

## How to survive your child's GCSE year

If your son or daughter is taking GCSEs this year, then chances are your household's going to get increasingly fraught over the coming weeks and months.



Preparing for GCSEs can be an extremely testing time for teenagers. There's the pressure of revising multiple subjects at the same time, sitting the exams and getting the right results to contend with. What's more (and we're sure you'll remember this), there's no set rule to revising; different students learn differently, and it's down to your son or daughter to find the tactics that work best for them.

Creating the right home environment and providing your child with constructive help and support can be a challenge. You need to offer assistance while giving your child the freedom to study how and when they want to, while being confident that they're on track to get their target grade.

Read on for practical advice on what to do to survive your child's GCSE year and support them effectively through the exam season.



### 1 The right home environment will help your child focus

One of the most important things you can do is to create a home environment where your child wants to be, where they can study and where they can take time out and relax after a revision session.

For instance, can they shut themselves away in a room and study in peace and quiet without being disturbed? Do they get time to themselves that they can dedicate to getting their head down and stuck into the revision notes?

### 2 Practice really does make perfect



Every child is different when it comes to learning. Some have excellent memories while others don't remember things right away. The key is helping your child find out what's best for them – flowcharts and diagrams, revision cards or pages of notes, for example.

In our experience, one method that works particularly well for everyone is practising and testing.

Once your child has revised a topic, an effective (and motivating) way to test if they've absorbed the information is to answer a standard exam question. They'll quickly be able to see the areas they need to brush up on. After a few days, it's worth them answering the question again to test their knowledge gaps.

Encouraging your child to practice test papers beforehand will also help them manage their nerves on exam day, as they'll be more familiar with the language and format of the exam questions.

Past papers are really easy to get hold of and can be downloaded here



### 3 Give your child the freedom to set their revision timetable

As tempting as it might be to take over, it's best your child prepares their own revision timetable because, at the end of the day, they're the ones who are going to have to stick to it.

As much as you may have your child's best interests at heart, insisting they revise or work for a set period of time every day can be counterproductive. Instead, try to come up with a plan together that works for your child; this will help them feel supported and provide them with a structure that's based on when they prefer to learn. For example, some students learn better in the morning than the evening, and vice versa.

### 4 A good night's sleep goes a very long way

It goes without saying, but making sure your child gets adequate sleep will aid their concentration, keep them alert for their revision and help them perform as best as they can on exam day.

According to psychologists at the University of Exeter, sleep almost doubles our chances of remembering previously unrecalled material. Sleeping not only protects memories from being forgotten, it also makes them easier to access because we're more likely to recall facts that we could not remember while still awake.

No matter how stressed your son or daughter may feel, encourage them to get a good night's sleep. It'll do wonders, especially the night before exam day.



### 5 It's ok to be guided by your child (honest!)

Last, but not least, let your child tell you what help they need.

For instance, if they prefer to study with friends rather than on their own, don't be afraid to encourage it. Equally, if you find they want to study all of the time, that's fine, but make sure you encourage them to take a break every now and again.

Most students learn best when they revise in 30 to 45 minute bursts before taking a break.

We can't stress to you enough the importance of listening to your child and how they prefer to study for their GCSE examinations. Yes, you may be the parent, but don't forget that no matter how stressed things get, letting your child know that you're there for them no matter what, will go an incredibly long way.

## ABOUT US

Stride offers GCSE mentoring for students willing to work hard to go further.

Supported by peers and guided by a mentor, students of all abilities benefit from a proven methodology that offers a clear path to success.