5 ways to survive & thrive in Year 11: A Parent Guide.

Parent Guide to GCSEs
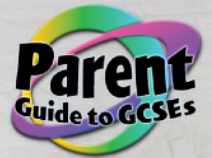
## 1. Little bits add up to a LOT

Revision can seem overwhelming. It's tempting to put it off. Here's why they shouldn't.

Just 15 minutes work a day = 7.5 hours a month That's pretty much a full day of revision.

Starting there, then gradually increasing the time each day up to an hour could mean they've done something like **150 hours of revision** by the time they reach the first exam. Not too bad for at most an hour a day!

The Power of Tiny Gains

1% better every day $1.01^{365} = 37.78$

1% worse every day $0.99^{365} = 0.03$

Improvement or Decline

1

1 Year
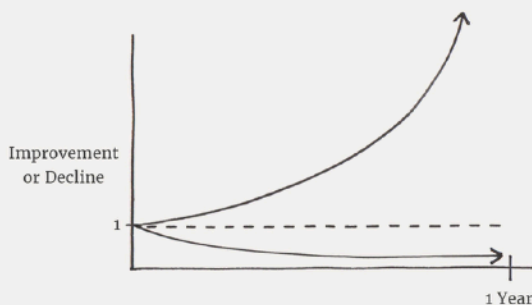
JamesClear.com

It's also REALLY important to remember that *rest makes just as much difference as revision* - if they're overworked and overstressed, it'll do more harm than good.

Check out this article about how making tiny improvements led to a huge difference for the British Cycling Team:

https://jamesclear.com/marginal-gains

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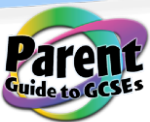
2. GOOD COP vs BAD COP

Studies have shown us that punishment is a stronger motivator than reward, but when your child is in the middle of what is probably the most stressful year they've ever faced, it's important that they see you as 'on their side'.

Here's how to use some **key teenage motivators** to get them studying. (Without needing to be 'bad cop'.)

FREEDOM

If they start revising now, they'll have done most of it by the time exams start, so they'll be able to have some free time after Easter, rather than being stuck inside working.

If they commit to (say) 30 minutes a day of revision after school, they can have their weekends off!

INDEPENDENCE

If they are not sticking to their schedule, sit down with them and encourage them to make some changes to it so that they can stick to it. Why isn't it working for them? Is it unrealistic? The wrong time of day? You're teaching them to self-regulate their work habits, so prompt rather than tell.

Ask them what they'd like you to do to help them this year. Some might actually *want* you to check up on their revision! Do they need a better workspace at home? Do they want help setting revision goals? Do they want help avoiding distractions?

RESPECT

Understand that mocks are tough (because you usually sit a full paper even though you haven't finished the course yet), and don't criticise their results.

Praise the effort they put in, even if you wish they were doing more.

Grades follow effort.

3. They're going to need a plan

A good revision plan:

- Covers every subject area
- Is broken down into topics within each subject
- Is realistic
- Has regular breaks (10 minutes break for every 20 minutes studying is good)
- Plans in 'me' time FIRST. (If your plan is going to cause you to miss your favourite show, which do you think will win?!)
- Allows time for homework too

(We'll be running a free webinar in August on exactly how to draw up a revision timetable.)

4. The one revision hack to rule them all
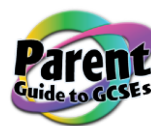
Making a daily habit of writing up notes can turn a mammoth task for most students into... something they've already done! 🥳

To set a habit, link it to a daily activity.
It makes a HUGE difference in terms of stickability!
For example: Every day when I get home from school,
I'll take 10 minutes to add any notes from today's lessons.

It all builds up so they have ready-made revision materials for each subject, and also helps them identify any problem areas early. Win-win!

5. Beating procrastination

Tough stuff FIRST

We gradually lose the motivation to make tough choices as we get more tired. Doing the big things first makes you less likely to put them off.

The temptation of autoplay…

Each of these logos takes you to instructions on how to turn off autoplay for that service.   Remove the temptation to 'just watch one more'.
(A short break watching Netflix is fine, a 5 episode marathon isn't!)

NETFLIX

prime video

▶ YouTube

The 5 minute rule

The hardest part of going for a run is putting on your trainers.
Once that's done, you've made the decision, and off you go.
If you *don't want to go*, you'll find 15 different reasons to put off putting your trainers on, and never leave the house.

It's the same with revision. Starting is the hardest part.
That's where the 5 minute rule comes in. **Just do 5 minutes**.
(It's tough to find excuses for not being able to manage 5 minutes!)
Once you've started, it's much less daunting to carry on. The scary part is over.

Heres' how the CEO of Instagram uses the same principle.

The cost of distractions

Did you know that every time you stop mid-work to check social media / emails / text notifications, it takes an average of almost half an hour to regain your focus on work? ([See study here](#))

To study efficiently (i.e. get it over and done with like most teens want, but done properly like all parents want), teenagers need to avoid distractions at all costs.

Between social media and messaging apps, teens can have a crazy number of notifications ping up during the day. If you really want to scare yourself, you can see your 'screentime' stats on an iPhone via the settings menu, and find out how many times an hour you pick up your phone.
(There's an app called 'moment', available on iOS or Android, that'll do the same thing.)

Helping them break the addiction to responding instantly to any notification is valuable enough in itself, but the impact on their revision will be immense. Be warned that it'll be an uphill battle, and will go better for everyone if you can convince them how much easier it'll make revision (so it's something they *choose* to do, not something you do TO them...)!

How?
They can set up 'do not disturb' mode on a phone to silence notifications for a period of time, and they can schedule it to repeat at the same time each day if that suits their study schedule. They can always blame it on you when their friends complain they're not responding fast enough. 😉

Games consoles

Fortnite:
Games last up to 20 minutes, so they're a great way to take a break from studying. There is however a huge amount of temptation to just play 'one more game', particularly if friends are online too. This is where they need to use some self-control, or if that's not likely, you can set a timer to remind you to remind them to stop!

To **set parental limits on games consoles**, see the advice here:

https://www.askaboutgames.com/advice/parental-controls/

Phones

Candy Crush style games: Another great way of switching off your brain during a break, but it can be difficult to stop once you've started. While you only get a set number of lives, the 'daily reward' is often unlimited lives for up to an hour, so there's no natural stopping point. Setting a timer can be helpful here. It's also worth blocking notifications, or it'll ping up to tell you when your lives have refilled...

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