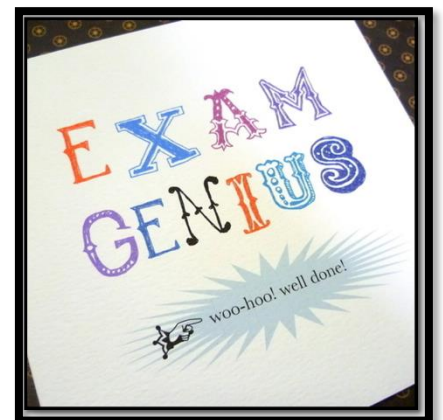




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Exam Preparation Booklet



**Practical Advice
and Guidance for Students and Parents**

Introduction

At MECE we want all of our students to leave with the best possible exam results that will enable them to be both proud of their achievements and access their chosen path at post-16.

Students today are expected to learn a significant volume of work in each of their subjects and so exam performance is a critical part of GCSE success. Therefore, students need to be confident in the methods of revision they choose and need to practice their effectiveness over time so that in the summer of Year 11 they are able to perform at their peak. As such this booklet is designed to be accessed by pupils to complement their learning and preparation for exams throughout the remainder of their MECE career.

This booklet gives students (and parents) guidance on how to successfully prepare for exams and organise their revision to suit personal preferences and learning styles. During the remainder of Year 10 and into Year 11 there is time built into the curriculum to explore different revision techniques to help students further refine the process.

What is revision?

Revision means revisiting previously covered work and doing something to help yourself remember it. It should be an active process and requires more than simply reading information. It is important to turn the information into a new version rather than simply re-writing it. It is a time-consuming activity and therefore it is important to begin in plenty of time. The most successful revision requires lots of paper, colours, highlighters and post-it notes as well as the right mind-set to engage with the subject content.

Science tells us that we remember more as we transform information from one form to another eg from text to notes, so simply rereading notes is particularly ineffective. Testing yourself then helps strengthen the memory further. Finally practicing exam questions is crucial as there is more to success than just the knowledge; the skill of answering the question needs to be learned and practiced.



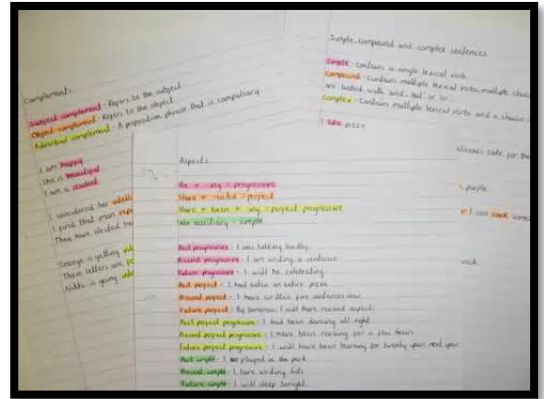
Revision Notes:

Writing notes is often the starting point. It is a good way to get the material back into your head (especially if it is a while since you learnt it). You should use your exercise book and/or a revision guide (at GCSE) to help you. It is an opportunity to check you haven't missed any notes (through absence) and make a list of things you perhaps don't understand.

Creating traditional notes:

Read through a particular topic to get an overview of the key points and theories. Then condense your notes into smaller, bite-sized chunks. Make sure that key definitions/equations are accurately transferred. Remember also to:

- Use your own words for descriptions
- Keep notes spaced out
- Vary the size of words (so some stand out)
- Add interest to the notes (colours, highlighter, arrows, boxes)

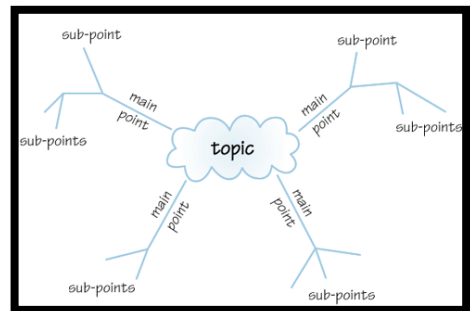


Creating concept maps:

Some students find creating and revising from patterned notes far more enjoyable and effective. They are particularly good in providing an overview of a topic because they can identify patterns and connections within a topic.

Use these steps to create one:

- Write the MAIN TOPIC in the middle of the paper
- Draw a branch from the main topic for each KEY POINT
- Write a KEY WORD/PHRASE on each branch
- Add DETAILS off each branch (including diagrams)
- Draw arrows to link together different branches



Creating revision cards:



These are even more condensed versions of your notes. They are easily transportable and can be referred to in a 'spare' moment! Remember to:

- Flash cards should be double sided with the question, key word or idea on the front and the answer on the back
- Give each card a clear title/theme/topic
- Don't cram too much on each card
- Consider a numbering or colour coded method to organise the cards

The best way to revise from flash cards is to use the Leitner system:

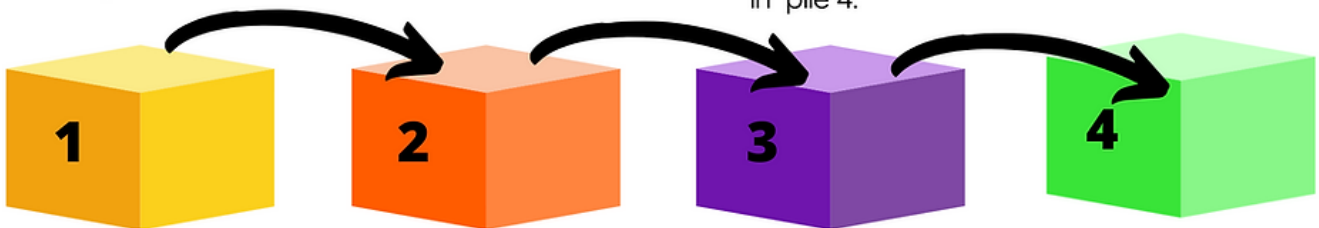
Introducing the Leitner System

All flash cards start off in pile 1 .
As you review the cards,
each card you answer **correctly** goes into pile 2.

If you give the wrong answer the card stays in pile 1.

When you review cards in pile 2, if you **get it right** you move the card to pile 3 and so on until all cards are in pile 4.

If you answer a card incorrectly in any pile it moves back to pile 1 for you to go over again.



Revision Techniques:

Successful revision will depend on your preferred learning style and the type of information you are trying to learn. Once you have solid revision notes and a general understanding of the key ideas you need to begin trying to learn and recall the information. Below are some popular revision techniques; no one technique is better than the other. It is your job over the years to practice different ones to find success.

Quiz it: Once you've got your revision notes you need to test yourself. The act of retrieval (remembering) helps strengthen the knowledge. Test yourself using flash cards or online quizzes or have a friend or family member help out by testing you.

Mnemonics (Accrostics): help you remember a sequence or a list of key words. A popular example is 'Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain' which identifies the sequence of the colours of the rainbow (Red, Orange, Yellow etc). When creating the mnemonic it often helps to associate the words to the topic and add some silly things in too (it helps make it more memorable).

Auditory Revision Techniques: Many people find learning song lyrics easy and so it makes sense to transfer this to academic learning too. You could record yourself speaking key information and play it back to yourself. Alternatively you could create a song of the key information and record yourself singing it. This technique is particularly useful if you have a long journey as you can use the time to be learning your work. A number of websites have created 'bitesize' podcasts of information too which summarize key topics for you to play to yourself.

Post-it notes: These are particularly useful for short facts or dates (e.g. equations, important historical dates) – they act as a reminder. You can place them around the space in which you are working.

Practice Questions: Once you have attempted to learn the bulk of the information using past questions (at GCSE) is an excellent way to test your knowledge against the expectations of the exam paper. Remember that knowing the information is only the first step, being able to complete the questions in the given time and in the format required is as (and sometimes more) important! You can do this open book to start to create excellent answers and when you are confident you can try them in timed conditions to build up your technique. Use the mark schemes to check your work.

Planning your revision:

As you move towards Y11 and the volume of work you need to revise increases it will be vitally important to create a timetable of revision for yourself in order to ensure you have covered all the topics in time.

During Y10 in-school exam week you should still go through the first phases of the process (in italics below), but it may not be appropriate to go as far as creating a full timetable. You will be given dedicated revision time (as homework) and at least one lesson will be dedicated to re-visiting previously covered material to help you out.

How to construct a revision timetable:

- *Make a list of the subjects you need to revise*
- *For each subject make a comprehensive list of the topics you need to revise – the spec will help with this.*
- *Find out (and note down) the dates of each exam (and which topics are being assessed if there are multiple papers)*
- Consult a revision timetable making website (e.g. www.getrevising.co.uk) and input the exams and subject topics.
- Be sure to include any fixed activities (family birthday/cricket match etc) so that you don't double book your time!
- Be realistic – don't overfill your days/evenings (or else you will never stick to it!). But equally ensure you include enough slots to cover all the topics you listed!

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9:00am – 10:00am	School						Sports
10:00am – 11:00am	School						Biology
11:00am – 12:00pm	School						Maths
12:00pm – 1:00pm	School						Homework
1:00pm – 2:00pm	School						Maths
2:00pm – 3:00pm	School						
3:00pm – 4:00pm	School						
4:00pm – 5:00pm	German		German				
5:00pm – 6:00pm	Biology	Physics	Chemistry	Biology	Physics		
6:00pm – 7:00pm	Chemistry	German	Chemistry	Physics	Chemistry	Physics	Chemistry
7:00pm – 8:00pm	Maths	Maths	Maths	English			
8:00pm – 9:00pm	Geography	English	Geography	Geography			

Managing your revision:

- You should complete revision in small, manageable chunks of time (25 – 40 minutes) followed by a break for a drink or snack. This cycle can be repeated many times over within a longer session (of say 2-3 hours).
- Avoid distractions whilst revising; keep your phone/tablet/laptop in a different room. It can be beneficial to do some aspects of revision with friends/family - but be careful who you choose to work with.
- Create a dedicated working space at home that is well lit and clutter free. Ensure you have everything you need at the start of each session.
- Maintain a healthy sleeping, eating and relaxation pattern during revision periods - this will help keep feelings of anxiety at bay.
- If you find yourself getting stuck, make a note of the area you don't understand and find an opportunity to speak to your teachers.

How can parents help?

DO:

- Recognise the importance of the exams in the process of longer term achievement
- Encourage your child to invest time in the process
- Discuss with your child whether you can help with their revision (testing them, getting hold of paper/highlighters etc)
- Help identify and maintain an environment at home that promotes study including where to put their phone during revision sessions
- Encourage your child to take regular breaks and participate in an activity they enjoy (e.g. listening to some music/watching tv/riding their bike)
- Avoid a 'post-mortem' of each exam - encourage them instead to focus on the next one
- Try to support, rather than police, your child and accept that during the exam period stress levels at home are likely to be raised.

DO NOT:

- Make comparisons with siblings or friends
- Voice criticism over their choice of revision technique – it may well be a different approach to one you would use!
- Add to their stresses with 'unnecessary' questioning or over-bearing support
- Expect them to study all the time
- Make studying a punishment

With all the recent changes in education, formal exams have become a necessary part of a student's life within school. We know that some students find the process stressful, but hope that by arming them with the strategies and opportunities to develop and test them out that once the 'real' exams of Y11 are upon them they will be in the best possible place to succeed. We expect students to approach internal exams sensibly and hope that they will prepare appropriately.

Exam boards and revision guides

It can be worth investing in revision guides, especially for content-heavy subjects. They can really help during the course to look up tricky concepts for homework or consolidation. They help in revision to create revision notes or for students to test themselves. There are a number of different styles and publishers. The CGP guides are succinct and reasonably priced but the ones from exam boards tend to be more comprehensive. There are also workbooks that can really help structure revision as a way for students to make notes if used 'open book' or test themselves if used 'closed book'. Some subjects also have question books with past paper style questions. Look for the ones with answers in the back as checking your working can be a helpful part of the revision process.

Be sure to get the right book for the exam board as there are several:

Subject / Qualification	Exam Board	Subject / Qualification	Exam Board
Art & Design	Edexcel	French	AQA
Biology (Single Science)	AQA	Geography	AQA
Chemistry (Single Science)	AQA	History	AQA
Computing	AQA	Maths	Edexcel
Design & Technology	Edexcel	Photography	AQA
Drama	OCR	Physics (Single Science)	AQA
English Language	AQA	Science (Combined - Trilogy)	AQA
English Literature	AQA	Sport (BTEC)	Pearson
Food & Nutrition	WJEC	ASDAN	ASDAN