



# Steps to **Success**



*How to achieve a Grade 7+ in your GCSEs.*

**Information and guidance  
for students.**



# Dear High Attainer

You are being given this booklet because you have been identified as a 'High Attainer' which means that you have target grades of 7+ in one or more of your chosen GCSE subjects.

Having target grades of 7+ indicates that you have the potential to achieve the very highest levels in your GCSE exams. However, whilst your target grade is an indication of what you COULD achieve, you need to know HOW to achieve these grades so that you can put in the hard work to give yourself the best possible opportunity of achieving your potential.

That is where this guide comes in! Each department has outlined the skills that you need to demonstrate in order to achieve a grade 7+ in that subject, advice on how to demonstrate these skills in your work and where you can find extra resources to help you, general advice on how to revise, and importantly how not to revise! There is also advice from students who have been in your situation and succeeded.

GCSEs are a very important stage of your academic life. When you apply for future jobs or college and university courses, you will be required to state your GCSE achievements. By being able to show that you have achieved high grades you will be demonstrating that you are a capable young person, who has the dedication and ability to succeed in your chosen path.

This booklet alone will not guarantee you success in your GCSEs. However, using it in conjunction with your class work, revision sessions, practice papers and your own initiative and hard work you are giving yourself the best possible opportunity to succeed in your exams and achieve those top grades.

I wish you good luck in your GCSE endeavours.

Miss Rogers

Associate Assistant Headteacher (HA lead).

*"The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing."* Walt Disney



# How to revise:

“Revise for exams” you are told, but how do you actually revise?

## Techniques that WILL work:

### Retrieval Practice and Spaced Learning:

Quiz yourself on the content. Create for yourself flash cards with questions on one side of the card and the answers on the other. Then test yourself! (Or get someone to test you). As you test yourself create different piles of the cards: one pile of those that you knew straight away, one pile of those that you got right after some thinking time and one pile of those that you didn't know. When completed spend time working on those that you didn't know before re-testing yourself a couple of days later. Then return to the questions that you knew the answers to after 3 or 4 days and start the process over again! Remember, if you start to struggle with any of the content in your “I know this pile” move it to the “don't know pile” so that you spend more time going over it.

### Learn the technique:

Whilst it is great that you know the content, you also need to make sure that you know how to use this information in answering the exam questions. Learn sentence starters in the Retrieval Practice and Spaced Learning manner. You can only get marks if you know how to collect them!

### Complete exam questions:

The only way to see if you have the right technique is to complete exam questions. The more questions that you answer the more practice you get. Give them to your teachers and they will mark them to show you where you are getting things right and, most importantly where you are getting things wrong. Don't just focus upon the mark that you are given, look at WHY you have been given the mark. Read the comments; what do you need to do to improve your answer?

### Reward yourself:

When you have completed a set of revision, reward yourself! It doesn't matter what the reward is, as long it is something that you makes you feel good (but don't reward yourself if you haven't done the work!)

## Popular websites to help you revise:

GCSEPod  
BBC Bitesize  
Pixl Apps  
Hegarty Maths  
Tassomai



# How not to revise:

## Popular techniques which, unfortunately, have very little impact:

### Using highlighters:

Whilst highlighting is fine to identify the content you need to learn, this is not enough on its own (especially if you are highlighting everything!)

### Re-reading your notes:

This creates the illusion of knowing the material as you recognise what you are reading. BUT, you are not really engaging with the material, your mind will be wandering as you have read this before and it is therefore boring. Unless you are re-reading to try and understand an idea or concept, you will not be getting much out of the process.

### Spending time making your work look pretty:

Whilst it is important that your work is legible, do not spend all your time on the appearance of your work. Colour is a great way of making items stand out, but not at the expense of the content. Get the content done first, then worry about what it looks like!

### Revising what you already know:

It's far more satisfying to revise what we know, since this triggers a rewarding sense of familiarity, rather than focus on our weaknesses. Revision shouldn't be for reassuring yourself about what you know, it needs to be the deliberate effort to identify what you don't.

### Revising with your friends:

Whilst this sounds great, the reality is that you will probably spend more time chatting than actually revising. If you can be really disciplined with your time and test each other, then there is a place for this. However, if you have been at it for an hour and realise that you are still on the same question or page, then go home! Far better to revise on your own and then arrange a break at the same time as your friends for that chat.

### Revising with your phone/tv/computer/music on:

These will only distract you! If you need to use technology to revise, then download the apps that will mute social media alerts for a time. If you don't, then you won't be fully concentrating upon your work.



# Advice from those who achieved a Grade 7+ in all their GCSEs:

## Student A:

It's important to recognize that everyone will have different ways to revise that are effective for them. So just because someone else finds mind maps useful does not necessarily mean that they will work in the same way for you. Therefore, it's up to you to find out as early as possible what revision techniques will help you best when it comes to exams and this is where mocks are useful. Tried something the first-time round that didn't work out as well as you'd hoped? That's fine, try something else next time. In year 10/11 you are given a lot of opportunities to try different revision strategies so use them to your advantage.

Following on from that, starting early is a great way to get ahead but it's also important to structure your revision correctly so that you make best use of your time. For example, in essay subjects, at the start of the year your focus should be making sure that the structure of the answers you're writing is correct and hence practice questions will be really useful. Your teachers will be happy to mark these and give any feedback. As exams get closer, then is the time to start trying to remember quotes/dates. Trying to do this earlier in the year will likely result in you not remembering them and having to do the whole process again when it comes to exams. Be smart about what revision you are doing and when you are doing it.

Unfortunately, there's no secret formula to do well. The truth is that getting the top grades requires a lot of work. However, your health and well-being is also incredibly important. Working from the moment you wake up until when you go to bed is simply not healthy and should 100% be avoided. If you do an activity outside of school, keep doing it! If anything, just to take your mind off work for a while. It would be pointless for me to say not worry or not to panic because obviously GCSEs are stressful and the month of exams is a daunting task to anyone. Therefore, don't make it more stressful than it needs to be. Start your revision early and you'll be prepared by May.

Finally, there are a few things that I picked up during year 10/11 that I found useful:

- Channels like freesciencelessons and mr bruff are a really useful tool for that

short term revision. I would watch the videos, make notes and then just go over and over them until I remembered it. (Cramming should not be your only revision though. It becomes very stressful very quickly.)



- Use the lesson time wisely. It becomes very easy to be distracted when your task for the lesson is 'revise'. But using this time in school will mean that you don't necessarily have as much to do at home.
- Don't feel the need to structure your entire day into revision timetables. The likelihood is that it'll come to a time that you've said you'll revise, you just don't feel like it and that's when you start to procrastinate. I instead just had a loose idea of what I wanted to get done in the day and then I just did it when I felt like I'd actually do it.
- Avoiding burnout is very important so be sure to take breaks when you need to. There's nothing worse than knowing you have exams coming up but having zero motivation.
- With essays, sometimes the way you write is almost as important as what you are actually writing. Each type of question will have a specific structure to get the most marks possible so make sure to practise these. Quotes/dates, while obviously important, are only a part of your answer so don't make it all of your revision.
- Practice papers are the best way to test your knowledge. Go through them at your own pace and at the end you'll be able to see the areas that you need to work on. Go over these topics and try a different paper to see if you've improved.

Student B:

### GETTING GRADE 7 AND ABOVE

I am very pleased with how I did at GCSE but always keep in mind that most things are massively subjective and differ widely from person to person.

#### Finding your way of working

You still have plenty of time to play around with different studying techniques before your exams. Don't think that by deviating from your usual revision will waste time- for all you know you could be wasting time by working the way you are right now! This is obviously excluding exam questions which you will do more and more as exams get closer.

Things to try:

- Flash cards
- Mind maps
- Flow charts
- Diagrams associated to events, quotes etc.
- Creating stories around a topic
- Teaching a family member about topics
- Testing each other through quizzes
- Summarise to as few words as possible

Something you may not have heard of, but one that I found really, really helpful.





## “Blurting”

This is a technique where you pick a topic or chapter, from any subject and give yourself a set amount of time, maybe 5 or 10 minutes depending on what it is to “blurt” out as much as you can about it with NO HELP!! Then, cross reference to your notes, the spec and revision guides to see what you’re missing. Note them down, do some revision and come back to the same topic in a week or two. Repeat until you know it inside out!

### My favourite apps and websites

- Quizlet [essentially online flash cards but more fun than writing out notes.](#) Making your own quizlet sets help too as you have to go through your work to find the key bits.
- Memrise (languages) used this practically everyday. It gradually tailors towards helping you with your weaker vocab the more you do it. Quite addictive once you get into it too!
- Tassomai (sciences) similar to memrise but for sciences.
- Pinterest (art and photography) amazing for mood board inspo, finding potential artists to look into and new techniques to use.
- THE SPECIFICATIONS if it isn’t in the spec, they can’t ask you about it! (Not so much for essay subjects where further contextual knowledge will help reach top grades). Go through it, highlight any areas that you feel you’re weak on and act on it.

THESE ARE NOT AN ALTERNATIVE TO EXAM PRACTICE, THEY’RE A SUPPLEMENT TO HELP YOU ANSWER THEM

### When to revise

“When shall I start revising?” Is something that everyone will ask at some point. I did too. The sooner you can gradually build it into routine the better. The sooner you start, the less you’ll have to cram. Also, people always assumed I spend every living moment doing school work. It was actually a shock to people to see me at parties but it’s because I managed my time. Also, focusing in lesson makes the world of a difference, and people forget that. It’s 5 hours a day that you have dedicated to focusing! Why would you waste it if it then means that you have to spend more time at home trying to understand things. School time is for establishing your knowledge, then use time at home to apply to in revision and practise. You could spend 5 hours a night in front of books but you only focused in 2 lessons. Someone that focused all day then only needs 2 hours of revision to work as long as you, and that time will have been more helpful too as they’ve maximised the time around teachers who can help with that initial understanding.



### Mocks

I can not stress enough how valuable mocks are. People write them off all of the time because “they don’t count” but honestly, if you act as if they’re the real thing and work hard for them it’s going to help you out for 4 main reasons:

1. You’ll be more used to being in exam conditions. I used to get so nervous for them, and would have massive blank moments and my hands would get shaky and tense. This is normal, but if you get this out of your system during the mocks, then you’ll be accustomed to it. By the real thing, it’ll feel almost normal an like something you’re used to doing.
2. The work you put in while for revising for mocks is work in the bank all done for the real thing. If you’re already comfortable with a lot of topics, it will just be the case of going over them again and again in May. If you do nothing, then some topics will be new to you again due to how long it will have been since the lessons they were taught in.
3. You’ll have genuinely weak areas highlighted for you. If you’ve put 100% into your mocks, then the areas that you dropped marks in will be the areas that you don’t understand, rather than the areas you can’t remember-there’s a big difference!
4. The grade you get will motivate you either way. If you’re happy with it then it’s reassuring and you know that what you’re doing is working. On the other hand, if it isn’t what you’re hoping for this doesn’t mean it’s the grade you’re going to get. All it means is that you now know where to focus your efforts, or if you focus just isn’t quite there yet. We all need that shock into reality sometimes.

### Self care 😊

There is no getting around the fact that exams can be stressful. We put pressure on ourselves, may even have it from other people around us and while we need to use that to fuel motivation it can easily turn into being massively overwhelming. I am my biggest critic as I’m sure a lot of you are too, and as such a perfectionist, it took me a while to change my viewpoint on mocks or pieces of work that hadn’t gone too well. I saw it as weakness and a reflection on my work going downhill-THIS IS NOT TRUE! These are hugely useful in showing which areas need a bit more attention in the spec and can also be a sign that we need to be kinder to ourselves. Being tired, stressed, overworked and having a lack of self-belief are a lot more detrimental to results than you may think. It sounds really cliché but honestly, believing in yourself gets you half way there.

### Dealing with burn out

There will be periods of time in which you may feel absolutely done with it all! You’ve been working so hard yet the end point still feels miles away. I had this at around January of year 11. I’d already spent a year working really hard, a lot of the time on things I’ve been over several times before in subjects which I wasn’t passionate about and I just





wanted to sleep and give up to be honest. This was definitely because I had overworked myself not just with the actual work, but more so mentally with the stress of wanting perfection. It's so easy to spend ages doing nothing and feeling guilty that you aren't working, so you're neither productive nor actually resting. This quickly turns into a slump cycle that's hard to break. Not a healthy approach at all... however, after my dip, I picked myself back up knowing that it was only temporary, and by consciously fitting in periods of time to switch off and stop thinking. Watch a film, walk your dog- whatever you need!

### Getting away from work

Things that got me through these anxious times included going to the gym, for long runs to clear my head and, despite how daft it sounds, yoga was actually so relaxing. However, don't absolutely exhaust yourself with exercise, you might need a bit of energy to think when you do work! Also by doing things like this, you're going to be more tired and therefore will probably get to sleep earlier and have a better night's sleep. Let's be real, who couldn't do with sorting out their sleeping pattern!? Yes being active is amazing, but some of us are closer to couch potato than an athlete, or may feel like this sometimes. You could do some baking, reading away from academic subjects, actually talk to your family and people around you or just listen to some music. Allowing myself this time without being ridiculous always made me more willing to get back to the desk.

### Self-belief

Having a fixed mindset that you just "aren't smart" or whatever it is just won't cut it. If you want a grade 6 or an 8 or dream of that 9, then work for it. All of us that have already got them did exactly that. It's not a talent, it's focus. It's constructive criticism instead of self-deprecation, and it's working smart rather than wasting hour upon hour doing things which aren't genuinely beneficial.

### Subject specific- working towards 9's

I obviously can't speak for the subjects which I didn't take, and for a lot of these, I haven't done any since my exams- but here's what I did to get my 9's.

### Maths

In year 11, you'll be doing at least a paper a week, which sounds boring, but is the best use of time. Once you've done so many, 3 in the Summer will feel like nothing! It's all set out so you're explicitly told your weaknesses and unfortunately all you can do is questions upon questions on these topics. Make sure you know your trig equations!

### English literature

This is an overwhelming subject and a half! I got my own copies of the books to reread and highlight key quotes, I found it reassuring to know I always had access to them but obviously isn't necessary. Similarly, I found that York notes revision guides were amazing, but you don't need them. For each poem learn several quotes, but not necessarily the ones everyone talks about.



Really think about them, and find ones which you can analyse in the most depth. In lesson, if someone says a quote that you don't remember, this doesn't always mean that you need to know it too. So long as you can answer questions on the main themes, keep to the ones which are your favourite and with the most advanced interpretations.

This is the same with the plays and A Christmas Carol. Just get to grips with the plots, key terminology and themes. Then over time, the detail will begin to build up.

Quizlet was a lifesaver for quotes.

The thing I found most beneficial was that I wrote out my key themes, and planned out essays for them. That way, you've already got an answer for most questions that they could possibly ask you.

### Sciences

Tassomai was amazing for knowing the facts, but especially for biology, the application only comes with exam practise.

Physics, unfortunately will always be frustrating as it's something which at this level (or ever) can't genuinely be understood. Learning the equations is a bore but ESSENTIAL. If you do know them, that's a load of marks bagged since you just have to plug the numbers in. Keep to the spec and try your best to grasp the topics- for me, it was more a case of remembering it than learning it!

### History

History is so incredibly content heavy. It took me so long to realise that you're never going to remember everything. For every key topic, stick to the 2 or 3 things which stand out. If you're swimming in facts and dates you'll forget to go into depth with explanations and analysis. What I found useful was during lessons or while revising, rather than trying to learn the evidence, I'd expand on them and always try to keep going with the "what if"s until you can go no further. Likewise with English, if you know and understand an explanation, the evidence will come hand in hand with it. Essays are not many people's favourite things to do, but they need doing. Even planning out an essay question is helpful as you can then find out if you're on the right path or not and it gets you used to the thought process needed of expanding from evidence to explanation to analysis (dependant on the question).

Taking the time to make simple things like timelines puts the mass of dates into perspective and the topics will begin to flow more like a story, giving wider perspective of long-term causes/consequences etc.

### Languages

My advice if you're aiming high is mainly down to nailing vocab and complex grammar structures. Your speaking booklets are where you can show these off. If you learn these answers you can even use them in the writing exam too! That's 2 out of 4 practically sorted just through taking the time to make these booklets at a high standard- BUT STICK TO ONE THAT YOU



STILL UNDERSTAND. Don't add gobbledygoop that you don't understand, it's obvious if you've just stolen it from the internet.

I know that if I was back in your position 2 years ago, I'd be thinking that this is stuff that I've heard millions of times before- it's boring and sounds like a nag. However, even if it isn't directly these things that you take on board, just be reminded that us sixth formers are living proof that there is life after GCSE's! You can and will get through it, as year 11 goes on, time will go faster and faster. I haven't been told what to put here at all, these were all my genuine thoughts on what I personally found beneficial. I hope this is somewhat helpful! 😊



# English Language

## Skills required to achieve Grade 7+ in writing:

- Creative writing at grade 7+ needs to be *convincing* and *compelling* - this means it is engaging and you have clearly thought about how you have written it. In order to do this you need to have planned it carefully; considered the structure; carefully selected techniques and vocabulary that is matched to the audience and purpose.
- There should be a formality and professionalism to your writing; you need to write using the appropriate register and tone e.g. if writing a broadsheet newspaper article it needs to sound like one!
- Use a range of sophisticated punctuation to help control and manipulate your sentences. Make sure you know how to effectively use semicolons and colons.

## Hints and Tips to help you demonstrate this in your work:

- Consider interesting ways to begin your sentences and paragraphs e.g. show opinion by using adverbs such as: *interestingly, infuriatingly, controversially, funnily enough, shockingly, amazingly, despite the fact...*
- Include extended metaphors and symbols in your work.
- Plan really thoroughly so it is obvious you have carefully constructed your piece of writing – try something like a cyclical structure or a flashback.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge or help you revise:

- Read novels and extracts to see how stories and descriptions are structured; how writers use techniques for effect; how characters are formed; how settings are described, and used to create an atmosphere... The English faculty can recommend novels and/or extracts for you to read and learn from.
- Read a range of non-fiction texts to gain ideas on different topics and see how professional writers write in different non-fiction forms. The Guardian website/app is great for accessing opinion articles on different topics and it is a broadsheet newspaper so will give you an indication of how formal, editorial writing should sound. Watch great speeches on YouTube to better understand how speeches are structured and how they use rhetoric for effect.
- Research things such as Greek/Roman gods and goddesses so that you can refer to them or use them in extended metaphors in your work. E.g. writing a description of a storm at sea, could include a reference to Poseidon (God of the sea). The 'Mythology' app is really helpful for this; we have them on the English iPads, but it's free to download.



# English Literature

## Skills required to achieve Grade 7+ in writing:

- Writing a *well-planned, thorough, and developed* response to the question. Having a clear structure; well-linked points, more than one piece of evidence to support ideas and detailed analysis of the writers' methods and messages and intentions.
- A *confident understanding* of the genre, form and context of the text.
- Being *original and conceptualised* in your response - not going with the obvious interpretations but considering the wider issues that are then represented through the text.

## Hints and Tips to help you demonstrate this in your work:

- Start by focusing on the writer of the text and their message/intention. Then, focus on how they share those messages and intentions through the methods such as characters, settings, language and structure.
- Discuss what the writer is criticising, highlighting, subverting, or emphasising in their text.
- Choose your quotations judiciously (carefully). Quotations need to be 'juicy' enough to squeeze enough analysis out of them. Revise quotations that link to both character and theme. You should know exactly what you can say about the quotations you've learnt and are including, to help prove your point. Discussing symbolism and layers of meaning will mean you're being more exploratory and thorough.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge or help you revise:

- Your books and class notes are a good starting point, but *then* refer to a revision guide and see which bits it confirms or makes you realise you didn't have already.
- Do some *additional* reading and research. There are lots of YouTube blogs/vlogs with helpful tips and interesting interpretations and ideas to enhance your understanding and analysis. Type in 'grade 7+' in the search bar when you type in the text you're looking for.
- English also have a range of magazines called 'Literary Eye' about all of the Literature texts which offer some insightful ideas that you can use to 'take it further'.



# Maths

## Skills required to achieve Grade 7+:

- Generate efficient strategies to solve complex mathematical and non-mathematical problems by translating them into a series of mathematical processes.
- Make and use connections, which may not be immediately obvious, between different parts of mathematics.
- Interpret results in the context of the given problem.

## Hints and Tips to help you demonstrate this in your work:

- Always show your working (even on the calculator paper).
- Highlight key information and the topics required to answer the question.
- Ensure your answer makes sense in terms of the context of the question.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge or help you revise:

- Hegarty Maths.
- WE from your exercise books.
- Revision guides aimed at Edexcel.





# Science

## Skills required to achieve a Grade 7+:

- It sounds obvious, but make sure that there are no gaps in your knowledge and understanding so that you can apply these correctly to both familiar and unfamiliar contexts.
- Make sure that you are confident in the following mathematical skills - using a graph to calculate a rate, drawing an appropriate line of best fit, being able to calculate ratios (e.g. surface area to volume ratio) and being able to convert units (e.g. millimetres into micrometres).
- Make sure that you are able to critically evaluate practical methods and judge the validity of scientific conclusions.

## Hints and Tips to demonstrate this in your work:

- Key facts and spec notes are clearly indicated in your class notes, along with TIF questions.
- Mathematical skills are practised regularly and within a scientific context.
- Assessment objectives (AO1, AO2 and AO3) are identified when answering exam-style questions and during PDDT opportunities.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge and to help you revise:

- [www.GCSEpod.com](http://www.GCSEpod.com) - watch pods and answer questions to regularly apply your knowledge to familiar and unfamiliar situations.
- <https://www.freesciencelessons.co.uk/> - watch short clips to help plug gaps in your knowledge and understanding.
- <https://www.aqa.org.uk/> - download past exam papers and practise questions regularly.
- Keep up with your daily goals on Tassomai [www.tassomai.com](http://www.tassomai.com)



# Geography

## Skills required to achieve Grade 7+:

- Linking each paragraph back to the question to make sure everything you've included is relevant.
- Using relevant SPECIFIC case study information that helps shape your answer to meet the needs of the question - not a case study dump.
- Following the command word and picking out fewer points but making sure they follow detailed action of the command word e.g. discussion is in depth but only about your specific point.

## Hints and Tips to help you demonstrate this in your work:

- Plan the case study facts you are going to talk about before you answer the question and then do not add in any more descriptive information.
- Ask yourself WHY at the end of your sentence, if you can explain it further it is not in enough detail.
- Highlight the command word and key information in the question and refer back to this throughout your paragraphs.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge or help you revise:

- Pixl Geography app.
- Online OneDrive paper 1 & 2 revision guides & past paper questions.
- GCSEpod.
- Caludon Geography YouTube channel.



# History

## Skills required to achieve a Grade 7+:

- Apply detailed own knowledge to every answer to show you understand the key historical events and issues.
- Write clear explanations which analyse the key events and issues.
- Write a conclusion which reaches a clear, evidenced judgement.

## Hints and Tips to demonstrate this in your work:

- Include complex thinking in your work – link factors together to help you justify your judgements.
- Include analysis of the wider context comments in your work, what else was happening at the same time which was important to the outcome.
- Practise exam technique by planning answers to questions: how will you demonstrate your complex thinking?

## Resources to help expand your knowledge to help you revise:

- Revision guides - Revise AQA Conflict and Tension 1918-1939, Revise AQA Germany 1890-1945, Revise AQA Medicine c1000 to present. All available in school.
- Websites:
  - <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/history/gcse>
  - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history>
  - <http://www.revisionworld.co.uk/gcse-revision/history>
  - <http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk>
- GCSEPod - Access clips and quizzes on GCSE topics; Paper 1 Conflict and Tension 1918-1939, Germany 1890-1945, Paper 2 Medicine c1000 to present .



# MFL: French and Spanish

## Skills required to achieve Grade 7+:

- Ability to manipulate language to suit your own needs and purpose. Students will understand a wide range of vocabulary from different topics and will be able to see links between them.
- Can understand and use a variety of tenses (past, present, future, imperfect (what used to happen) and conditional (what would happen in the future).
- Confidence and resilience to keep going even when they find the subject matter challenging.

## Hints and Tips to help you demonstrate this in your work:

- PALMOW in your writing - always follow the formula.
- AVOCADO in your writing work (A = adjectives V= verbs O= opinions C= connectives A= adverbs D= detail O = wOw phrases).
- Careful structuring of your ideas - make a plan for your writing and make notes for all the bullet points on the writing exam.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge or help you revise:

- [www.memrise.com](http://www.memrise.com) - all the GCSE spec vocab is there for you.
- News in slow French or Spanish - google it - it will keep you up to date on recent events which often form part of the trickiest questions.
- AQA website has a wealth of past papers to practise with [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)



# Art

## Skills required to achieve a Grade 7+:

- Compare and contrast artists with key descriptive words.
- Respond to artists visually with independent and creative outcomes.
- Visit a local gallery and explain how it will influence your projects.
- Have a range of thumbnails and creative making showing exciting compositions and media combinations.
- Have a range of traditional drawing with in-depth tone.
- Have a range of experimental drawings showing the possibilities of what your theme could look like.
- Rigorously annotate all work in portfolio with key descriptive words explaining what you have learnt and how it will influence your project.
- Create an exciting final outcome that experiments with presentation showing your refined skill.

## Hints and Tips to demonstrate this in your work:

- Use the 'what does a GCSE art portfolio look like?' booklet. In this you will find artists' annotation sheets, key words and visual aids to prompt you in your portfolio.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge to help you revise:

- Pinterest boards that have been set up. These can be located at [www.pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com) under the heading of 'Caludon Castle visual arts'. Themes and artist imagery have been pinned here to inspire you.
- 'What does a GCSE portfolio look like?' booklet.



# Business: Enterprise and Marketing

## Skills required to achieve Grade 7+:

- Answering the 6 mark questions – Point, Explain, Impact (twice). Impact – what is the impact on the business – make sure you use a different potential impact for each of the two points being made.
- Extended 8 mark question. You must consider both of the options in the question, consider benefits and drawbacks of each, making sure your answer is in context. To get the 7th mark you must make a justified decision between the two options. To get the final mark explain why the other option was rejected.

## Hints and Tips to help you demonstrate this in your work:

- Revise key definitions (create a glossary).
- Make sure all answers are contextual - you relate all answers to the business scenario used throughout section B.
- Know the expectations of each command verb and provide a corresponding answer.
- Be familiar with potential impact that different situations and activities can have on a business.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge or help you revise:

- <https://www.tutor2u.net/business>
- <https://www.businessed.co.uk/>
- Revision guide: My Revision Notes: Cambridge National Level 1/2 Enterprise and Marketing, Tess Bayley, Leanna Oliver





# Computer Science

## Skills required to achieve Grade 7+:

- Use algorithms effectively; pseudocode and flowcharts must be translated to a variety of scenarios.
- Programming concepts must be familiarised and analysed with confidence to ensure it can be used in Unit 2 exam.
- Discussing the environmental, ethical, cultural and privacy implications of computer science; researching into current news and writing an argument for OR against a statement will need to be practised thoroughly.

## Hints and Tips to help you demonstrate this in your work:

- Conversion into binary, denary and hexadecimal questions will need to show full working out to evidence mathematical operations.
- Be able to apply decomposition and abstraction into all the sort and search algorithms.
- Answers must be kept to the point on exam questions with reference to real life examples and showing explicit instructions to algorithm based questions.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge or help you revise:

- Revision guides being given as hard copy will help with all key concepts of both units.
- Videos on Craig n Dave will help significantly with different examples and exam type questions.
- Booklets being given out on exam questions/model answers will help to analyse Q's being tackled to aim higher marks.



# Creative iMedia

## Skills required to achieve Grade 7+:

- Work with confidence and independence to create materials which reflect thoughtful planning, skilled production and perceptive review.
- Apply knowledge, understanding and skills in a variety of contexts – exploring, and using a range of creative media techniques, identifying and selecting equipment and assets efficiently to create effective media solutions.
- Confidently use suitable features from a range of software commonly found in the workplace and in higher education appropriate to creative media.

## Hints and Tips to help you demonstrate this in your work:

### R081 exam:

- Check your class-notes to ensure that they are complete.
- Make sure you are familiar with the structure of the exam and which topics link with which unit.
- Learn appropriate exam technique from doing past papers; do not waffle, keep to the point and respond to the command word.
- Use specific subject vocabulary at all times.
- Take care with spelling, punctuation and grammar.

### R082, R085 and R086 coursework:

- Regularly self-assess your work against the mark scheme and hand in work on deadline days.
- Make sure you are familiar with the structure of the coursework and which topics link with which unit.
- Use specific subject vocabulary at all times.
- Always link your answers back to the question / the client brief.
- Take care with spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge or help you revise:

- Websites: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/>
- On-Line learning: Firefly > subjects > computing > KS4 > R081
- Textbook: 'My revision notes, OCR Cambridge Nationals, Creative iMedia L1/2, Pre-production skills and creating digital graphics', Hodder Education, Kevin Wells.
- erevision



# Design and Technology

## Skills required to achieve Grade 7+ (coursework):

- Analysis of research - finding out the useful information.
- Reflecting on data and deciding on how this impacts your intentions.
- Making strong links between findings and next steps

## Hints and Tips to help you demonstrate this in your work:

- Signpost your findings, colour code or separate key information, use arrows to show links. Collect the key points into one space.
- Constantly ask yourself questions - what does this mean, why does it do this, if this happens then what?
- TESTING - prove your thoughts! Or prove yourself wrong? Document your testing, take photos and annotate. This can be modelling or simply asking for client feedback/ opinions.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge or help you revise:

- [www.technologystudent.com](http://www.technologystudent.com)
- GCSE Pod
- BBC Bitesize



# Drama

## Skills required to achieve Grade 7+:

- You will need to have assured and comprehensive practical creation, development and refinement of ideas from the given stimuli/scripts to communicate meaning. You will need to demonstrate confident engagement with the process of collaboration, rehearsal and refinement.
- When studying *The Crucible* you will need to understand social, historical and/or cultural contexts including the theatre conventions of the period in which the text was created and performed.
- Performance is accomplished, skilful and highly engaging, demonstrating comprehensive and assured focus, confidence and commitment.

## Hints and Tips to help you demonstrate this in your work:

- Offer comprehensive explanations of the creative intentions for the scripted/devised performances.
- Performance is refined, articulate and dynamic, creating significant impact with ability to drive the piece, showing accomplished energy and ease.
- Confident and accomplished use of appropriate drama terminology.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge or help you revise:

- Revision guides available from finance for the written component.
- Resources, revision booklets and guide sheets all on Firefly for the written components.
- Exemplar practical work available to watch on the school system or Firefly.



# Health and Social Care

## Skills required to achieve Grade 7+:

- Evaluation - gives strengths and weaknesses of arguments.
- Create appropriate actions for service users in the scenario.
- Give a reasoned rationale for the actions that you have created.

## Hints and Tips to help you demonstrate this in your work:

- Consider the 'good' points and the 'bad' points and write a mini conclusion.
- Put yourself in the service user's shoes - what would you do in this situation?
- Give 3 paragraphs, each relating to the 3 actions that you have given, ensuring that you have discussed needs, wishes and circumstances.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge or help you revise:

- Use booster distinction cards to support evaluation skills.
- Access the e-book using the QR code in the back of your HL book.
- Use the Pearson BTEC Health and Social Care revision guide.



# Music

## Skills required to achieve a Merit+:

Perform in your band at least two songs with confidence, fluency and musical style.  
Compose a piece of music, both 10-15 seconds in length to accompany 2 contrasting adverts.

## Hints and Tips to demonstrate this in your work:

- Be able to demonstrate a high level of personal management skills with competent, fluent and sustained application of music performance skills in rehearsal. You will use your time wisely and practice S.M.A.R.Tly. You need to complete your own independent practice on your band parts to be able to perform confidently and accurately as part of your band.

## Resources to expand your knowledge and help you revise:

- Demonstrate skilful selection and use of appropriate structures to effectively develop one compositional draft into a completed composition, showing imagination, style and flair as appropriate given the brief. This composition will then be presented in an appropriate format with clarity, accuracy and attention to detail. Unfortunately, this can only be completed in school on Garageband, so use all time wisely, and use the extra time after school. At home, you could be experimenting with your ideas or listening to music that has been composed for TV adverts to get inspiration to add flair to your work.





# Photography

## Skills required to achieve a Grade 7+:

- Analysis of both technical and aesthetic qualities in other people's photographs and your own, and the deliberate application and development of both technical and aesthetic knowledge when taking your own photographs.
- Developing ideas by experimenting widely and then refining your work gradually and methodically.
- Independent creativity.

## Hints and tips to demonstrate this in your work:

- Your sketchbook or power point should demonstrate your flow of ideas. How does each step lead to the next? Don't leave interpretation to chance. Even failures help you to move your work forward - explain how.
- Use at least 3 words from the vocabulary sheet or classroom wall in every section of annotation. Consistently analyse the technical and aesthetic qualities of images, throughout your sketchbook or power point.
- Ensure you take at least 40 photos per shoot, each photo at least slightly different from the last. When you think you've exhausted your ideas for that subject, force yourself to take 10 more: from underneath, from above, use different lighting etc.

## Resources to help you expand your knowledge to help you revise:

- Online sources such as Fstoppers, Photography Life, and iPhone Photography School.
- Pinterest for new ideas - but you may then have to put the images back into an image search in Google images to find the photographer's name.
- Photopedagogy.com for interesting ideas.



# Sociology

## Skills required to achieve Grade 7+:

- Criticism - you need to criticise your point.
- Evidence - you need to use facts and statistics to demonstrate that what you are saying is the case.
- Analysis - you need to analyse at least 2 different sociological studies or case studies.

## Hints and Tips to help you demonstrate this in your work:

- Criticism - However .... would criticise this view by saying....
- Evidence - This is demonstrated by....
- Analysis - ..... 's study of shows that..... In contrast ..... believes that....

## Resources to help expand your knowledge or help you revise:

- Use the sociologists' booklet that has been given out that contains the 25 key studies.
- Recommended revision guide: 'My Revision Notes: AQA GCSE (9-1) Sociology'
- Practice exam question booklets given out in class.
- Use the flashcards that you have been given, including the key studies.
- Watch/read the news to support your Real-World Applications.



# Sport

## Skills required to achieve Grade 7+:

- Advanced application of practical skills in both team and individual sports.
- Advanced application of leadership and officiating skills.
- Excellent subject knowledge across 4 learning outcomes for contemporary issues exam.

## Hints and Tips to help you demonstrate this in your work:

- Remember to perform/show off advanced skills e.g. passing with non-dominant foot and not taking the easy option.
- Stick to session structure when delivering and ensure effective time management throughout session.
- Follow PEE structure for 8 mark star questions.

## Resources to help expand your knowledge or help you revise:

- Resources in staff student share
- Resources on firefly
- Distinction level model past papers