:00am | | | | | | | |
| 9:00am | | | | | | | |
| 10:00am | | | | | | | |
| 11:00am | | | | | | | |
| 12:00pm | | | | | | | |
| 1:00pm | | | | | | | |
| 2:00pm | | | | | | | |
| 3:00pm | | | | | | | |
| 4:00pm | | | | | | | |
| 5:00pm | | | | | | | |
| 6:00pm | | | | | | | |
| 7:00pm | | | | | | | |
| 8:00pm | | | | | | | |
| 9:00pm | | | | | | | |

REVISION GUIDELINES

1. MANAGEABLE CHUNKS

The most effective way to approach your revision is to divide your subject work up into different units or Topics – this will continue your ability to organise your work and will allow you to approach your revision in small, manageable chunks.

2. RAG EXAM SPECIFICATION

Carefully go through your exam specification, topic by topic, and highlight the areas you feel confident in using a **green** colour, those you are unsure of in **amber/yellow** and those you still do not feel confident in at all as **red**. Be guided by this and prioritise the **red/amber** areas.

3. REVISION TECHNIQUES

The main focus should be **active revision**. Reading the textbook will not produce good results on its own.

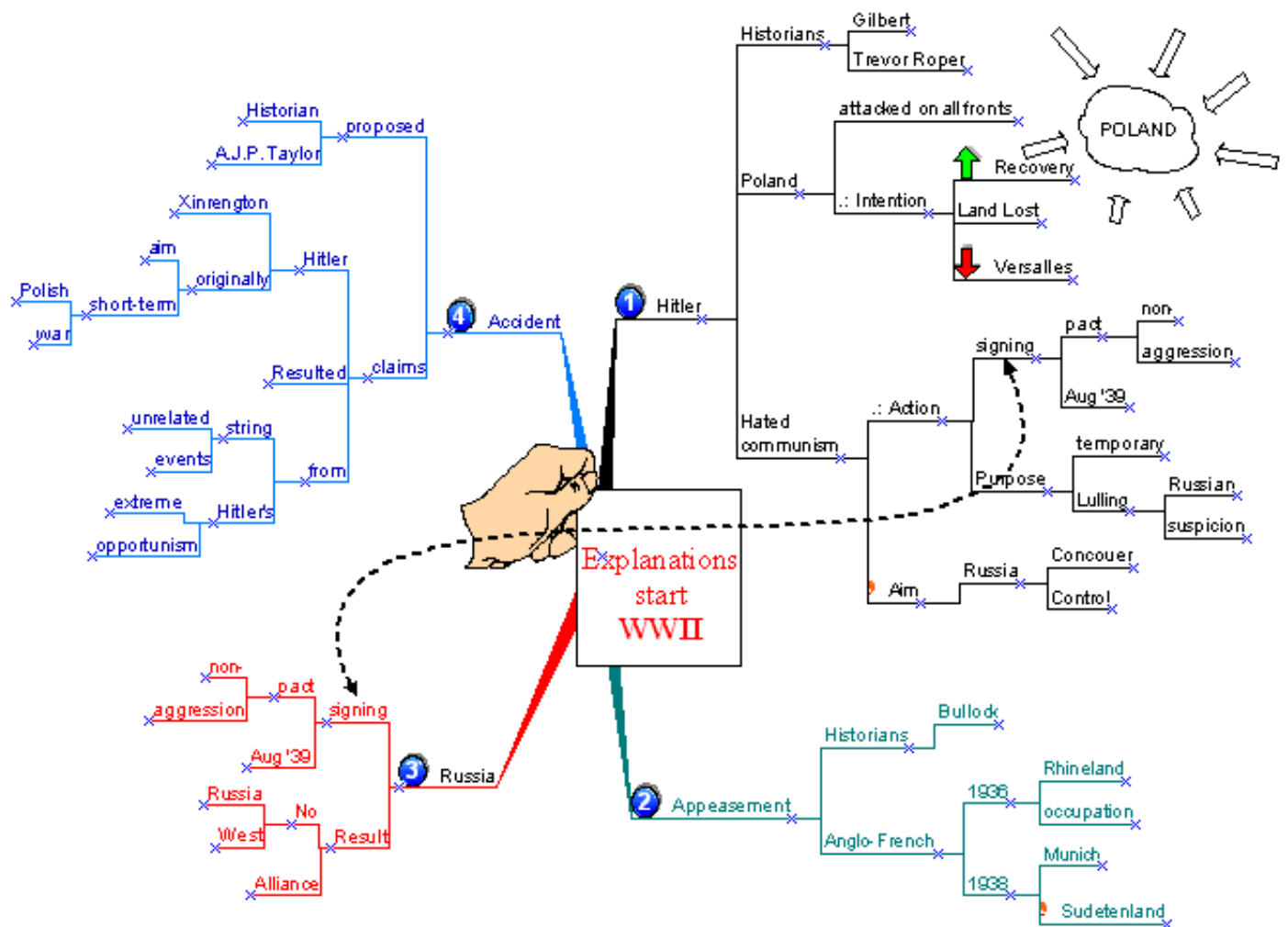


1. Read through your notes and break them into sub-topics; write summaries, create your own exam questions, and ask critical questions.
2. Build up a subject glossary e.g. vocabulary & definitions.
3. Recall what you have read: mnemonics, outlines, plans and diagrams. Prioritise topics you find difficult.
4. Practise: past papers, plans, problem solving. Devise potential exam questions and then answer them or use questions from the exam board website.
5. Practise questions in timed conditions only when you have revised the material: write out a plan for an ideal answer and then revise from this outline essay plan. Only then try it as a timed piece.
6. Learn how you are to be assessed as much as what is being assessed – use the Assessment Objectives and mark schemes to help with this.
7. Use practical strategies to suit your learning style e.g.
 - i. Visual - colour coding, creating posters of quotations, mind maps, index cards etc.
 - ii. Auditory - Record your notes and play them back, fit notes to a favourite tune, discuss and answer questions orally, test yourself with a friend.
 - iii. Kinaesthetic – Move around your room or house and allocate certain pieces of furniture or even different rooms to each topic, leave yourself post-it notes on the stairs etc.

At the end of each revision session **test yourself** in the way you will be tested in the examination i.e. try a **timed exam question, write a timed essay** or complete a table or task using the information revised. This is something to return to school with, ready for feedback from your teachers. Mark your completed test using mark schemes so you learn what the examining board is expecting.

REVISION IDEAS: MINDMAPS

MIND MAPS: Make mind-maps or association maps rather than taking linear notes. Mapping your notes by radiating key words out in a pattern of links from a central point will make best use of your memory. If you use colour and images on the maps, you'll be harnessing the power of both sides of your brain - creative and logical.



REVISION IDEAS: FLASH CARDS



Use cards. Write **questions** on one side and **answers** on the other. Then get your family to test you. Merely creating the cards will help your recall. You can also use them to test yourself when faced with 'dead' time at bus stops or waiting for someone. This helps long term memory as it is based on rehearsal and also practise application of material.

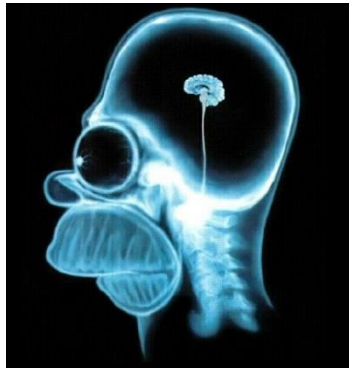
REVISION IDEAS: METHOD OF LOCI

The oldest known mnemonic strategy is called the method of loci ("loci" is the plural of locus, which means location, or place). It's based on the assumption that you can best remember places that you are familiar with, so if you can link something you need to remember with a place that you know very well, the location will serve as a clue that will help you to remember.

HOW IT WORKS: Physical learning: **Use the environment** Use a different room for each subject.

- ❖ Notice aspects of the environment such as the light or feel of the room - how do you feel in that place?
- ❖ Attach your notes to the furniture. Notice their location.
- ❖ Associate a different location with each subject. Associate furniture, windows, plants and ornaments with particular topics.
- ❖ When you want to remember the items, simply visualize your house and go through it room by room in your mind. Each item that you associated with a specific location in your house should spring to mind as you mentally make your way through your home.

IMPROVING MEMORY



We often blame our memory for poor academic performance ("I'm no good at remembering names / dates / rules / verbs / characteristics") when really we should be addressing our faulty input and storage system. There is a big difference between short-term and long-term memory. If you study a topic one night and can recall most of it the next morning, don't be fooled into thinking that you will be able to remember it accurately in two months time.

If the goal is to improve your long-term memory, then the key to success is based on the efficiency of input (the 'mental filing system' we employ). Reducing the burden on the limited short-term memory, and channelling information into long-term storage, is based on the creation of patterns and the avoidance of randomness.

TECHNIQUES FOR IMPROVING MEMORY:

- **'Chunking':** as the average person can only hold seven 'items' in short-term memory, grouping items together into 'chunks' can increase capacity. This is generally used for remembering numbers (think of how you remember phone numbers by grouping the seven digits into 2 or 3 chunks) but can be applied to other listings in various subjects.
- **Repetition:** Studies indicate that 66% of material is forgotten within seven days if it is not reviewed or recited again by the student, and 88% is gone after six weeks. Don't make life harder for yourself - build in a brief daily and weekly review of material covered. It will save you having to re-learn material from scratch!
- **Application and association:** The best way to channel material to long-term memory is to organise it into meaningful associations. Link it to existing information and topics and create vivid personal examples which act as 'mental hooks' or 'cues' for recalling material in the future. Thus, new items are put in context. If you learn a new formula / verb / rule, try to put it into practice immediately with a relevant example.
- **Use of mnemonics:** these are various word games which can act as memory aids and which allow personalisation and creativity. Think of *stalactites* (come down from the ceiling) and *stalagmites* (go

up from the ground); the colours of the rainbow - **Roy G. Biv** ('Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain' to remember red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet); the seven characteristics of living organisms - **Mr. Grief** (**M**ovement, **R**eproduction, **G**rowth, **R**espiration, **I**rritability, **E**xcretion, **F**eeding). You can devise many more of these to aid your personalised recall of items in your subjects.

SUMMARY: EFFECTIVE REVISION STRATEGIES

Now that you know some good methods for revising, here is some advice to help you spend your time more effectively:

1. Start to revise early in the holidays - don't wait until it's too late.
2. Avoid long spells of just reading – this is not the most effective way to learn and remember information.
3. Practise answering exam questions.
4. Work in lots of short spells rather than a few long ones.
5. Use any available time to revise – this could be on a long journey, at Granny's house etc.
6. Give yourself variety - don't use the same method over and over again and don't stay on one topic too long.
7. Practise important things many times. Make sure that you can apply what you know to new situations or a variety of exam questions.

TOP TIPS

HOW TO ORGANISE YOURSELF



The best way to organise is the one that works for you. There is no golden rule that works for everyone. These are general ideas that may help you to work out your own system for organising your time.

DO:

- Work out how much time you have available, and when.
- Use a timetable to fill in times you know you will be doing other things e.g. Sunday lunch with family etc. Only then can you know how much time you have to revise in.
- List the tasks you have to complete before you fill in the rest of the timetable. Use the revision booklets and guidance given in class to work out what has to be done. Work out priorities between these tasks. Make decisions about how long to spend on each task and set targets for each period of revision.
- Revision takes many forms; it is active and requires you to do something beyond reading.
- Organise pieces of work (essays, exam practice papers) into smaller, less daunting tasks.

DON'T:

- Don't try to do it all at once.
- Neglect any of your courses, especially those you find relatively easy or particularly difficult.
- Drift from essay deadline to essay deadline. While working on an essay in one course, you should continue reading and preparing for other courses.
- Don't allow yourself to be distracted. **Stick to your timetable.**

REST & RELAXATION



Finally, remember that you will need to allow your mind and body to rest and recuperate from both this busy term and after each day of revising. If you are following a revision timetable based on the school day you can use time in the evenings and at weekends to schedule time off for relaxing, going to the gym or seeing friends. Think of this as your reward for a good day's work. Remember that all rewards have to be earned so unless the day has been productive, you have not earned this time off.

You may have commitments during the break with your family and need a few days off revision. If this is the case, enjoy yourself and arrange a revision timetable which ensures that you fit all the studying in to two weeks instead.

However, **beware** of giving yourself too much time off and using the idea of recovering as an excuse to avoid revision – displacement activities such as cleaning your room and tidying the garage can wait!!



USING THE EXAMINER'S EXPERTISE

The job of examiners is to give you marks, not to take them away, but they are powerless to help you if you fall into the most common traps. These are the biggest pitfalls they have identified:

- **Not reading the paper correctly:** Examiners say that this is one of the most regular and fatal errors. They call it the 'triggered answer'. You have your pre-prepared answer ready but you don't look at the exact terms/phrase of the question and therefore supply the wrong information in your answer.
- **Not finishing the paper:** Mis-managing your time within the exam can easily cost you a full grade. The biggest exam 'crime' is to leave suitable questions un-attempted. Remember, it is much easier to get the first 20% of the marks for any question than the last 5%. Therefore, if you find yourself stuck for time as you struggle through your third answer out of five, do not spend your remaining time extending and perfecting that answer. Instead, move on to questions four and five, even if your attempt is sketched or in point form. If you have answered only three questions instead of five, the highest mark you can get is 60%!
- **Ignoring the Mark Scheme:** You must take the mark scheme into account when you allocate time to each question or part of a question. If the marks allotted to a question clearly indicate that a few paragraphs are sufficient, do not write an essay on the subject! Avoid the temptation of writing everything you know about a topic – always give the appropriate amount of information.
- **Repetition:** Make the point once. There are no extra marks for restating facts, even if you phrase them differently. Examiners say repetition is a very common mistake. It is also a time-waster and an irritant for the examiner – and you do not want to irritate your examiner!
- **Missing part of a question:** Sometimes, part of a question can be carried onto the next page and, in the pressure of the moment, you don't see it. As a consequence you might fail to do a compulsory part of a question or miss out on the chance to take an option that would have suited you better. Always take time to familiarise yourself with the whole paper before you start answering it.
- **Know your Assessment Objectives:** When you attempt exam questions, ensure that you know how you are going to be assessed. All subjects have strict Assessment Objectives and Mark Schemes which are on the exam board websites. Look at these and ensure you both understand them, and that you follow them closely.

Good luck! A period of hard work now will support your chances of celebrating when you open that envelope in August!