

# PARENTS GUIDE TO EXAM SUPPORT

PRACTICAL TIPS AND ADVICE ON  
SUPPORTING REVISION AT HOME



**MARR COLLEGE**

MOTIVATION | AMBITION | RESPECT | RESPONSIBILITY

## Introduction

At Marr College, we work hard to ensure your child receives the best education, opportunities and support when they are at school. And we know that, as a parent, carer or guardian, you want to provide a supportive environment at home to ensure your child achieves their potential. But – what does it mean to be supportive at home? What can you do to help your child with the motivation, preparation and stress involved in the exam process?



Most of the topics covered in this booklet will be things that you do already, but some may be small things that can make a big impact. On the other hand, there may be advice that you hadn't considered and can use to support your child further. We all want the best outcome for your child, so take a few minutes to browse through some of the ideas contained within.

## Contents

This guide will provide you with practical tips for helping your child with:

Getting Started  
Organisation  
Motivation  
Health  
Social Media  
The Night before the Exam  
The Day of the Exam

## Contact

Please remember that the school is also happy to help with any queries that may be individual to your child, for example regarding individual support arrangements. Please do not hesitate to contact the school:

**Marr College**  
**Dundonald Road**  
**Troon**  
**KA10 7AB**

**Tel: 01292 690022**

**Email:**

[marr.mail@south-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:marr.mail@south-ayrshire.gov.uk)

<http://www.marr.sayr.sch.uk>



@MarrColOfficial



**Remember: you can make the difference to your child's exam experience.**



**"Some of us are like wheelbarrows, only useful when pushed... and easily upset."**

Jack Herbert

# Getting Started

Helping your child to succeed means helping them to meet targets and deadlines. The next few months will be a stressful time with a variety of coursework due as well as the time they need to spend on revising.

Start by taking stock of what your child is studying and ensuring that they and you are aware of what targets have to be met. Use the table on the following page to evaluate what action needs to be taken.

- What courses are they studying?
- At what level are they being presented?
- How many exams do they have?
- When are those exams?
- What mandatory coursework is involved in each subject?
- When is this coursework due?
- Is your child on-track with this coursework?



## Where to Find Relevant Information about Your Child's Exams



- Check your child's tracking and monitoring reports in order to confirm what subjects and levels they are studying.
- The tracking and monitoring report may also give information about coursework that is due in. Alternatively, you could ask your child what is due/outstanding for each subject.
- Your child will be issued with an exam timetable in due course. However, the exam dates and times are available on the SQA website where you can also build a personalised timetable:  
<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/1439.html>

# Evaluation

	Subject, Level & Teacher	Internal Assessments Complete	Internal Assessments still to Complete	Due Date	Exam? Y/N	Date of Exam
	<i>E.g. English Miss Carey N4</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>Analysis and Evaluation Unit</i></li><li><i>Creation and Production Unit</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>Added Value Unit</i></li></ul>		<i>N</i>	
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						

# Organisation

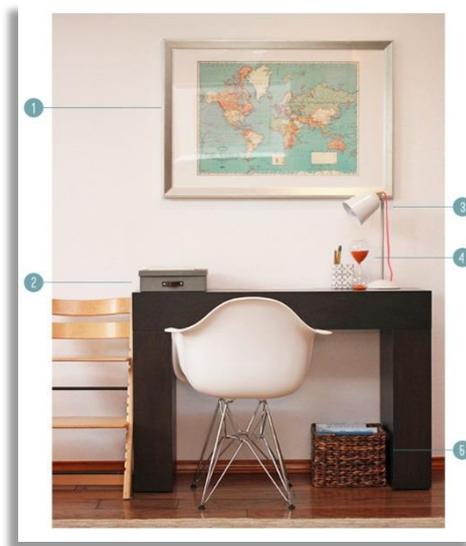
Helping your child with organisational skills is more than just an exam-preparation skill, it is a skill to help them balance essential tasks and priorities with their leisure time. In the world of work, as we all know, this is essential in order to remain sane!

The three main organisational skills you can help with are:

- Space
- Study resources
- Time

## Creating a Study Space

- Your child needs an allocated space that is quite and free from distractions.
- The space need not be in their bedroom; it could be at the dining room table, a desk in the lounge or even at a relative’s house - so long as it is quiet!
- This space ideally should have:
  - A noticeboard where deadlines, calendars and homework can be kept visible.
  - A box to keep all stationery – pens, pencils, post-its, highlighters, index cards...
  - A lamp to reduce eye strain.
  - A timer for timed exam practice – a mobile phone is ok, but something without internet access is probably best – like a kitchen timer or a wristwatch timer.
  - A larger box or basket to keep folders, textbooks and notes.
- If studying at home is impossible, ask your child to speak to a teacher they like and trust who may be able to offer space after school in their department, or the school library.
- The public libraries also offer quiet study spaces with free internet and computer access.



Local Library	Opening Hours
<b>Troon Library, 5 Southbeach, Troon, KA10 6EF</b> <b>Tel: 01292 315352</b> <b>Email: <a href="mailto:carnegie.library@south-ayrshire.gov.uk">carnegie.library@south-ayrshire.gov.uk</a></b>	Monday and Tuesday: 9.15am-7.30pm Wednesday: 10.00am – 5.00pm Thursday and Friday: 9.15am – 7.30pm Saturday: 9.15am – 5pm Sunday: Closed
<b>Prestwick Library, 14 Kyle Street, Prestwick KA9 1PQ</b> <b>Tel: 01292 476769</b> <b>Email: <a href="mailto:carnegie.library@south-ayrshire.gov.uk">carnegie.library@south-ayrshire.gov.uk</a></b>	Monday and Thursday: 9am-7pm Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday: 9am – 5pm Sunday: Closed
<b>Carnegie Library, 12 Main Street, Ayr KA8 8EB</b> <b>Tel: 01292 286385</b> <b>Email: <a href="mailto:carnegie.library@south-ayrshire.gov.uk">carnegie.library@south-ayrshire.gov.uk</a></b>	Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday: 9am – 5pm Tuesday: 9am – 7pm Thursday: 10am – 7pm Sunday: Closed

## Study Resources

It is essential that your child has a full set of study notes from their subject, particularly for subjects assessed by examination. Throughout the year your child will have been participating in activities in class and taking notes on the main areas for study. Therefore, they should already have a set of notes to begin revising from. In addition, many teachers provide additional sets of notes for revision purposes, and there are many published study guides available for a range of subjects.

There are a range of study guides available in school already, and on request your child can ask for a specific text that they feel will help them with their exams. Your child should speak to the Principal Teacher of the relevant department.



## Your Child's Notes

Although your child may have a folder for each subject, it may not be in tip-top order. A good kick-start to a revision programme is to help your child sort through each set of notes and organise into the various topics covered. You can buy sets of coloured dividers, or you can easily make your own with card, a hole-punch, paper and clear cello tape.



Simply write the topic on a small piece of paper and cut it so that it fits within the folder over cello tape, and tape to a piece of A4 card. Place each tab lower on each card the more of them you need.

See instructions here for homemade dividers:  
<http://www.instructables.com/id/Homemade-Notebook-Dividers/>

Once you have helped your child organise their notes, ask them if they think there is anything missing. If your child is unsure, then suggest they take their newly organised folder to their teacher to check its contents. The teacher will very quickly be able to see if anything is missing and either supplement the missing notes with others, or may be able to photocopy another pupil's notes.

Spend some time looking over the topics with your child and help them to evaluate which areas are their strongest and which areas need the most work. This will help when devising a study timetable as to what subjects and areas need the most time. An evaluation template is provided on the next page.

## Evaluation of Subjects and Topics

Subject	Topics	Evaluation (1-5 where 1 is very poor and 5 is very good)	Specific Targets
<b>English</b>			

Subject	Topics	Evaluation (1-5 where 1 is very poor and 5 is very good)	Specific Targets
<b>Maths</b>			

Subject	Topics	Evaluation (1-5 where 1 is very poor and 5 is very good)	Specific Targets

Subject	Topics	Evaluation (1-5 where 1 is very poor and 5 is very good)	Specific Targets

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Subject	Topics	Evaluation (1-5 where 1 is very poor and 5 is very good)	Specific Targets

# Time Management

It is essential that your child manages their time well during the prelim and exam period. However, we all know how easy it can be to procrastinate, allow ourselves to be distracted and, all of a sudden, time has slipped away and we have achieved very little! Help your child to stay motivated by working with them to set targets and deadlines.

From examining with your child their courses, you both should have an idea on what topic areas are a priority for revising.

It is time to make a plan to help your child organise their time and priorities.



## Making a Study Plan

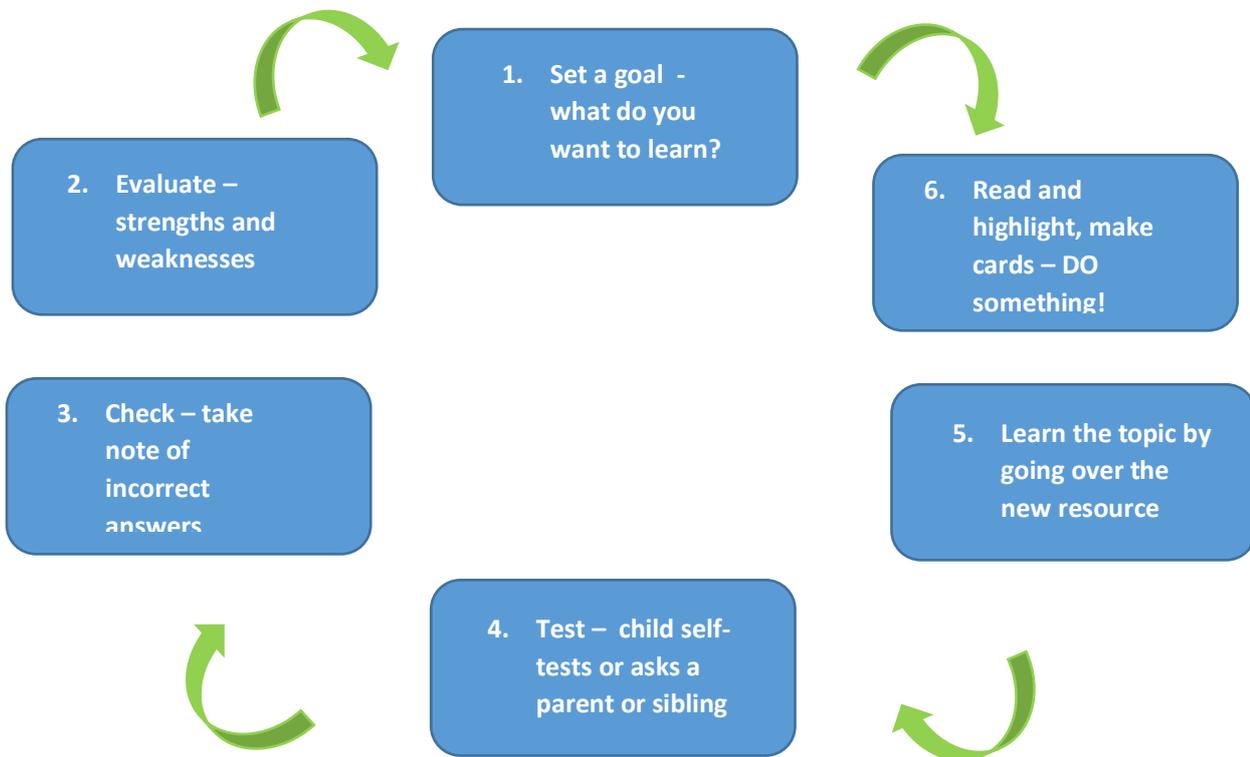
Your child should make a study plan by working out **how much time they have available** until each exam, and **realistically working out how much time they can spend studying**. They should prioritise the earliest exams, but ensure to study all subjects to **avoid boredom** and to **keep each subject fresh** in their minds.

Activity	Personal Deadline	Tick when complete
Put together a calendar of deadlines and put it somewhere obvious.		
Put the dates and times of your exams on the calendar.		
Make a list of the topics in each subject you need to revise.		
Work out how much time roughly you think you will need to spend on each topic.		
Plan what topics and what subjects you will revise and when. Put these on to a weekly planner sheet for each week up to the exam.		

On the next page you will find an example of a planner. Encourage your child to use something like this to plan their time. Remind them to plan in time each night for homework as well as revising their subjects and topics.

# Motivation

Ensure your child stays motivated during their study sessions by checking that they follow a routine structure for each block of study.



## Routine & Motivation

Getting your child into a routine of studying is half the battle. Remember – just because they are in their room and quiet does not mean they are necessarily being productive. If possible, set some agreed breaks or times when you will test them or listen to them talk about topics they are revising. Being able to explain a topic to an adult and cope with their questions is a sure sign your child knows what they are talking about!

A reasonable amount of study time on one topic is 30-50 minutes. While your child takes a break remember to praise your child for putting the effort in and reminding them that trying their best is all that is asked of them. If they are lacking in motivation, you may offer small additional incentives, or perhaps their lack of motivation is down to a lack of confidence in a particular subject area: talk to them and reassure them they are capable of learning. Remind your child that the examination period is relatively short and it will be over in no time!

# Study Support



Your child has discussed with their class teachers appropriate revision strategies. Therefore it is not necessary for you to teach them these skills. The most important idea to remember is to encourage your child to DO something with the notes they already have – passively reading them is not enough! However, don't think that if they haven't produced pages of notes that they haven't been productive. Modern technology allows your child to revise by recording their own voice and listening to notes, or listening to recordings from a teacher. Similarly, they can watch and take notes from YouTube clips and may even find it useful to have study groups with children taking the same subject.

The school also offer a range of study support sessions for different subjects. Ask your child to find out when supported study/drop-in is running for their subjects and encourage them to go where possible.

After-School Study Support			
Subject	Days	Time	Can your child attend?

Alternatively, if your child is struggling with a particular aspect of one subject, they may arrange a time to speak to their class teacher for a short one-to-one explanation of a key idea.

The following websites also offer a range of study notes and support:

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/68908.html>

[www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/bitesize)

[www.chemistrycoach.com](http://www.chemistrycoach.com)

[www.homeworktips.about.com](http://www.homeworktips.about.com)

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/nationalqualifications/exampreparation/subjectrevision.asp>

[www.shmoop.com](http://www.shmoop.com)

<https://education.gov.scot/>

[www.studyzones.com](http://www.studyzones.com)

# Mnemonics

Pronounced 'nem-o-nics', this is another learning technique. It is when you use a word, rhyme, sentence or idea to help you remember something. This is useful for learning a rule, equation or short list. They were used as far back as ancient Greece where speakers used them to help remember long passages and speeches.

Learning is better when you use multiple parts of your brain to learn. To do this you should:

- Use positive, pleasing images. Your brain often blocks out unpleasant ones.
- Use bright, colourful, sense-laden images – these are easier to remember than boring ones.
- Use all your senses to remember information. Use mnemonics with sounds, smells, tastes, touch, movements and feelings as well as pictures. You can use movement to help you to remember.
- Exaggerate and use humour! Funny things are easier to remember.
- Symbols (red traffic lights, pointing fingers, road signs, etc.) can help you remember complex information quickly and effectively.

Here are just a few of the fun mnemonic techniques that you could use to remember what I needed to know for tests:

## 1. Rhymes/Music

*Thirty days hath September ...* Remember this one? It is very likely you remember rhymes and songs from your childhood more than you remember things you did a year or two ago. There's a reason for this! Rhyme, beat and movement help you remember ideas. Making songs or rhymes out of your learning will do the same – even if it is a bit daft! This technique works just as well for memorising dates and facts.

- Have you learned any rhymes to help you with your learning?
- If not, try to think of some key facts that you find difficult to remember. Try to make up a rhyme to remember the information.

Subject area	Rhyme

## 2. Silly sentences

When information must be memorised in a particular order, form a sentence from the first letters of the words you are trying to memorise. Examples:

In chemistry, when learning the first eight alkanes, using a mnemonic can make learning the names easier.

<b>Methane</b>	<b>Monsters</b>
<b>Ethane</b>	<b>Eat</b>
<b>Propane</b>	<b>Pupils</b>
<b>Butane</b>	<b>But</b>
<b>Pentane</b>	<b>Prefer</b>
<b>Hexane</b>	<b>Hairy</b>
<b>Heptane</b>	<b>Haggis</b>
<b>Octane</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>

In computing science, the software development process of: analysis, design, implementation, testing, documentation, evaluation, maintenance can become...



**A Dance In The Dark Every Monday**

or

**A Dinosaur In The Desert Eats Mice**

- Have you learned any sentences to help you with your learning?
- If not, try to think of some key facts that you find difficult to remember. Try to make up a rhyme to remember the information.

Subject area	Sentence

### 3. Acronyms

Make a word using the first letter from each word that needs to be remembered. This works only when the list is fairly short and when the order of the words can't be shifted.

Examples:

In your English class you may have heard of the PEE chain – which stands for Point, Evidence, Explanation.

In Maths, trigonometric ratios are positive or negative. Use either 'all, sin, tan, cos' or a mnemonic such as CAST.

- Have you learned any acronyms to help you with your learning?
- If not, try to think of some key facts that you find difficult to remember. Try to make up a rhyme to remember the information.

Subject area	Acronym

## 4. Abbreviations

Using the first letter of each word in a list (but, unlike an acronym, it doesn't spell a word).

Example:

The mnemonic SOHCAHTOA may help you to remember the basic trigonometric ratios in a right-angled triangle.

In PE, the process of learning skills can be described as:

1. Teacher **N**ames the skill
2. Teacher **E**xplains the skill
3. Teacher **D**emonstrates the skill
4. Learner **I**mitates the skill
5. Learner **C**orrects the faults after *feedback* from the teacher
6. Learner **T**rains or practises the skill

You can remember this by using the mnemonic NEDICT.

In History, when analysing a source: how helpful is it for finding out a topic? The source will always be partly useful but never fully useful – you will have to add some of your own recall to get full marks.

Remember the following; ADPIK

- Author - Who wrote it?
- Date - When was it written?
- Purpose - Why was it written?
- Interpretation - What information is in the source and how is it relevant? You can quote!
- Knowledge - What's not there?

- Have you learned any abbreviations to help you with your learning?
- If not, try to think of some key facts that you find difficult to remember. Try to make up a rhyme to remember the information.

Subject area	Abbreviation

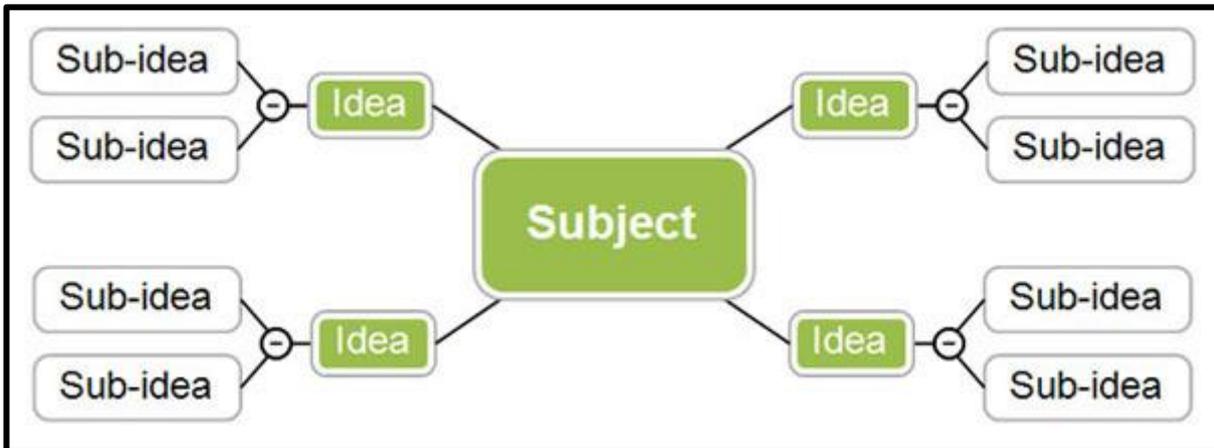


# Mind Maps and Spider Diagrams

Mind maps and spider diagrams are two different styles of organising ideas when you are studying. They both involve categorising ideas to make it easier to remember information.

## Spider Diagram

A spider diagram has a central bubble which all the other legs or threads come from. You should be able to follow a 'leg' of a spider diagram to follow one line of an argument. Each 'leg' will have details of one line of thought. These are a logical way to sequence an argument. They don't usually come with colour or pictures – they just trace linked facts together.



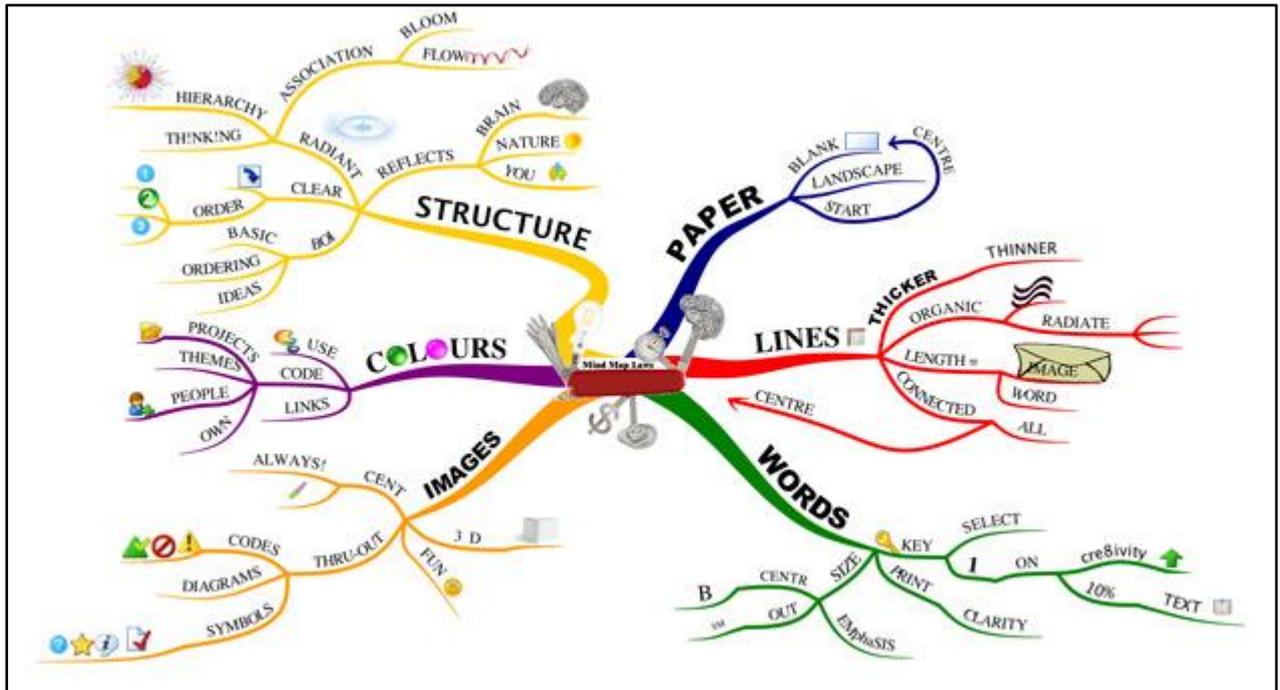
## A spider diagram on the triggers for WWII



## Mind Maps

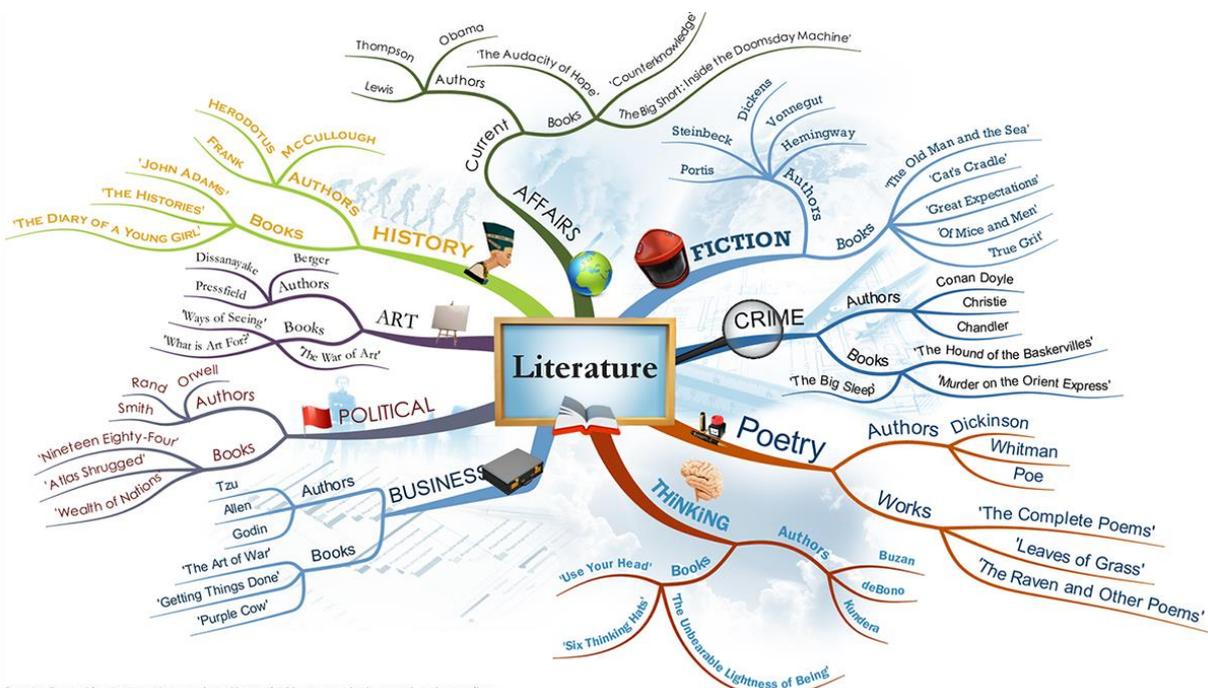
Mind mapping is different to a spider diagram. The differences include:

- A mind map is more creative than a spider diagram – it has NO straight lines – all lines are curved.
- A mind map is colourful and uses images.



### To create a mind map:

- Get plain paper (in landscape position), coloured pens and draw in the middle of the page.
- Draw an image that really represents your topic. Label this image.
- Branch out your Mind Map ideas - thick, curvy, colourful branches spreading out from the centre.
- Each branch – or line of thought – must be in the same colour. The more creative your Mind Map is, the better – this is good to get all of your senses involved in learning
- Add your main ideas as you add branches to your Mind Map. Write these ideas in capitals. Each idea should have an image which represents it. This helps you remember your notes. Draw smaller branches stemming from your Mind Map keywords. These will be associated ideas. Keep doing this until you have included all of your ideas!



# Health

Potentially, the most challenging part of coping with the exam period is the stress. Some pupils put far too much pressure on themselves, set unrealistic expectations for the amount of work they should do and end up feeling overwhelmed by the entire situation. This is what we hope to avoid with good planning and organisation. However, there may be times when your child feels like it is all too much and that they are not coping.



## Ways Parents and Carers Can Help

- Ensure your child is eating well. Excessive sugar can cause energy levels to spike and then plummet, preventing your child from concentrating for longer periods of time.
- Ensure your child drinks plenty of water. Avoid caffeinated drinks and coffee as caffeine makes your body produce more adrenaline – the chemical which creates anxiety in your body!
- Ensure your child has a good sleep routine. Encourage your child to unwind before bed by putting all study materials away, computers and technology away. They could have a relaxing bath, or read a book for half an hour to help them de-stress and get to sleep.



- Ensure your child still has a life. Exam time does not mean that life has to stop. In fact, it is unhealthy for your child to be completely focussed on exams. Allow them leisure time to spend with friends or play their computer game console, or, even better, get them doing some physical activity – go for a walk, swimming or even just dance around the living room!



- If your child's stress levels begin to increase, look for meditations and relaxation audios online that they can lie down and listen to.
- If you feel your child's stress levels are beyond your control, please do not hesitate to contact the school Pupil Support Department.
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**REMEMBER** – it is important for you to **remain positive** around your child during their exams, even if you too are feeling somewhat stressed! **Praise** and reward good effort, **listen** to their concerns, give small **incentives** and **encouragement** and remind them that **the end is in sight!**



# Social Media



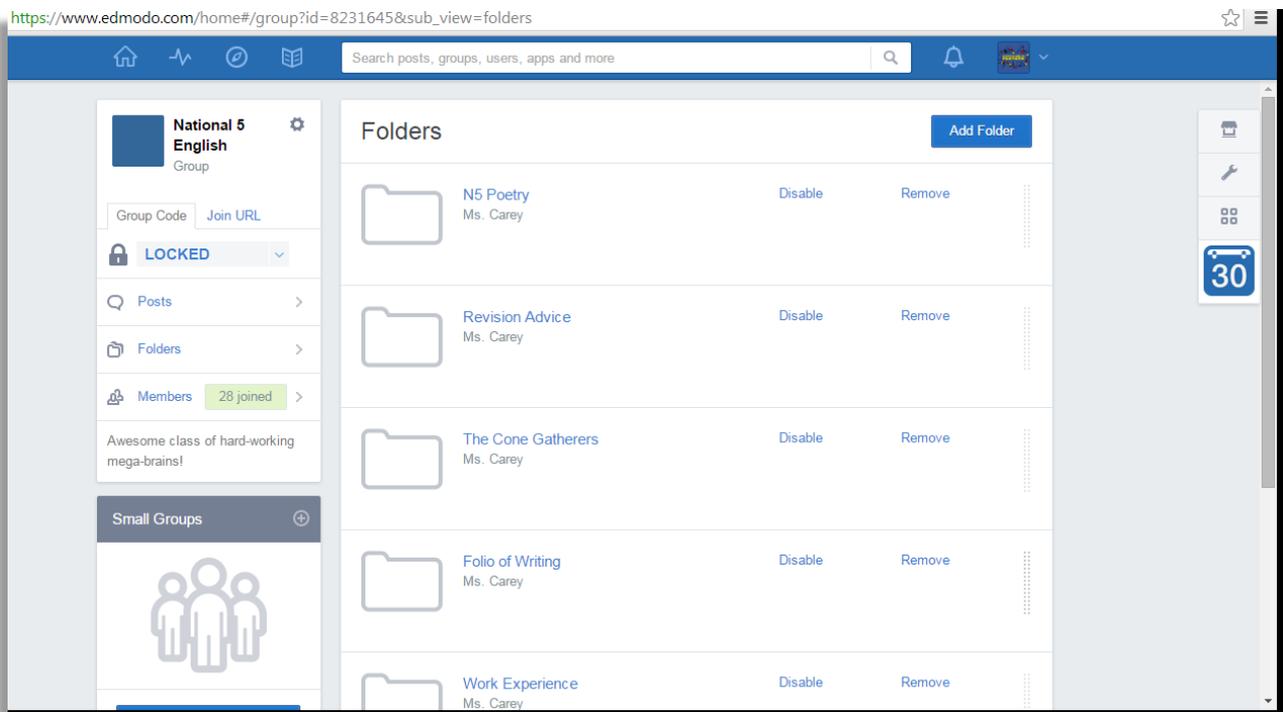
We all know that social media is both a blessing and, at times, a curse. However, we have to accept that for today's young people – having grown up with mobile technology - it is an essential part of their lives. Unfortunately, for some it has become a huge part of their lives! During exam time, you might try to encourage your child to refrain from using social media in order to focus on their studying. This is important for a few reasons. Firstly, it is easy to get distracted by trivial matters that waste time. Secondly, it can cause

**It's BLACK and BLUE!**



frustration in your child if they think others are 'having fun' while they are 'having to study'. Thirdly, if the buzz on social media is about exams or who is studying what, it can cause anxiety as pupils compare themselves to others and forget that they have individual targets to focus on.

On the other hand, sites like Emodo allow pupils to access resources specifically from their teacher, and leave messages for their teacher to request advice and help.



# The Night Before...

The night before the prelim or SQA exam you should double-check the **time of the exam** and ensure your child knows the starting times and **the location**. For one subject there may be more than one paper and therefore they should know all the starting times and to which papers these times relate.

Ask your child to get their **uniform** ready for the next day so that they do not have to be rushing around at the last minute looking for their tie. Having to iron a shirt in the morning is the last thing they – or you – need!

Ensure your child has the appropriate resources packed and ready to go for the morning, including:

- Extra pens and pencils
- Calculator (if required)
- Revision notes to look at before and between the exams
- A bottle of water
- A watch or means of checking the time to ensure they arrive on time.
- Their Scottish Candidate Number



Your child should **arrive early to the exam** – at least 15 minutes. In this time they must check their allocated seat number. Therefore, check the night before that their alarm is set for a reasonable time to allow them to get up and get to school without rushing. If your child is indeed late for an exam, it may not be possible to allow them entry.

## What is not permitted?

- Any digital audio device
- Any mobile phones
- Tippex or corrective fluid
- Food, sweets or chewing gum.
- Notes, books or paper of any kind
- Pencil cases (unless transparent) or calculator cases
- Speaking to other candidates
- Sharing of equipment
- Being disruptive
- Removing the exam paper from the hall

## What are the consequence?

Breaking any of the exam hall rules may result in the exam being void for the candidate.

# FINAL EXAM

## In the Morning

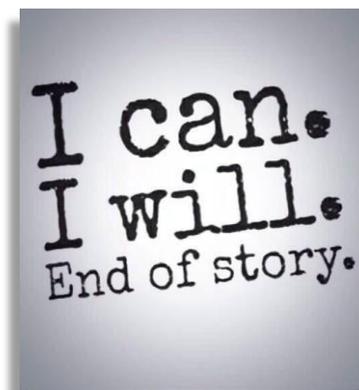
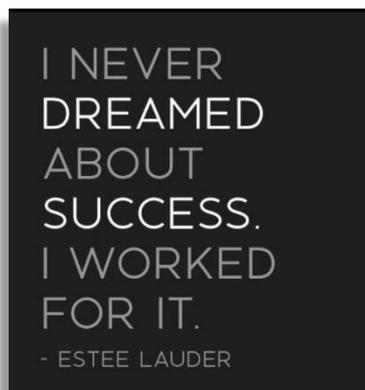
As parents/carers, it is impossible to stop your own life and other responsibilities for your child's exams, and, therefore, only some of these suggestions will be possible due to time constraints etc.

- If you can, ensure your child is out of bed in the morning.
- Double check they know the times of the exam/s that day.
- Leave out, or recommend they have a nutritious breakfast i.e. not crisps and juice on the walk in to school.
- Ensure their uniform and pre-packed bag are somewhere visible.
- Wish them luck and encourage them to do their best!! (Of course!)



## After the Exam

- Ask how the exam went!
- Listen to the positives and negatives of their experience.
- Remind them that they tried their best – which is all anyone can ask!
- Allow them some chill out time if possible.
- Gently remind them that they have other exams to revise for, and be positive that they can do just as well or better in them.





## Subject/ Topic Planner

Subject:

Topics to  
Study:

Time needed:

Subject:							
Topics to Study:							
Time needed:							

