

South Craven Exam Preparation 2019



"You mustn't rely upon anyone else. It's going to be you who defines the way forward".

Lord Alan Sugar

Introduction

A set of grades at GCSE that reflect the best of you is a vital and necessary tool in terms of ensuring that you provide yourself with the best opportunities for the future.

It is essential that you prepare well for your GCSEs. You can do this by starting your exam preparation earlier rather than later, by staying positive and by developing better study skills.

Some key areas to work on include:

- Time management
- Stress management
- Identifying preparation and revision techniques that work for you.
- Utilising all the resources at your disposal.

Remember study skills are meant to make learning more effective and more satisfying. We all have unique learning styles and you will need to try multiple approaches and techniques to identify which ones work best for you.

Your teachers are committed to your success and will do all they can to help you but the responsibility is on you to identify areas that require improvement and address them. Show courage in accepting the challenges that your examination subjects will produce and ensure you are fully prepared to face them.

Work hard – this is the simplest way to get good results.

Focus on exam preparation – pay no attention to how much or how little other people claim to be doing.

Nobody got anywhere by putting things off.

If you think you can do a thing or you think you can't do a thing, you're right.

Mr Lovell

9 TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESS

1. **Have a dedicated work area** - It should be quiet and free from distractions and interruptions.
2. **Create a revision timetable** – Draw up a revision timetable in partnership with your exam timetable. Follow this timetable! It should be realistic, covering all your examined subjects and allowing you time to relax and short breaks within revision sessions. You can create an interactive revision timetable at www.revisionworld.co.uk.
3. **Use Active Revision Strategies** – Don't just read through class work notes or copy them out again. This is passive and will not enable you to learn. You must *do* something with the content and skills you are revisiting. See the information on active strategies later in the guide.
4. **Revision guides** – Teachers have already recommended the best revision guides for their examination subjects. Ensure you have all the relevant ones or agree with a couple of friends that you will split the subjects between each other and share the revision guides for full coverage.
5. **Prioritise** – Try to revisit subjects and areas of subjects that you find most challenging or confusing initially. You will also get a huge sense of satisfaction from mastering areas of your subjects that have eluded you before.
6. **Prompts** – Put key words/phrases/quotes/equations/facts on PostIt notes around your house and bedroom so you have visual reminders to help you embed the information. Your parents can also see how committed you are to your exams and can test you on these PostIt notes. You can make electronic flashcards for your computer at www.quizlet.com.
7. **Seek help!** Get friends and family and form tutors on board to help you revisit skills and content. If you revise with a friend arrange beforehand what the aim of the session is and what you want to get out of it – it's too easy to drift off task otherwise.
8. **Mark schemes** – Make sure you have mark schemes for all your examination areas and understand precisely what the examiners will be looking for in each question. These documents are vital as they tell you exactly what examiners need to see. All you have to then do in each exam is deliver this to them – simples!
9. **Use the internet effectively** – Learn how to resource exactly what you need. To get best results, type in the name of the exam board, module and topic followed by what you want, e.g “mind map”. Cutting and pasting does nothing, you may feel busy but you are not learning anything.



Managing your time

Planning your work through a revision timetable helps to ensure that you revise all of your subjects properly.



Guidelines for Revision:

- 2 hours of revision each week night is a minimum requirement. Clearly weekends and holidays allow you to revise for more hours – remember the standard school day is approximately 8 hours!
- Set aside time each day for hobbies, relaxation and fun. Give yourself the odd night off on your revision planner.
- Working to a timetable of actions and subjects helps to reduce stress levels by putting you in control.
- Make a list of all the topics you need to revise in each examination subject area first, this will ensure that you cover all aspects of the course and can prioritise those areas of the subject you are least sure about for action first.
- Give more time to subject topics that are challenging.
- Don't be put off by the volume of work – good planning keeps your work load in perspective.

Managing your stress



It is natural to feel a little stressed and anxious about the challenges ahead. Any “pre-match nerves” will most likely leave you once you have started the exam itself but staff and parents recognise that you are going through a crucial process.

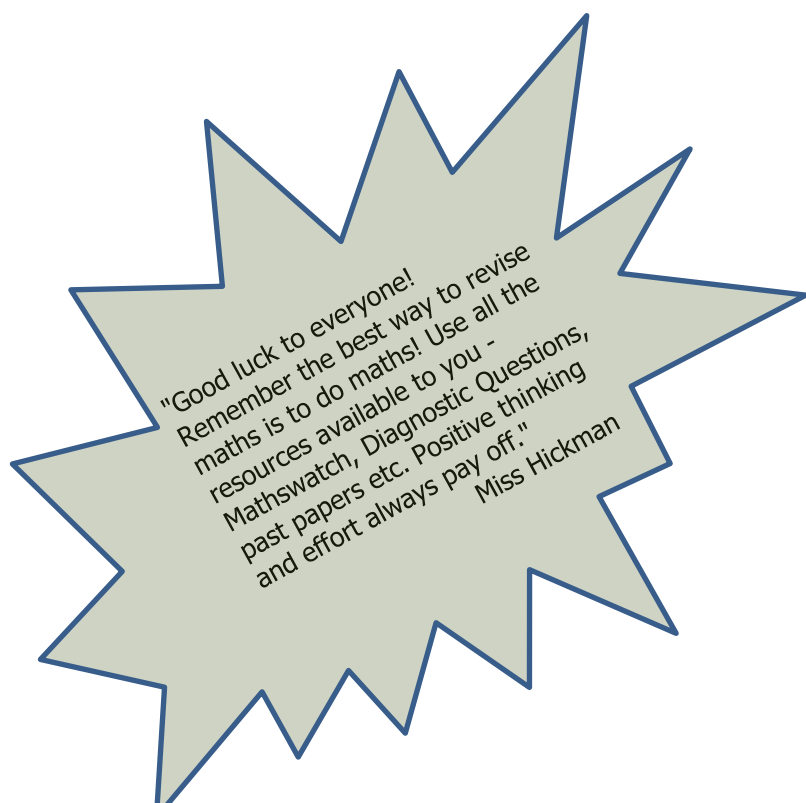
Guidelines for Stress Management:

- Develop a positive self-talk. If something is challenging it is only because you have not grasped it “yet”, not because you fundamentally cannot do it. **You can!**
- Slow and steady wins the race. Exam preparation is a marathon not a sprint so pace your revision to minimise stress. Putting it off only enhances the stress.
- Communicate openly with your teachers, friends, parents and the pastoral team about any aspects of the examination process that are creating stress for you. There may be solutions you have not thought of while even the process of discussing the issue has been shown scientifically to release stress levels.
- Visit the Mindfulness materials that Mr Lonsdale has set up for you on the VLE and work on some relaxation techniques. [Mindfulness techniques](#).
- Eat healthily, stay hydrated with water, maximize sleep and punctuate your revision with some exercise.

What makes a good revision session?

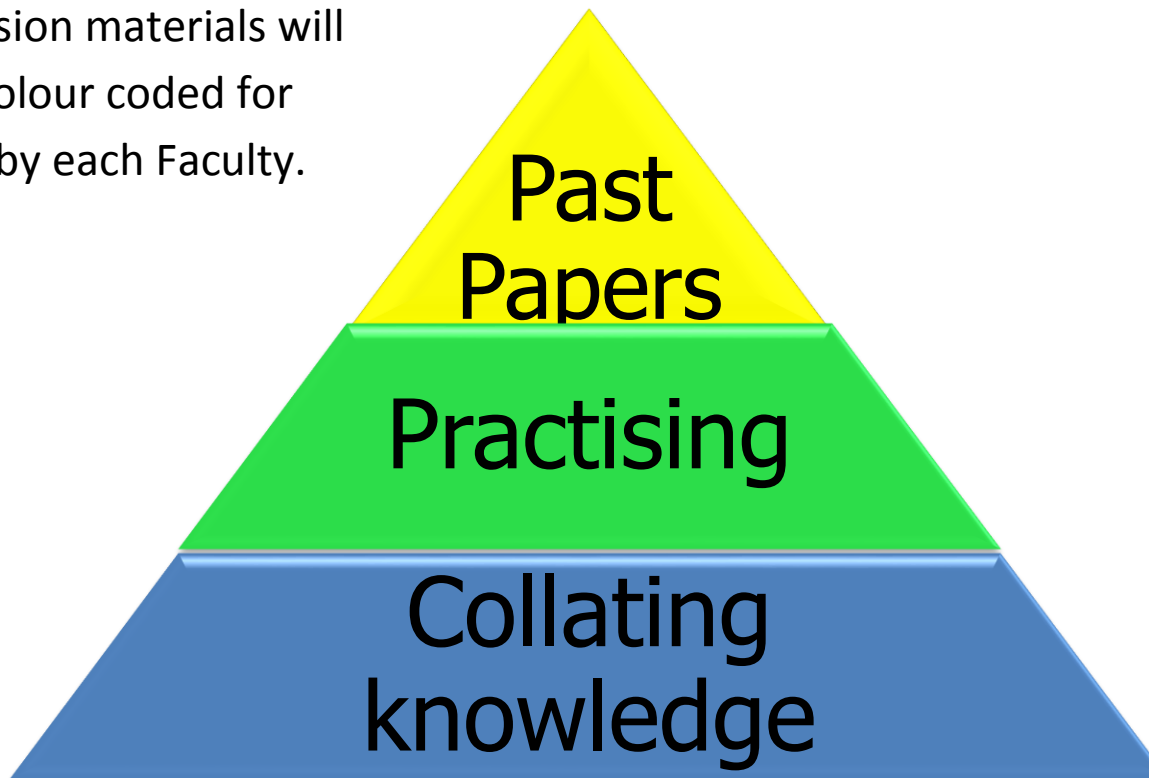
- A good revision session will last 2 hours broken up into four or five 15 to 20 minute sessions with breaks built in.
- You will need to set tasks for each revision session that you map out on your revision timetable. Until the start of May it is advisable to focus on content and knowledge acquisition and then applying the specific exam skills to this content. Completing full past papers at this stage of your revision can reinforce misconceptions or can mean that you are performing a skill incorrectly without realising it.
- Each session should involve different examination subject areas or topics.
- Find out which study skills techniques work best for you in your different subject areas and become expert at using them.
- The diagram below shows how you could break up a one hour session.
- At the end of every hour session make sure you review your learning, don't move on until you have grasped the topic you have been focusing on.
- Keep all your revision materials in one place neatly organised into different subjects then topics.
- Make sure you have produced something physical at the end of the session that you can use to refresh your learning when you return to the topic again.

5	20	5	15	5	10
EXERCISE	Mind Map Notes	DRINK	Reading Highlight Keywords Post It Notes OR Review previous topic summary	RELAX	Review Test Yourself Check
0-5 mins	5- 25 mins	25-30	30-45 mins	45-50	50-60 mins



The South Craven Exam Preparation Pyramid

Revision materials will be colour coded for you by each Faculty.



Collating knowledge

- Create flash cards of key information
- Create evolving mind maps of facts and ideas
- Create revision posters detailing requirements for each question on an exam
- Create quizzes on each question/text/topic
- Create timelines or flow charts
- Create Venn diagrams comparing points in different texts
- Write exam style questions for an extract

Practising

- Answer quiz questions
- Write an opening paragraph to writing questions
- Plan answers to questions
- Cover and remember key quotes
- Write an explanation of how structure is used to engage the reader in an extract you choose.
- Rank the factors that led to the rise of Hitler in terms of their importance and impact.
- Summarise in your own words a topic you find hard after researching it in a revision guide.

Warning:

Do not attempt past papers until the beginning of May. Embed knowledge and hone your skills first!

Online resources

These are excellent for establishing and securing content knowledge but Examiners are looking for original thought. Ensure that you are not simply regurgitating or trying to remember what GCSEPod said, but instead stand out by answering the question naturally and fluently.

Study Skills – techniques.

It is essential that you establish which study skills are most effective for your individual learning style. You have been introduced to a number of different skills throughout Year 11 but settle on a few which are most productive for you. Remember, certain techniques may lend themselves better to certain subjects.

- 1) Detailed observation – here you focus very closely on a small piece of text or an image, picture or diagram with the intention of understanding the very close detail and small differences within the subject.
- 2) Cover and remember – with this technique you will write down a phrase or quote and then cover it over and try to recall what it said. Both speaking it aloud and writing it again without cheating will help to embed the words in your mind.
- 3) 5 whys? – Here you think of an event or action and try to find five reasons why that event or action occurred. For each of the five reasons you identify try to think of five reasons behind each of them. This helps to ensure you have a deep understanding of your subject or topic.
- 4) Evolving mind map – Starting with general ideas zoom in onto a very specific area your mind map has uncovered and develop that aspect further recalling as much information as you can on that specific area.
- 5) Timelines and flow charts – create a timeline or flow chart of events. Learn this, write it down in the reverse order, randomise it and then place it back into the correct order without looking at your original timeline or flow chart.

Perform,
Believe,
Achieve!

Mrs Taylor

- 6) Rank or prioritise information - think of as many factors as you can that may have contributed to an event and then rank them in order of most impact or importance to least impact or importance.

- 7) Mnemonics – personalised memory aids which help you remember facts. Eg – seven characteristics of living organisms – Mr.Grief (Movement, Reproduction, Growth, Respiration, Irritability, Excretion, Feeding).

- 8) Demystify the text – look up keywords that are new to you or words that you do not understand the meaning of to aid you in comprehending an idea or piece of writing. Having learnt the meaning of the word you can now add them to your own vocabulary as well.

- 9) Record – record quotes, facts and mathematical rules onto your device and then play them back to you at night as you fall asleep and in the morning as you get ready for school. Repetitive hearing is a great way of absorbing information as is the act of reading the information aloud in the first instance.

Review your work and return often to your notes. Once you have secured an area try to:

- a) Simplify and reduce – condense your knowledge into one A4 side of everything you need to know for a particular exam.

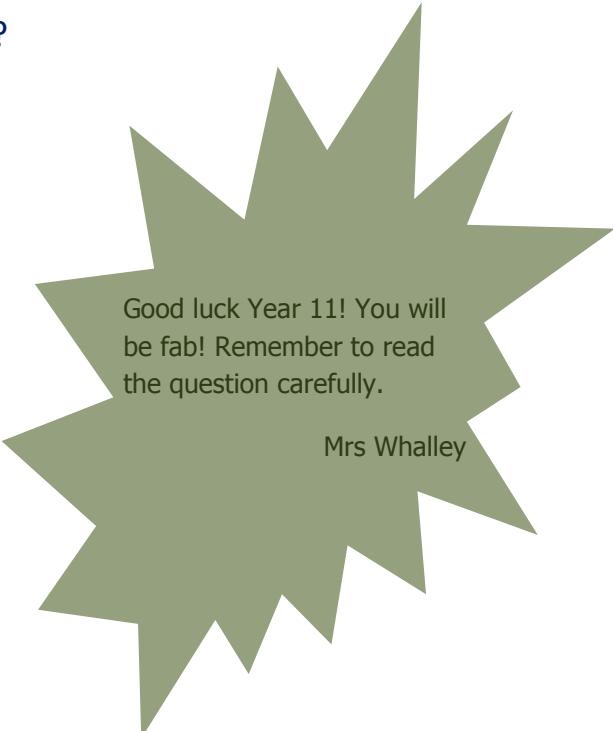
Then

- b) Topic explosion – take your one page list and try to write as much as you can about each of the points on it.

Study Skills – Active revision

Use some of these question stems to describe what you know about a topic or subject area.

- Can you list three.....?
- What is your opinion of....?
- Can you select....?
- What facts would you select to show....?
- Can you explain what is happening.....?
- Can you list the parts.....?
- What is meant....?
- What ideas justify.....?
- How would you summarise.....?
- How could you determine....?
- What would happen if.....?
- What information would you use to ...?
- What evidence can you find for....?
- Support your view on....?
- What can you say about.....?
- How would you prioritise.....?
- How is related to ?
- What is the function of.....?
- Why do you think?
- How would you use....?
- What conclusions can you draw....?
- What is the relationship between.....?



Good luck Year 11! You will be fab! Remember to read the question carefully.

Mrs Whalley

Examination advice – 5 Pitfalls

Examiners are instructed by the exam boards to mark positively. Their job is to find marks in your responses, not look to take them away, but despite their best intentions they cannot help you if you fall into these common traps.

- **Not reading the instructions on the exam or the question carefully.** Examiners across the country will tell you this is one of the most regular and fatal errors. You see a question on a topic and answer the question that you had already prepared on the topic rather than answering the specific question in the exam. This is called the “triggered answer”, you believe you are answering the question but you have not identified exactly what the question is asking for and therefore write the wrong thing. Alternatively, you might be asked to answer either question 1 **or** 2 but in the moment of the exam you misinterpret this instruction and answer 1 **and** 2. Always look through the whole paper and understand exactly which questions you need to answer before you start writing any responses.
- **Not finishing the paper.** Mismanaging your time or simply running out of effort and will can make you a full grade or more in your examination subjects. The biggest exam “crime” is to leave unanswered questions in the exam you could have answered if you had got to them. If you are really beginning to struggle to extend or perfect an answer then move on to the next question. You can always go back and write more if you have time at the end of the exam having completed all the questions. Remember if you only answer three questions out of five you are already limiting yourself to a maximum of 60% on the exam.
- **Ignoring the mark scheme:** You must keep the mark scheme and allocated marks to each question in your head when working through the exam. Your exam preparation will have ensured you are aware what the mark scheme requires from each question. In the exam a question worth 4 marks will be requiring a far shorter answer than a question worth 16 marks. Ensure that you allocate your time and the volume of answer that you deliver in line with the marks for each question. Never write everything you know about a subject – just provide the appropriate and relevant information to answer the specific question successfully.
- **Repetition:** Make the point once. You do not get any more marks for restating facts, even if you phrase them differently. Explore one idea fully in as much complexity as you can and then move on to a different idea. Examiners say repetition is a very common mistake, it wastes your time as it does not secure you any additional marks and it can irritate examiners who are trying to be positive about your responses.
- **Rough work, working out and planning:** Ensure this is on show in your exam paper. You may get some credit for ideas or formulae or calculations in your rough work and working out.

Examination advice – 5 Golden rules

- 1) Stay calm and allow yourself time to read the examination paper carefully. The natural inclination is to launch into a favourite topic or question and start writing. Resist this urge. Take a breath, take your time and focus your mind. Be smart and size-up what the whole paper requires before beginning to write.
- 2) Stick to your game plan. You should go into each exam with a strategy for how you are going to approach the exam. This should include the subject areas or topics you wish to write about, an understanding of what each skills or knowledge each question will be asking and a plan on the sequence in which you will answer the questions. For example, English Language Paper 2 you should begin with Q5. In some cases the exam will be exactly as you wished and had planned but there may be some surprises, keep your cool and trust your judgement. You should make many of these strategic decisions in consultation with your subject teachers.
- 3) Sweep up any mistakes: In the pressure of the exam hall it is easy to fall into simple errors. Always leave time at the end of the exam to proof read for mistakes. For example in maths and Science have you labelled your answers with the correct units, in English have you used capital letters at the start of sentences and for proper nouns.
- 4) Attempt all questions: It is amazing how many exam scripts are passed to examiners unfinished. This can be catastrophic for your exam performance as it means that even the best prepared students underachieve. Work on the basis that you will have written a response to every required question. It is much easier to score marks early in a question and you can always leave room to go back to a question you are struggling to develop in the exam. You can always polish an answer up in the last few minutes of an exam but if you have not even attempted a question the examiner must give you a 0 for that question.
- 5) Keep your eye on the clock. The exam paper will give you guidelines of time. Stick to them.

Use a black pen.
Make sure you have eaten before
your exam.

Mrs Buchanan

Performing throughout the exam period

- a) **Get a good night's sleep** – while you may believe the more you “cram” the night before the more success you will have in the exam, all evidence suggests this approach is counterproductive. The most you should need to do is refresh your one page A4 document where you have summarised all you need to know for the exam. The rest of the work has already been done and any attempt to learn new ideas at this point will result in underperformance.
- b) **Arrive in plenty of time** – To perform well you must feel relaxed and in control. You need some calm time before the exam to mentally prepare for the challenge ahead and to refresh yourself of your game plan for this exam. If you are late report to reception as soon as you are on site so they can find Mrs Batty, Miss Priedavs or Mr Bell. There may be something we can do.
- c) **Have your equipment ready** – Each exam has its own requirements. Apart from a working set of pens, pencils, rulers etc you may need a calculator for maths or science exams.
- d) **Ensure you understand the examination rules** – You do not want to create any extra stress for yourself by failing to abide by the rules around GCSE examinations. Make sure you understand all of these rules and comply with them. Remember, you must hand your phone/device in for safe keeping. Exam boards reserve every right to disqualify students who break their rules, it is out of the control of South Craven School.
- e) **Think positively and share that positivity** – You have prepared well, worked hard and you know what to expect from the exam you are going to enter. Be positive, believe in your skills and the work you have done and enjoy the opportunity that has finally arrived to show the examiner how good you are.
- f) **Maintain focus** – There can be many heightened emotions, tension and drama around exam days. Your friends are important to normalising the situation but surround yourself with people who will add to your mood of focussed calmness rather than feed any tension. See Mr Bell immediately if there is anything that might knock you off your “A”-game that day or if you need somewhere more private and calm to mentally warm up.
- g) **Don't overthink or over analyse after an exam** – it's done, it's too late to alter or change it. Accept the performance you gave, metaphorically bin the exam and start to focus on the next. Cross them off physically on your exam timetable as you complete them!

A Final Word

I spoke to you at the start of year 10 about the journey upon which we were about to embark and how difficult it might be to navigate the following 18 months. The enormous task that you are about to undertake should not be underestimated, and I want your parents to go through this process with you. Share the challenges you are going to face with them, particularly the requirement to be physically and mentally strong and energetic to provide you with the stamina required to sit through the many hours of exams you are going to face. At home, your parents provide your support network; at school, every teacher is rooting for you to do well and you will have that one particular teacher that you turn to when times are hard. Each and every one of us are here for you over the next few weeks, you are school's priority – use us.

I recently spoke in assembly about how privileged I am to hold my position in school and to lead such a dynamic and talented group of students at a critical time in their lives. You have made my job a pleasure. You have made the last five years of being at South Craven a pleasure and I know Mrs Johnson will be as excited, and nervous, as I am! You are hers just as much as you are mine. But this is now about you, as individuals, having the opportunity to go and make your mark.

Many times I have asked you to “be the best you can be” and you have stepped up on every occasion. I am asking one last time for you step up again. I spoke to you recently about going into battle against the exams; they are after all designed to test you and your mettle. You wouldn't go into battle without training and preparation and now is your time to do it. Seize this moment because it will define your own personal futures and opportunities. But I meant what I said. I would not wish to have any other group of young adults represent me or South Craven School.

You are the future and I am confident that our future is in safe hands when I stand in front of you all. I know you can do it, your teachers know you can do it and I know your parents and carers believe in you and the importance of the processes you are going through.

It's over to you now. Knock down those barriers and open those doors that lead to you all making the most of your talents and “being the best you can be”.

Good luck Year 11!

Mr Bell