



Exams and How to Prepare: Top Tips for Year 11 Students

As you sit here reading this article at the start of September it is worth focusing on the fact there are only 35 Monday's (35 weeks and 6 days) until the start of your GCSE exams and only 37 Monday's (37 weeks) until the start of your A Level exams.

Just sit there, with that thought, let it sink in...take a deep breath....are you ready to begin ?

The main theme that runs through the rest of this article is around Sean Patrick Flanery's quote 'Do something today that your future self will thank you for' and how we can plan for exam success in either Year 11 or Year 13. Your exams in the summer are a finite, fixed point in time...at some point during this next year you will come to the realisation that you need to start revising....they key to exam success is starting this process as early as possible as next year will fly by. When you return in September you will only have 12 weeks until the Christmas break and you will sit your mock exams within those 12 weeks. After Christmas you have another 12 weeks to Easter where you will more than likely sit another set of mock exams and from Easter its just a short 4 week stint to the start of your exams. At this point, you might be starting to feel a little overwhelmed....well the good news is that they key to exam success is the number 900.

Well, actually the key number is a little larger than that, its actually 86,400 – that's the number of seconds that you have every day, lets assume that you spend half of your time asleep that leaves us with 43,200 second in the day. Again, lets assume you are in school from 8.30am to 3pm in the afternoon – that's another 23,400 seconds of your day accounted for....well that leaves you with 19,800 seconds in the day.....studies show that the key to exam success can be found in just 15 minutes of revision or 900 seconds of revision....but as with all things, there is a catch. It's 900 seconds every day for every one of those 35 or 37 weeks to your exams depending on whether you are in Year 11 or Year 13.

I'm going to challenge you now, in the same way that I challenge my own Year 11 and Year 13 students by making the statement 'You can't tell me that you don't have a spare 900 seconds in your day somewhere'. Every year I hear students saying that they don't have time to revise or to study. I'm here to tell you that this simply isn't true, as human beings we make time for the things we love and the things we enjoy doing.

The key to exam success this year is allocating just 900 seconds of your day, every day to revision – given that the longest TikTok videos are 180 seconds long, you can literally find those 900 seconds by watching 5 fewer videos on TikTok a day.....the next time you find yourself endlessly scrolling through TikTok....think about how you could be better using that time....also focus on the fact that you have a 13 week summer holiday on the horizon as a reward.

So, now that you have found that 900 seconds in your day that you need for revision, the next step is to make a plan. You need to create a 24 hour, 7 day a week revision plan. This is nowhere near as scary as it sounds and you can download a template [here](#).

The problem we face with revision is we can always find an excuse to avoid doing revision, the key here is to be as honest as possible with yourself. Block out all of the times in the day where you cannot revise – block out the time you are asleep, the time between leaving for school and getting back, block out all of the other time commitments that you have that cannot be moved – football training, the gym, going to church, the 30 minutes you need to watch Love Island each week, block out time for

socialising or playing Xbox or scrolling through TikTok. Once you have done this, you'll be able to see that you have pockets of 900 seconds three, four, five times a day – each of these 900 seconds is time where you could revise an aspect of a topic, plan or answer an exam question and the beauty of it is all of those 900 seconds soon add up and you'll see that you can remember more, recall more, do more and that will impact your grades in each of your subjects.

The next step is to then plan your revision, make a revision calendar for each month – you can download templates [here](#). Use the unit / topic lists your teachers have given you for each of your subjects and add one task in each box for the month – you can access a template for AQA History [here](#). The key is to ensure that each task can be completed within 900 seconds and involves you doing something with your planned revision – are you using flashcards with a Leitner's Box, are you utilising 'Blank Paper Revision', are you planning and answering responses to exam questions, are you using the Pomodoro or Cornell Notes revision methods, are you using dual coding.

Don't be an 'I wish' student on the second or third week of August on results day, don't be that student who says 'I wish I revised earlier, I wish I revised harder'.

You already have all the tools and all of the information that you need to be successful in your upcoming exams, the real key is to make sure that you make time to revise, the grade you receive in each of your subjects is not a result of how you performed on the day of the exam, but on how you performed each and every day in the lead up to your exams.

Preparation is everything Usain Bolt trained for 3 hours a day, every day in preparation for a race that would take less than 10 seconds – preparation is the key to success, and the good news is it only takes 900 seconds !

These tips have served both my Year 11 students well over the course of the last 23 years and if embrace them fully, they will work for you as well....over to you....

Some Useful Resources:



**Jim Kwick:
'No Such Thing
As A Bad
Memory'**



**Josh Kaufman
'The First 20
Hours'
How To Learn
Anything**



**Leitner's Box:
How To
Remember
Anything
Forever**