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Revision Guide

Where do I start?

Revision should not be an onerous task and there are many simple strategies to make it easier.

On a daily basis:

- At the end of the day **re-read** your notes from your lessons.
- Go through your notes and highlight the key information using a highlighter
- Then turn the key information into questions.

Key Revision Strategies

PLAN

The key to successful revision is to plan – create a revision timetable. You may not do all of the revision on the timetable, but you will do more than if you don't have a timetable.

RANK YOUR SUBJECTS:

Rank all your subjects in order – best to worst. You need to allocate MORE time to the worst as they are the subjects which you currently find hardest.

THE BEST WAY TO REVISE IS TO REVISE AT INTERVALS.

In order to retain information, you will need to revise it several times. You may need to revise any given topic several times at ever-increasing intervals. Break down the subjects. Revise some Science, then some History, then some Geography, then some French and when you have revised some of each subject revise some more of each. The advantage of this is that you will not get fed up spending a lot of time on just one subject and keeping up the interest in this way you will probably retain the information more easily. Alternatively, you may wish to revise one subject for an extended period of time with breaks built in.

Have a look at past examination papers. Be familiar with the different kinds of questions. Practice having a go at some of them. Ask your teacher if there are any model answers available.

Find somewhere comfortable to work that is quiet and you won't be disturbed (away from the television!)

Ensure you work at a table and try to be tidy. You do not want to lose important information.

Break up the work into chunks. Your concentration span is limited so work for specific periods of time – 45, 60 or 75 minute slots and have a break for 10 minutes. Start back on time and perhaps on a different topic/subject. Don't get hooked on television programme during the timed break!

On your revision timetable, have a place to show you have completed it **record your achievement.**

Reward yourself when you have completed your targets – do something completely different, like going out and playing sport.

Make sure you are eating properly – especially breakfast as revision needs energy. Cereals, breads, pastas – stay away from sugary items. Drink lots of water.

Make sure you are getting enough sleep – do not try to make up lost hours of television! Aim for at least eight hours sleep.

Planning a revision timetable

Before starting your revision, **try** to make sure you have all other work – in particular coursework – up to date, otherwise it will distract you from your revision. Then work to your planned REVISION TIMETABLE. Set yourself targets to achieve on the way to the final target of examination success. Make your targets SMART.

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic

Time-related e.g. By April 10th I will have: -

- Index revision cards for History, Geography and Science
- Completed the French grammar revision booklet
- Tested myself on equations for Maths in a timed situation.

Making a revision timetable

The golden rule of revision is to allow enough time for it! A last-minute rush will leave you panicky and tired. You need to fit in relaxation as well as revision and keeping pace with new work.

For the GCSE proper you will probably need three months, and this will include both holiday and term time. For your mock examinations you have less time so plan to make the best use of the time available.

Hours available

Work out the total number of hours you can use for revision during weekdays and weekends during term time, and during weekdays and weekends during holidays. Revision is as simple as spending 10- or 15-minutes re-reading notes on a regular basis. During holidays you should try to dedicate the same amount of time to work as you would on a school day. (Approximately 4/5 hours, you normally spend 5 hours at school and should be spending at least 2/3 hours per night on homework plus revision, so this time is available!) You need to take responsibility for your revision, as your teachers will not be there to encourage you as they would on a school day. Make use of as much holiday time as possible since there will be more pressure on your time during term because of other school activities and responsibilities.

After a study session, take a quick nap or relax. New memories are very vulnerable, but studies have shown that sleep helps your new memories stick. After your nap, repeat the memory technique once more for maximum retention.

Leave the last fortnight before the exams out of your calculations.

- a) it is an opportunity for a last short revision of the most essential points or of those needing more attention.
- b) It is a chance to catch up if you have missed revision through illness or for any other reason.
- c) It allows you a few days to consider the subjects where you are totally terrified and to reassure yourself that you are on track to do well. It will also help you approach the exams freshly and with renewed interest.

Take into account which subjects will need more revision time and which less. This may be related to your own personal strengths and weaknesses or the nature of the subject.

Time management quiz

In today's session you will be given the opportunity to assess where your time goes and make some decisions about changes you would like to make to use your time more effectively. There is no one right way to manage your time; however, it is important to get to know yourself, so you can make good decisions about how to use your time. We all have 168 hours in a week to use as we wish; however, some people make better use of this time than others.

Answer Yes or No to each of the following questions:

- Do you estimate how many hours you will need to study each week?
- Do you meet assignment deadlines?
- Do you begin working on longer projects early in the term?
- Do you write a daily "to do" list?
- Do you prevent social activities from interfering with your study time?
- Do you have a job that requires fewer than 10 hours a week?
- Do you set specific goals for each study period?
- Do you begin your study time with your most difficult assignment?
- Do you complete most of your studying during your most productive hours each day?
- Do you think of being a full-time student as you would a full-time job?

Total score:

When you have answered all questions add up your scores to determine your Time Management Quiz score (Yes = 1 No = 0).

If you have a high total score (10 is the maximum score possible), this indicates that you are using effective time management techniques.

If your total score is low, it may be helpful to learn some techniques for using your study time more effectively

Revision Techniques

Revision does not mean just re-reading your exercise books. Simply re-reading will mean that you:-

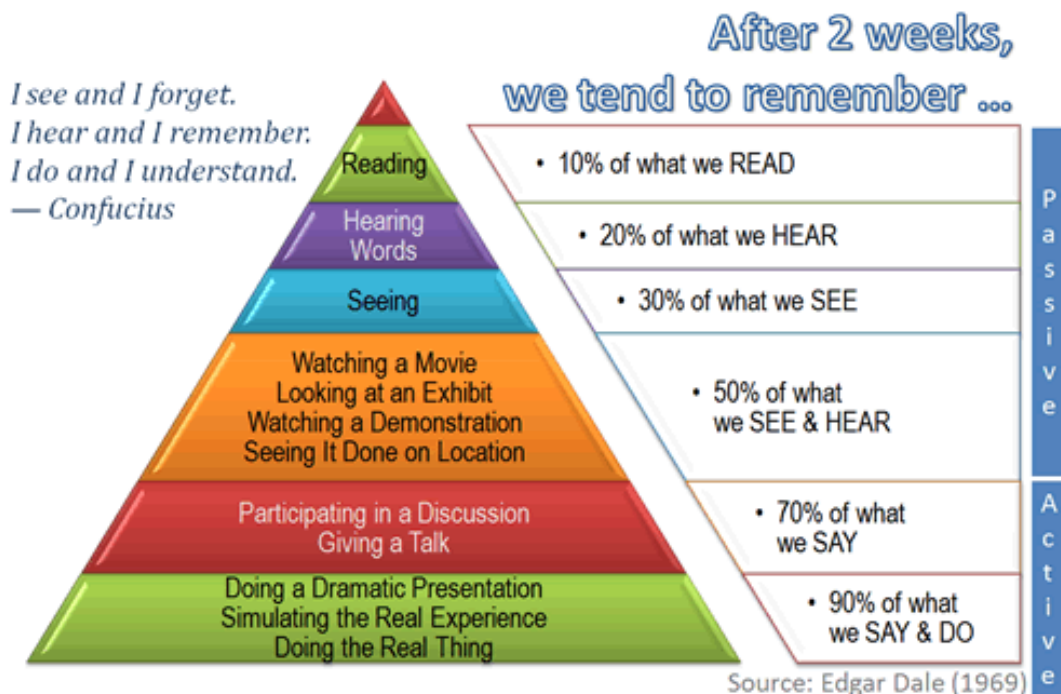
- use little or no brain power
- get bored quickly
- do not commit information/facts to memory
- have no idea whether or not you have committed the essentials of the topic to your memory.

INSTEAD revise **ACTIVELY**, that is, **DO** something as you revise.

Make sure you are well prepared – it is easy to find excuses not to revise! Have a supply of pencils, pens and paper ready.

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Try some of the ideas – see what suits you best.

If possible use “post its” as little reminders / prompts which you can place in strategic positions around the house – on the fridge door, on the bathroom door, on your bedroom door etc!!

Revision notes

It's only when you look back at your class notes that you can see (a) what's important and (b) the overall 'shape' of the topic. Revision is an ideal opportunity to reduce and rework your notes so that they:

- include only the key points – and are therefore shorter, and
- reflect the relationship between points – and are therefore more memorable.

Strategies to create your own revision notes

Make your own REVISION NOTES, go through your exercise books and make shorter notes on the topics you have covered:

- read the information
- key facts
- make sub-headings
- use bullet points (like this list)
- colours
- symbols
- abbreviations that suit you – they are your notes!

Creating lists of key words

A list of key words or phrases is the simplest way to reduce a number of related points.

- Causes of an event
- Characteristics of a thing, place, time
- Traits of a character.

It's a good idea to number the points in your list:

It'll jog your memory if you know how many points you're after!

Split lists are simply lists of related key points which balance each other.

- Sides of an argument ('for', 'against')
- Alternative solutions to a problem ('either', 'or')
- Advantages and disadvantages
- Similarities and differences ('compare and contrast')

Split lists visually reflect the nature of the relationship between the points, so they're particularly memorable.

Chains are lists of **key** points which link in a particular order or sequence for example, chronological order ('X, then Y, then Z') or cause and effect ('X causes Y, which causes Z').

- Events leading up to a war
- The plot of a novel
- Stages in a process

Your notes could follow a simple line, or a flowchart.

Generation Game

Rules

1. Look the list of words for 60 seconds and attempt to remember as many of the words as you can. Once the 60 seconds is up write them down on a piece of paper. Tally your score.
2. For this attempt you need to read the words to your partner and try and repeat as many as you can for 60 seconds. Once again write down as many words as you can without looking at the list! Tally your score.
3. Make up a story using as many of the words as you can. Make the story memorable. You have 2 minutes to make up the story but you're not allowed to write it down! Once the two minutes is up don't look at the words and write down as many key words as you can think of on a separate piece of paper. Tally your score.

What did your results look like?

What technique worked best for you?

Did your results improve after a specific technique?

Try and write down as many words again after 30 minutes. Do you remember any more or less?

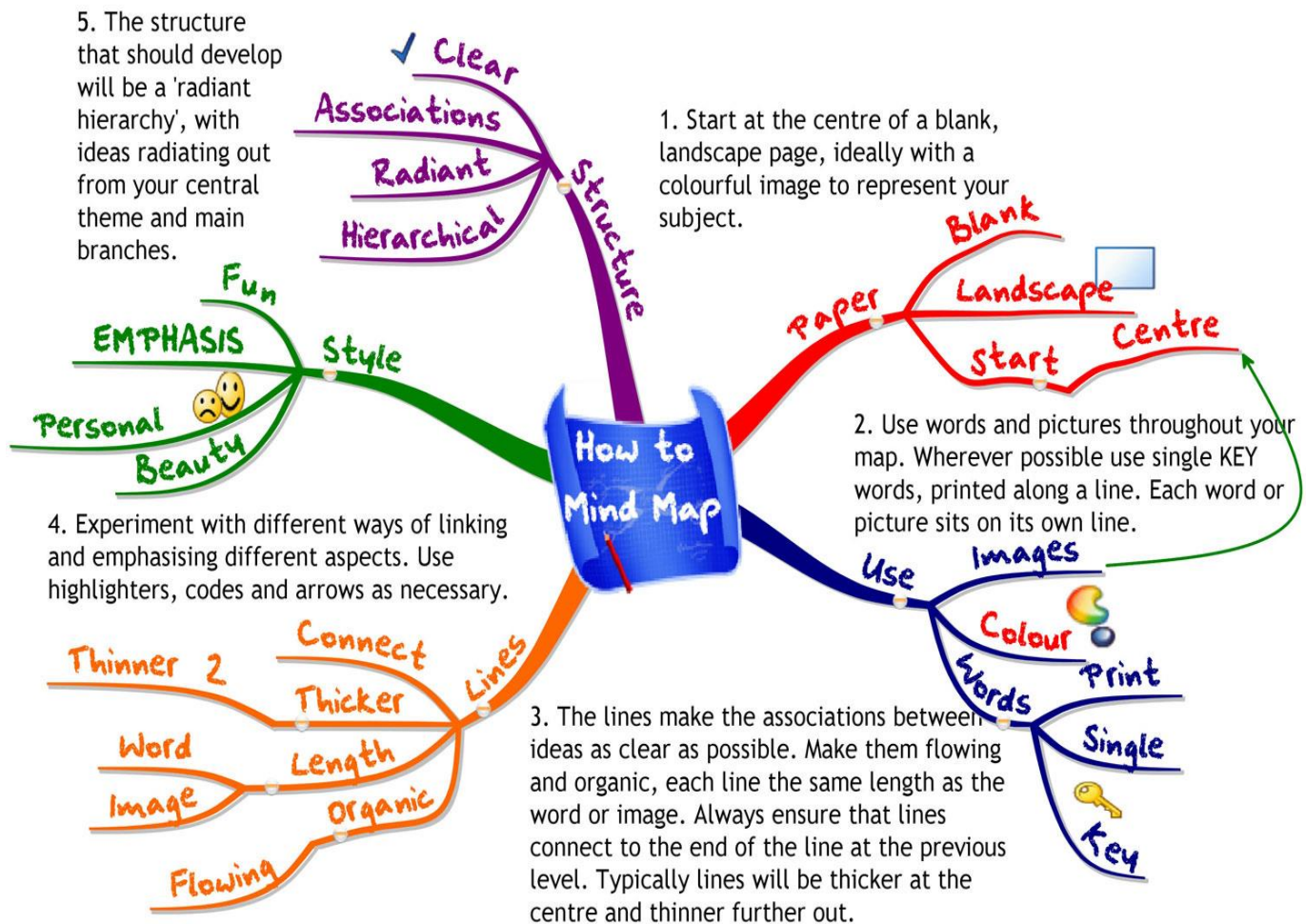
Why did you remember certain words?

Jungle	Stand
Super	Lorry
Rice Bath	Tiger
Liberty	Dell
Mango	Sing
Politician	Ocean
Duster	Religion
Enchanting	Mouth
Dance	Champion
Duck	Cupboard
Modi	Neem1
Star	Speakers
Biscuits	Walking
Umbrella	Tablets
Rocking	Gate
Band	Room
Pain	Computer
Swimming	Ball
Neck	Rope
Desk	Festival

Mind maps

'Mind maps' are amazingly effective as a way of analysing and remembering topics. Start with your main topic or theme title in the middle of a page, in a box. Add the main areas or points within the topic/theme, linked to the central box by lines or 'branches'. As points divide further, or lead on to others, branch out again.

Branches link points that are logically connected: add labels if you want to note what the connection is – 'eg', 'lead to'. Keep it tidy: use key words and phrases (or symbols or pictures) only. Use capital letters, boxes, circles, colour, underlining or whatever it takes to make more important elements stand out – and to make the whole thing memorable!



Chunking

Step 1

- Break your work down into sentence 'chunks'
- Take one paragraph and count the number of sentences
- Draw that number of boxes onto a page
- Write each sentence into a box from left to right
- Look at the first sentence in your notes and read it out loud. Then, close your eyes and say ('seeing the words in your mind') or 'air write' the sentence without looking at it
- Repeat the step above, this time with the first **2** sentences
- Next, try it with **3** sentences. Then **4**. Repeat until you have (mostly) memorized the first paragraph

Step 2

- Now turn over and draw the boxes again
- This time put the first letter of each word only, followed by a line. E.g. m__g_____ l__c_____
- When you have finished, try to complete the text without looking at your notes.

Step 3

- Take a 3 minute break
- Now turn over and draw the boxes again
- This time put a picture in each box instead of any words
- Try to use colourful, humorous images to link to the idea of the sentence
- When you have finished, try to complete the text without looking at your notes.

Visualisation

- Use images to help you remember
- Assign a picture to each sentence or part of a sentence
- Use positive, pleasant images.
- Your brain often blocks out unpleasant ones.
- Use vivid, colourful, sense-laden images - these are easier to remember than drab ones.
- Use all your senses to code information or dress up an image. Remember that your *mnemonic* can contain sounds, smells, tastes, touch, movements and feelings as well as pictures.
- Give your image three dimensions, movement and space to make it more vivid.
- You can use movement either to maintain the flow of association, or to help you to remember actions.
- Exaggerate the size of important parts of the image.
- Use humour! Funny or peculiar things are easier to remember than ordinary ones.
- Similarly, silly (or rude) rhymes are very difficult to forget!
- Symbols (red traffic lights, pointing fingers, road signs, etc.) can code quite complex messages quickly and effectively.

Self-test Techniques

- Put aside or cover up your books/notes and try to jot down the essential points from memory. Check them against the source, for completeness and accuracy.
- Pick one of your brief revision notes or index cards and expand on it (talking or in writing).
- Get a friend or family member to ask you questions from your notes.
- Explain the topic to someone else – or to yourself in the mirror, or to a favourite poster!
- Debate two-sided questions with a clued-up friend.
- Role-play people and situations from your history, geography or literature.
- Make a list of questions that might be asked about a topic – and give an outline answer, verbally or in writing.
- Analyse and attempt actual past exam questions. – this is a very useful way to check learning gaps.
 - Complete the paper in the allocated time
 - Use the mark scheme supplied by the exam board to correct it
 - Go through all the questions which were incorrect and work out why it is wrong.
 - Practice similar questions – using a text book, work sheets from your teacher etc

Note any areas you got wrong or didn't feel confident about and refresh your memory – or plan to do so later!

Put it straight on your Master List or Daily Worklist, before you forget!

Finding out about you – SWOT analysis:

Please complete the table below. You may wish to refer to factors relevant to school life, personal life and physical skills.

<p><u>What are my strengths?</u></p>	<p><u>What are my weaknesses?</u></p>
<p><u>What opportunities do I have?</u></p>	<p><u>What might stop me achieving this?</u></p>

Diagrams and graphs

Diagram means one diagram and labels and a title.

Exam questions may ask you to draw a graph, diagram or a simple map/plan to gain marks.

Remember to label and title all diagrams, graphs maps that you draw. (The labels on the diagrams that earn you marks.) Refer to the diagram in your writing i.e. See the diagram below

Make sure your graph/drawing has:

1. Title
2. Key (Use appropriate colours/shades)
3. Labels (Each axis of a graph also)

Calculations

In the exam check your answers to make sure that the units of measurement are included e.g. 19 C, 4m/sec; 16km/hour etc.

You may need to show your calculations also.

IMPORTANT: Check to see if you are allowed a calculator – if so, bring one!

Multiple choice questions

Computer now reads most Multiple-Choice answer sheets. You usually need a HB pencil to mark your answer sheets. The best way to score well on Multiple Choice is by knowing your work but there may be some questions that may need a process to arrive at the right answer.

1. Eliminate all the definite “incorrect answers” on the questions paper and you will, be left with one or two possible answers.
2. If you still do not know the right answer, take a guess (never leave a Multiple-Choice question unanswered)

Fill in the answer on the answer sheet.

Spelling, grammar and punctuation

All GCSE exams require you to use good levels of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Do not worry about it but do check over your work at the end for any errors. It may also give you the chance to add any last-minute inspirations. Re-read ALL written work, diagrams and graphs.

TIP: if you have any trouble seeing spelling errors – read the letters backwards to get the mind to focus fully on the word.

Choosing questions

Do you have a choice?

Don't count on avoiding the topics you don't like altogether! Bear in mind that:

- Some questions may be compulsory.
- You may have to answer a set number of questions from specific sections of the paper.
- Some papers (for example, multiple choice) require you to answer all questions.

Read through the entire paper once, carefully. Underline the topic and instruction keywords as you go, so you know exactly what each question requires of you!

Write down at the beginning of each section of the paper how many questions (if any) you must answer from it. Check all the instructions and do this carefully!

Circle the number of any question that is compulsory.

Go back through the other questions a second time. The underlined key words will tell you whether/how well you can tackle each question: put a tick (No Problem), cross (Not Good) or question mark (Not Sure) against each.

Planning answers

Even sentence-completion and two-line answers should be planned – if only in year heard. For example: think of a whole sentence before you start it (and find you can't finish it...) and check that your answer fits the space available. (No extra marks for over-running!).

For slightly longer answers (say 5-10), try jotting down in pencil, in the margin, the keywords of points you need to include, then numbering them in answer order. (Rub all this out when you've finished, for tidiness).

Why 'waste time' planning an exam essay

- You get ideas down before you 'lose' them, which boosts your recall – and your confidence, as the marks start adding up.
- You can organise your ideas, with a sense of how the whole answer hangs together.
- A checklist of points will let you work more quickly – without forgetting anything!

As for essay questions

- Brainstorm. On a spare sheet of paper, write down relevant points and examples as they occur to you.
- Number the points, in a sensible order that suits the question.
- Now switch to the answer sheet, and simply list your points neatly and briefly, in order, under appropriate headings and sub-headings.
- When you've finished your full answer, put a line through your plan so that it doesn't distract the examiner – but is legible (if necessary).

Presenting your answers

Of course, this will entirely depend on the question – and on how you approach it. But here are some general tips for helping (and perhaps even impressing) the examiners...

If examiners can't follow your workings, interpret your diagrams, read your writing, you want your answer to be read (it's the only way to get marks) and you want to get the examiner on your side. So?

- Write legibly!
- Label diagrams and tables clearly.
- Lay out workings neatly down the page – not all over the place.
- Cross things out with a single straight line: don't scribble!
- Break long passages into chunks of related points: paragraphs or sections.
- Use headings and sub-headings to indicate new topics and topic subdivisions.
- Consider numbering your points, especially if they are in list form.
- Don't overcrowd a page. Leave space between sections, and around diagrams.
- Don't leave gaps, hoping to fill them later. (You won't)

Show your workings

In topics which require calculation, it's a good idea to show clearly the procedures you followed to arrive at your answer. Even if you get the *calculation* – and therefore the answer – wrong, you will still be given marks for getting the method right!

Checking your answers

Try and leave yourself:

- 2-3 minutes at the end of your time for each long question, or
- 5-10 minutes at the end of the exam (especially a multiple choice paper).

BUT...Checking time is never wasted

- There may be short-answer or multiple-choice questions – or aspects of essay questions – that you've accidentally missed out, which you've still got time to answer.
- There may be short-answer or multiple-choice questions you've *left out*, for later inspiration: now or never!
- There may be longer or essay questions that you 'abandoned' for lack of time, which you could go back and finish.
- You may have made some careless errors that are immediately obvious when you read over them in the comparative calm of checking time.
- Your brain may have run ahead of your pen (or vice versa): sentences that don't make sense are easier to spot when you're reading than when you're writing.
- You may have brushed over doubtful spellings and punctuation as you wrote your answers: now's the time to go back and try a few alternatives until you feel happier. (Remember: there are marks available for this kind of stuff...).
- You may not have completed all the items on your front cover instruction checklist. (The listing of questions answered is particularly easy to forget) Now is the time!

At home

Have a good night's sleep before the exam.

Check you have all your equipment

- Pen x 2
- Pencil x 2 (one HB)
- Rubber
- Ruler
- Coloured Pencils x 3
- Calculator

Eat something that will last you a while. Try to avoid sweets. You need to have energy for an exam. E.G. cereal bars, fruit, nuts etc.

Leave early so that you arrive at school in time for registration. Make sure you are ready at latest 20 minutes before the exam. Don't get caught out by buses or trains. If they are not reliable then leave earlier.

At school

- Go to the toilet before the exam. (During that spare 20 minutes)
- Make your way to the examination room 15 minutes before the timetabled start of the exam. Wait outside for further instructions.
- Do not get drawn into panic by others – do not discuss what you or they have revised! Sit down calmly.
- Relax – you have revised well and now is the time to reap the rewards of all your hard work.

In the exam

- Stay calm
- Remain in absolute silence.
- Listen carefully to all examination instructions...follow them.
- Read the paper through carefully – all the way through! Highlight or make a note of what is expected of you.
- Make sure you are clear on exactly what is required of you.
- If you have to answer question 1 & 2 and then any four other questions – make sure that is what you do!
- Mark on the exam paper (in pencil) the questions you intend to cover.
- Divide the time up between the questions. Spend an equal amount on each question if they are worth equal marks.
- You may wish to start with your best question to get you into the swing of things.
- Answer the questions they are asking (see following section: In the exam – what do they want? What do you give them?).
- Make sure the answer you give is to the question they are asking. If they leave you six lines to answer it and you've answered it in one – it probably isn't as detailed as it should be!!!
- Write and draw neatly. Use sentences when that is required. Only if you are short on time do you write in note form.
- If the examination asks for DATA – give data.
- If the examination asks for a DIAGRAM – draw a diagram.
- Check your answers.

Key Terminology

QUESTIONS: Exam questions often hinge on key words – understand these words and your half way to the right kind of answer. Here’s a list of the examiner’s favourites.

ANALYSE: Show the main points, key ideas of a topic. Examine in detail

COMPARE: Look for similarities, resemblances between the two or more things you have to consider. You may need to mention differences but should concentrate on the shared characteristics.

CONTRAST: Look for differences, dissimilarities, ways in which things are not alike.

CRITICISE: To judge, to argue whether the topic concerned has good or bad points in it. Base answers on evidence and try to offer your own judgement.

DEFINE: Give the meaning of word, phrase, idea.

DESCRIBE: Write about the chief features of a situation, diagram photograph, map or retell the key parts of a story or sequence of events. What are the features that need reporting on?

DISCUSS: Examine both sides of the problem, conflict, situation, event – give reasons for your idea.

EVALUATE: Like DISCUSS but with special emphasis on underlying reasons.

EXPLAIN: Describe giving reasons and causes. Answer both the questions HOW? and the question WHY?

ILLUSTRATE: Explain using examples or case studies to support the argument

OUTLINE: Write an answer that shows the main points very clearly and also distinguishes between more and less important factors.

PROVE: Provide evidence based on fact.

SUMMARISE: Write an account of the main events, facts or points. This kind of answer usually does not include personal comment

Accessing past papers:

AQA - <http://www.aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/exams-guidance/find-past-papers-and-mark-schemes>

CIE - <http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/i-want-to/resource-centre/>

EDEXCEL - <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/exams/past-papers.html>

OCR - <http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/past-papers/>

WJEC/EDUQAS - <http://www.wjec.co.uk/students/past-papers/>