

Off the Record's Guide to Exams 2025

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2023 "OFF THE RECORD" YOUTH COUNSELLING CROYDON. REGISTERED COMPANY NO. 1051144, REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 2987817, REGISTERED IN ENGLAND AND WALES. REGISTERED OFFICE, 72 QUEENS ROAD, CROYDON, SURREY, CR0 2PR WWW.TALKOFFTHERECORD.ORG

Introduction

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.

In this document we will include the following information:

- 1 A guide to how exams will work this year.
- 2 What are T-Levels and how do they work?
- 3 Advice for managing exam days.
- 4 Self-care advice during your studies.
- 5 Useful links to support.

21.08.25

GCSE results day

14.08.25

A Level / T level results day

How exams will be graded this year

This year, schools will be returning to a pre-pandemic grading system for GCSE & A-Level exams. However, in acknowledgement of the impact of lockdowns there will be some additional help given:

- You will be given extra support materials like formulae and equation sheets in Maths, Physics and Combined Sciences.
- Examiners will be grading with the same grade boundaries as 2019 and have been advised to be a bit more lenient with their marking.
- Exam dates have been more spaced out so that if you fall ill during exam time, you will miss less tests.
- GCSE language exams, you will be provided with a vocabulary list for words you might not have learned yet in term time.

What are T-Levels?

T-Levels are two-year courses which are taken after GCSE's at a college or sixth form. They are roughly the equivalent of three A-Levels but have more of a practical and technical focus and are aimed at preparing students for a particular, skilled profession. They started in 2020 and have replaced a lot of the BTEC's that existed previously. There are 16 T-Level course options available currently, and the aim of the government is to increase that to 24 course options over the next few years.

On an average T-Level course, about 80% of your time is spent in college and 20% of your time is spent on a work placement in an industry related to your field of study. T-Levels are offered by colleges / sixth forms alongside A-Levels, Apprenticeships or Diplomas. According to the government website T-Levels are "more suited to those who want to earn a wage and learn at the same time, and are ready to enter the workforce at age 16." If you need any extra support to improve your grades or transition into further education before starting a T-Level course, there is also a one-year programme called a T-Level Transition course that is available.

How will they be graded?

Students who successfully complete their T-Levels will receive a certificate, which is recognised across the UK. On the certificate it will list their overall grade and a breakdown of the individual grades you achieved as well. For the overall 'T-Level' grade, if you pass and complete the course, there are four separate marks you can achieve:

- Pass
- Merit
- Distinction
- Distinction*

This overall grade is decided based on your grade for a '**Core Component**', an '**Occupational Specialism**' and registration that you completed an industry placement.

CORE COMPONENT = Written assessments and a project set by your employer at your placement.

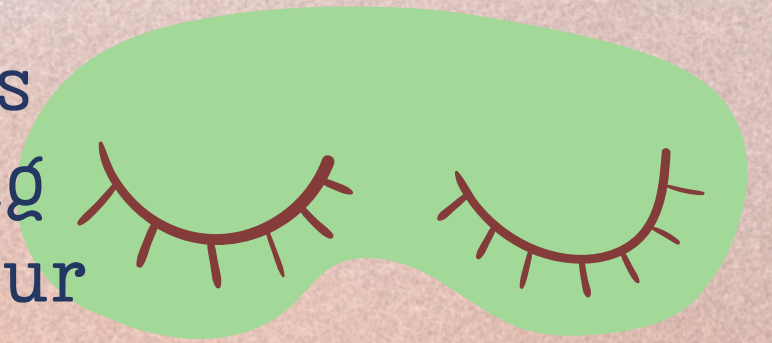
OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALISM: A practical project or series of assignments, set by your course provider.

TIPS ON EXAM DAYS



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. Here is a link to a helpful checklist of what to include in your exam pencil case: [The essentials for your GCSE Exam Pencil Case: \(studentslifeblog.wixsite.com\)](https://studentslifeblog.wixsite.com)

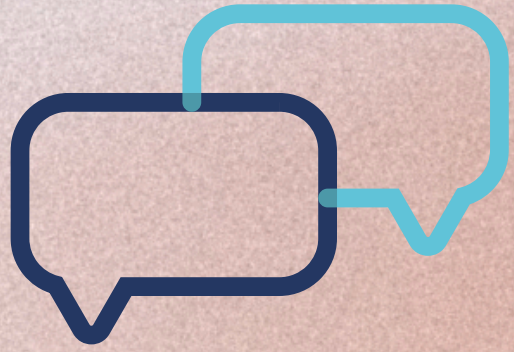


Give yourself plenty of time in the mornings to get ready so you don't start your exam day rushed, stressed or panicked. Maybe consider setting your alarm twenty minutes earlier to allow you to ease into your morning. Getting a bit of fresh air before you start your school day can also help to wake your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

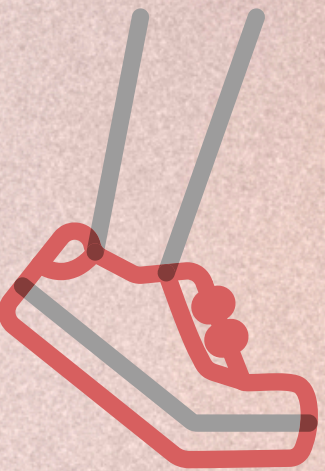
Try not to over-revise! It can be tempting on exam days or the night before to try and cram in some last minute information, but this can actually have the opposite affect and make us less likely to remember what we need to know. It can also stress yourself out and compromise much needed sleep or downtime, 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.



Self-care tips to deal with exam stress



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 next page).



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.

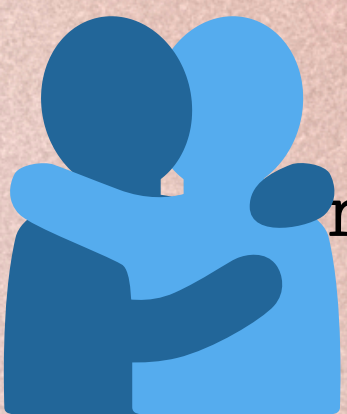
Physical activity releases endorphins that help us lift our mood and think more clearly.



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



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!

Emotional & Mental Health support lines

If you want to talk about what's going on for you and work through your thoughts and feelings, you can contact us to speak directly to a mental health practitioner who will listen to you, offer emotional support and can give you information about our services or signpost you to services that might be relevant to you.

Our Support Line is **open Monday (including Bank Holidays) to Friday from 3 - 6pm and Saturdays, 10am - 1pm**. Call us on **0800 980 7475**.

Call OTRs Support Line

Our support line is open 6 days a week.

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There are a number of phone lines that can also help:

- Every mental health trust in London has put in place a 24/7 crisis line for people of all ages - visit **www.nhs.uk**
- **Samaritans** on 116 123 for 24-hour confidential emotional support
- **Childline** on 0800 11 11 for 24-hour confidential support to children and young people up to the 19th birthday.
- **CALM** on 0800 58 58 58 (5pm-midnight)
- **PAPYRUS** on 0800 068 4141 (9am-midnight) for young people under the age of 35 who are experiencing thoughts of suicide.
- **Shout 85258** for 24/7 confidential support via text. Text 'SHOUT' to 85258

Useful links

1

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>

2

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)**

3

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/

4

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>

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**

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