

GUIDE TO EXAMS & TRANSITIONS (2022)

At Off the Record we are aware that many of you will be sitting your GCSE & A-Level exams this term and making big decisions about next steps in education or finishing school. We hope this short guide might help provide some info and tips for managing this, especially after coming out of lockdown.

In this document we will include the following information:

1. A guide to how exams will work this year.
2. Revision tips.
3. Self-care advice during your studies.
4. Useful links to support.

18.08.22
A Level / BTEC
results day

25.08.22
GCSE results
day

HOW EXAMS WILL BE GRADED THIS YEAR

This year schools will be returning to regular GCSE & A-Level exams however, due to the disruption to learning that 2020 and 2021 caused, the exam boards have tried to put some new rules in place to help:

- Schools have been given choice around what topics their students will be assessed on in English, Geography and History.
- You will have formulae sheets provided for the maths exams and a sheet with equations on for Combined Science and Physics.
- Some of the requirements for your practical Science or Art tests will have been changed.
- The exam boards have agreed to set the grade boundaries, which are decided after all tests have been marked, to a level somewhere between the teachers grades in 2021 and the grades from the last standard exams in 2019.

We recommend you speak with your school if you have any specific questions about how they have applied these changes to your exams this year.

REVISION TIPS



Remember to take regular breaks of around ten minutes every twenty - fifty minutes. Go for a brief walk or get a glass of water. Grab some fresh air. Just change environment for a short while. It helps you concentrate better and stay energised. **FRESH AIR** and **EXERCISE** are very important for your stress levels!

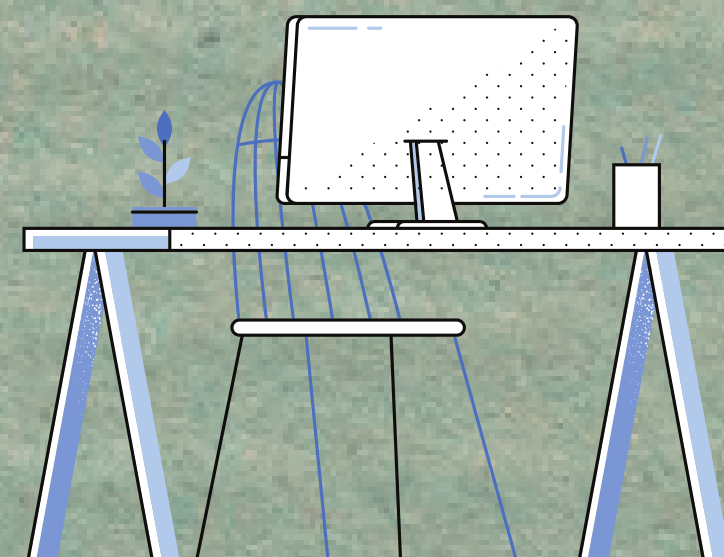


Try to have regular, small snacks with brain foods. Things that give us a slow release of energy and useful parts of a balanced diet. Some good examples are fish, bananas, nuts, berries, porridge, broccoli, dark chocolate and avocados.



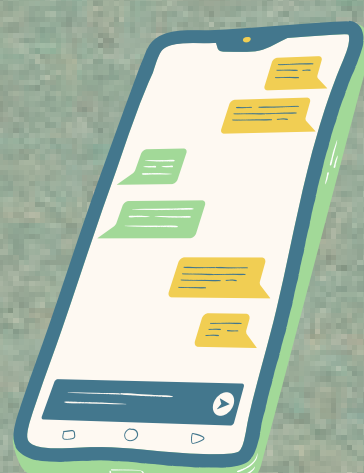
Everyone has different styles of learning and different ways of revising might be more suited to you as a learner. For example; reading information, watching demonstrations or explanations in video form, listening to notes or audio books, writing notes in your own words, making brainstorms or posters, using flashcards, speaking with others about what you have learned, applying your knowledge to something practical like making a presentation. Play around with these revision techniques and don't feel you have to stick to the traditional reading and memorising if that isn't working for you.

Having an organised, clean designated space where you revise can help because it sets the right environment for focus. It also helps your brain associate that space with study. If you can, try not to study on your bed as it can affect sleep. Sometimes, we have limited space to study in. In those cases, try to think of small ways you can decorate or tidy up around to make the space feel more comfortable.



Setting small, achievable goals for yourself, tracking progress and rewarding your achievements can help you stay motivated. Since exams have started and you may be short on time, focus on the topics you don't know as well rather than trying to cram everything, so you don't overload yourself.

Try to do some timed, practice tests at home if you can. This will help you get back into practice of doing exams after a long break during lockdown. It helps you review what you know as well. The AQA and Excel websites have practice papers available to download.



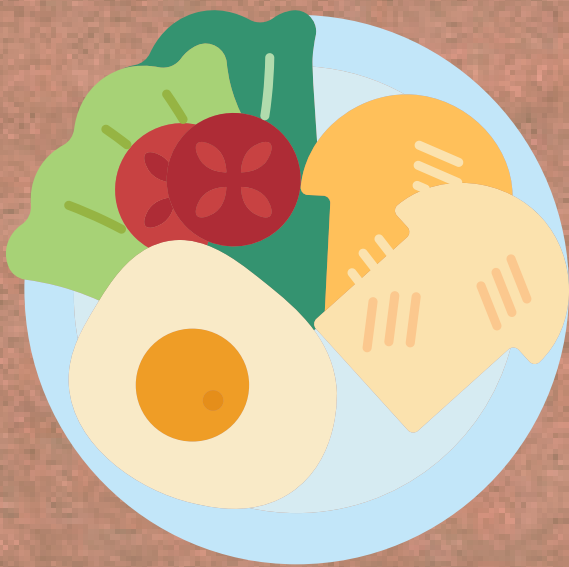
Try to switch off electronic devices or keep them on silent and away from your eyeline when you are revising so they don't disturb or distract you. If you have to use your phone or tablet to revise with or for music, try putting it onto 'do not disturb' mode.

ON EXAM DAY...



Make sure you have time to check in with family and friends for support if you need to talk. Making time to think about things other than exams and spending time with your support network is also important!

Try to resist staying up late to cram or be online. It is important to get a good night's sleep. If you are feeling stressed, try giving yourself a wind down period an hour before bed. You could read, listen to relaxing music, have a non-caffienated hot drink or have a hot bath to help prepare you for sleep.



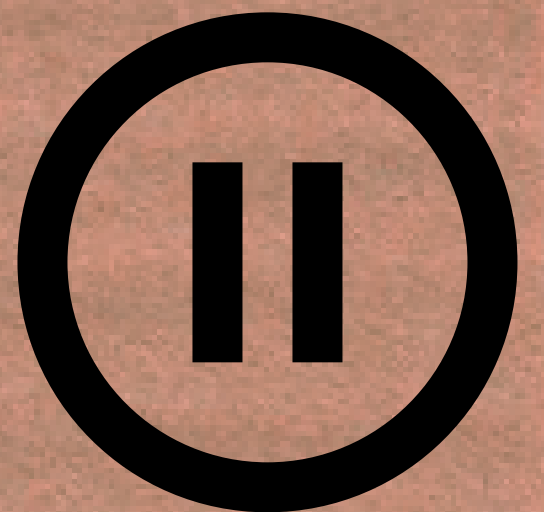
Having a filling, healthy breakfast is very important to set you up with enough energy for the exam days. Although you may not feel like eating, try not to skip breakfast or lunch as it is important your body gets what it needs to power your brain without getting burned out!

Packing your bag the night before helps make the morning of exams less busy. It also helps you make sure you don't forget anything important. There is a link to a helpful checklist of what to include in your exam pencil case: [The essentials for your 6CSE Exam Pencil Case: \(studentlifeblog.wixsite.com\)](https://studentlifeblog.wixsite.com/essentials-for-your-6cse-exam-pencil-case)



Give yourself plenty of time in the mornings to get ready so you don't start your exam day rushed, stressed or panicked. Maybe consider setting your alarm twenty minutes earlier to allow you to ease into your morning. Getting a bit of fresh air before you start your school day can also help to wake your brain and feel refreshed.

Try not to over-revise! It can be tempting on exam days or the night before to try and cram in some last minute information, but this can actually have the opposite affect and make us less likely to remember what we need to know. It can also stress yourself out and compromise much needed sleep or downtime, leaving you frazzled in the test. It's OK not to know everything on the revision list. You can only do your best and looking after your health and wellbeing will help you do that better than cramming in a quick fifteen minute revision burst between two exams.

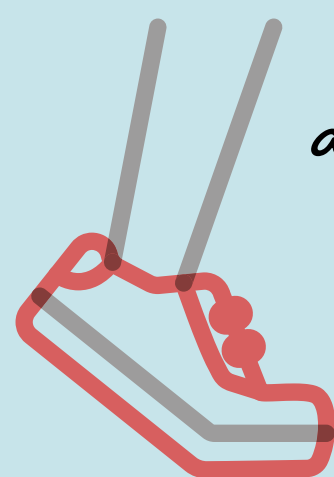


Allow yourself a small "well done" treat after your exam day, or plan something for an hour that you enjoy. You have earned it and it can help you stay motivated and recognise your achievements!

SELF-CARE TIPS DURING EXAM TIME



It might feel daunting or difficult to speak to someone about your results, but it can really help to turn to a trusted friend, parent(s) or family member. If you're nervous speaking to parents about your results, there are some useful tips on having that conversation on 'Childline's website' (link on page 12).



Sometimes getting outside in the open air; going for walk or a run; or doing some form of physical exercise can relieve feelings of stress or anger. Physical activity releases endorphins that help us lift our mood and think more clearly.



Mindfulness exercises can help people feel calmer and more grounded in times of change. Visit our website for tips and advice on mindfulness techniques (See page 12)



If you feel lost and don't know what you want to do next; that's OK. You don't have to rush into or force yourself to make a decision. When faced with lots of different options, writing them down or listing them from favourite to least favourite can be useful. Also writing down pro's and con's of the choices can make it easier to decide. Don't be afraid to ask for advice or look up testimonies online to inform your choices. Remember though, that it is your decision and not anyone else's, so listen to your gut and do what you feel is right for you!



Remind yourself about everything you have achieved & done well, in your studies or otherwise. Writing a list of your accomplishments can help remind you of your successes and build your confidence again. If you prefer something visual, try making a scrapbook of your favourite memories and proud moments. Perhaps, between now and September keep a small journal and every evening write three things in it that you did well that day. If this is difficult at first, start with one thing per day / on your list or in your scrapbook, and increase it a little at a time.

enjoy!

Spend some time doing something you enjoy or that you find relaxing. This could be watching a favourite TV show, listening to a favourite song or reading a book. This has been a difficult time and no matter your results, you deserve some down-time!

USEFUL LINKS

1. For advice around career choices, visit: www.youthemployment.org.uk/employment-help-young-people/ OR contact the National Careers Service: www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk (0800 100 900)
2. Childline have an advice page about dealing with exam disappointment. Although some of the information is out of date, the general advice about coping with exam results is useful: www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/school-college-and-work/school-college/exam-results/
3. For revision tips and advice, BBC Bitesize have a section dedicated to this topic and several videos: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zw8qpbk>
4. At Off The Record we have a range of support available, including webinars about managing anxieties and exam stress; counselling support; links and information about self-care. This is the link the Off the Record website and the info page about what's on offer: <https://www.talkofftherecord.org/whats-on/>
5. Here are links to the AQA and Edexcel websites for links to practice papers and information about the exams this year: www.aqa.org.uk / www.qualifications.pearson.com
6. If you want to appeal your GCSE or A-Level results, information about how to do that can be found here: www.gov.uk/appeal-qualification-result