

Looking after yourself during your GCSEs

A guide for pupils





What are GCSEs and why do I have to do them?

GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education. Your GCSEs can help you go on to further education or into work. GCSE assessments are made up of coursework and examinations, which will vary from subject to subject. Following the assessments, you'll get your results and a certificate for each completed subject.

It's important you do your GCSEs as best you can, as they're the springboards into further education and will help with job prospects. Most application forms you'll ever have to fill in will ask for your GCSE results.

Are GCSEs something to worry about?

No! They are there to be taken seriously, but shouldn't cause you any distress or upset – in fact, some people even enjoy doing them and see them as a personal challenge.

“Don't worry if there's something you can't answer.”



What's the best way to do my GCSEs?

GCSEs are normally done across a five week period around May/June time, but don't worry – you won't have an exam every day, and depending on what subjects you've been studying, you may even be finished much sooner than that. There are lots of things you can do to make things easier:

TOP TIPS



- Listen to what your teacher says. Your teacher is cheering you on and wants you to do really well. Don't see that as pressure, but as someone who really believes in you.
- Make sure you get plenty of sleep and stay well fed: sleep and food help keep the brain moving!
- In an exam, don't worry if there's something you can't answer. Take a deep breath! You can always move on and go back later. It's better to write something rather than nothing.
- Remember that your health and wellbeing is the most important thing.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH!

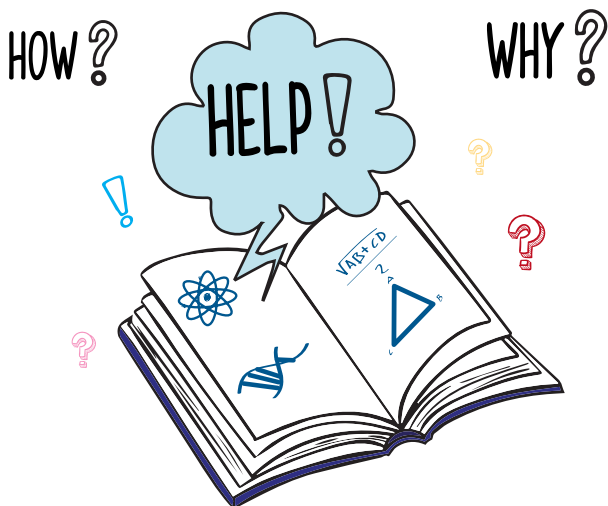


Who can I talk to about GCSEs?

If you have any questions or worries about GCSEs then it's important you don't keep them to yourself. There may be lots of other students in your class feeling exactly the same as you, so make sure you speak out.

- If you have any questions about GCSEs, **ask a teacher**
- If you have any worries about GCSEs, **trust a teacher**
- If you have any feedback about GCSEs, **tell a teacher**

Each subject teacher is walking through GCSEs with you and wants to help you at every possible stage. It's also good to talk to your parents or the people you live with and tell them how you feel.



How can I look after myself?

There are steps you can take to look after yourself while doing your GCSE exams:

TOP TIPS

- Be organised. Make sure you have all the information you need about each exam – date, time, place, what you need to take with you...and what subject it is! Have this available at home so the people you live with know what you're doing and when. The last thing you need is stress caused by not knowing what you're doing.
- Balance revision with rest. Don't neglect to revise, but don't overdo it. Rest is important. Sleep well, eat well, exercise and look after yourself – you won't shine in the exam hall if you're tired, hungry or stressed.
- Go outside. You don't need to be sitting in front of a computer or tablet in order to revise. Take your books and sit in the park in the sunshine; it's good for the soul and the fresh air will help you concentrate.
- During exam periods, experiencing some stress or anxiety is normal and is not necessarily harmful. To keep it manageable, take care of yourself and practise useful techniques like relaxation, mindfulness and breathing exercises.
- Talk to people. Express any worries or fears you may have as soon as they pop into your head – you'll be surprised at how many other people feel the same way; you're not alone. GCSEs should not be upsetting, and there will be teachers and others who want to support you any way they can – you only have to ask.





How can I look after my friends?



- Spend time together, revising, resting and staying in touch. Don't let anyone feel lonely.
- Listen to them. You might be loving the buzz of GCSEs, but not everyone will feel that way – if someone says they're worried or anxious then take it seriously and ask them what you can do to help.
- Help them to get help. You can support your friends and be there for them, but sometimes that might involve speaking to a teacher and sharing any concerns you may have.
- If any of your friends show signs of not sleeping, or being unusually anxious or tearful, then please speak to someone on their behalf – even if they don't want you to. Sometimes we don't realise we need support until it arrives – and you might be the friend who makes that happen for someone.

“You can support your friends and be there for them.”

And lastly...

CELEBRATE!



Plan something fun to mark the end of GCSE season. Your results will come, and you may be pleasantly surprised or slightly disappointed – but don't worry – there will be people on hand to help you understand your results and figure out the next steps.

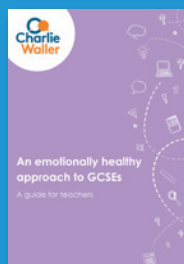
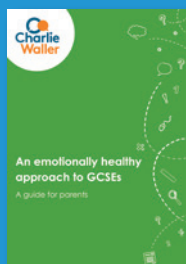
While you're waiting, enjoy some much needed time off and be proud of all your hard work.



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This leaflet is one of a series of three. There are also parent and teacher guides available:



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