



Organisation is vital to most things in life but it is even more important during preparation for GCSEs. It is easy to see that if you do not have the material to revise you will not be able to achieve your potential and attain the grades needed to succeed. As a parent it is crucial you support and aid your child in organising their material but also their minds. GCSEs are a tricky experience for everyone in the family and they can be a testing time. Being thoroughly organised throughout will make it much easier.

Organisation should begin in Year 9. This is the year most schools begin to start covering GCSE content and it is vitally important that you retain all of the notes and books you use during this period. We are not saying to intensely learn them; we are just suggesting that you keep them in a safe, neat place.

Primarily, you can support your child by simply suggesting an area they can store notes or even helping them file away the notes neatly. They will need these notes when they have mock exams and the real exams as this content forms almost 1/3 of the GCSE. It is also very important that you aid your children in finding note taking processes that work for them. There are a huge number of techniques but these are some of the ones we would recommend:

## **Note Taking Techniques**

### **Digital Note Taking**

This involves ensuring that any handwritten notes are typed out in their best version giving you a set of clear easily legible notes. It is also great as it enables you to always have access to your notes! However, it is important that you then read the notes regularly and use effective revision techniques to remember them.

Some techniques for digital note taking are:

- Changing the colour of font to make examples stand out
- Adding boxes around important text
- Clear section titles to divide up different areas
- Bullet points to make easy to read lists
- A picture tells a thousand words - any diagrams used should be easy to read and concise

### **Flashcards**

Flashcards are the perfect tool for effective revision and easy testing and practice. If you can support your child getting into the habit of writing these, GCSEs will become a lot easier. Setting them out neatly, with bright colours, is a superb way of learning. Just store them safely and carefully bind them to ensure that you don't lose any! Another bonus flashcards offer is that they allow parents to help test children on the subject content and to get involved in a constructive way.

# ALGEBRA

**FACTORISE** – put the brackets back in using common factors

**$6y+12$**  – common factor is **6**

$6(y+2)$  – 6 goes outside the bracket

**$4a+8ab$**  – common factor is **4a**

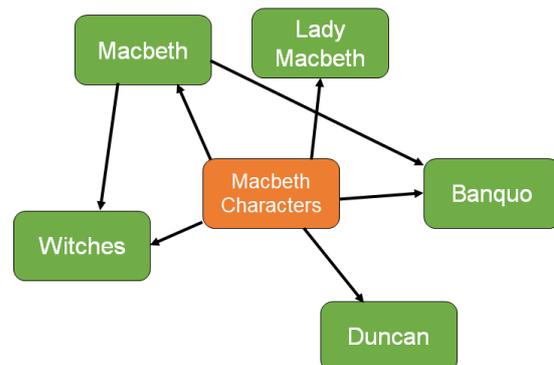
$4a(1+2b)$  – 4a goes outside the bracket

## Handwritten Bullet Point Noting

This is the most common method which just involves copying out or using notes made at school, however often these notes can be damaged by regular usage and by completing either of the 2 methods above you can revisit the work and refresh the subject content.

## Mind Maps

Mind maps are a really effective way of clearly organising thoughts and ideas onto the page. By using different colours, you can create a variety of sections in your map which allows for easier mental organisation of different topics.



## Audio Notes

This is where you say the necessary information into a recording device to store your notes. For some subjects this works well (for example, languages). Then to revise, simply play the recording back to yourself and you have a set of notes!

When you have tried and tested these methods with your child it is then time to ensure that you finalise the preferred method. Although it is sometimes simpler to have one method of note taking it is often necessary to have two. Some subjects will be suited to one method others to another so therefore it makes the most sense to have at least two methods. It is important that the child decides what suits them, not the parents!

Another important way that you can support your child with organisation is simply by buying them folders to store their notes. To stimulate a child's mind thinking about organising themselves you can support them by giving them the necessary resources.

As progress is made into Year 10 organisation becomes even more important. It does not just involve folders now but also staying on top of classwork and revision notes.

Organisation does involve regularly ensuring notes, folders and knowledge are all up to date. The premier way to do this for a parent is to just allow time for it. It is not about punishing and nagging, but supporting. Furthermore, creating a space for your child to store their notes

and folders will make everything easier. It can be anywhere, but ideally in their own room to give them more responsibility for their belongings.

Exams will come around, as will tests; these are another chance to organise yourself. If you create notes around this time you will be better prepared during exams and not have to work as much during the holidays! Working with your child to create solutions will aid you in organising them thoroughly, and help them develop crucial life skills. A strategy which is regularly employed is spending some time, no more than half an hour, reviewing organisation and work and going through whether anything is required. It is a great way to interact with your child over exams.

Being organised and efficient with homework will also be of great benefit to your child. When you're organised with homework you are able to receive the full benefit of learning it in the process and therefore progressing educationally. To focus on homework, you want to be able to work in a plain area, with plenty of time (not the night before) and distraction free. Organising all of these will be crucial for your child. Organisation also involves free-time. We cover the benefits of this in another section but obviously your child needs to relax and have fun. Organising this time gives your child an opportunity to look forward and have something to be excited about.

At the end of Year 10, GCSE mode should really kick in and it is important to use the summer effectively. Making sure all of your child's work from Year 9 and 10 is organised is important to ensure they have a stable foundation for the busy year ahead. By organising and filing notes you naturally read them and take in more information therefore expanding your knowledge base. If you help organise their notes with them it will be a great investment of time. Your child may have decided that some notes were not that good or lack detail so this provides an opportunity to reflect on this and make some more or improve them.

If they have organised, detailed and clear notes, you can ensure that your child will be in a very strong position going into Year 11. This system makes the learning, which is the part they should spend time doing, much easier.



In Year 11 the pace is rapid and the holidays can fly by. However, during half-terms especially, your child should be spending a good amount of time making and keeping up to date with notes. Further to this on weekends when they have a bit of free time, it can be useful to make sure all of their work from the past few weeks is organised.

All of the other organisation tips and ideas mentioned earlier should all be used during this year with free time and homework organised effectively.

Finally, the use of a revision schedule is crucial. During the times leading up to mocks and GCSEs it is crucial to plan your child's time. The first thing to do is to work out when your child works best. Some people prefer the evenings so will work up to 9/10 pm. However, some people prefer to start at 6/7 am and finish later. Plan a schedule around your child's needs. Some people prefer big sessions devoted to one subject, while others prefer a mix of all

different sorts of subjects. Your child can make links between the topics and feel like they have achieved something having learnt all of the course material!

Your schedule, as well as including the subject, should consider the individual topic so you can be sure of what you should be doing in that time! When planning, add free time and rest time to ensure that they can relax and have something to look forward to.

Organising with your child will improve their mental health and results, and remove a lot of unnecessary stress during an already trying period.