

My 5-Step Formula For GCSE Exam Success

- 1) Existing answers/solutions** – The key is to search for answers/solutions given for similar questions. In maths, the questions are very similar year-on-year. The only difference is the figures. If you can fully understand the reasoning behind a particular question, you should be able to answer questions that are similar in nature, despite a slight variation. If you're stuck on a particular question, find a similar question and understand how it's solved. Do you think you can apply the same methods and/or logic to the question you're stuck on? In most cases, you can! For essay-based subjects such as English, look for 'A' graded and 'C' graded essays. Distinguish between the two. What makes the 'C' graded essay a 'C' grade and the 'A' graded essay an 'A' grade? Analyse the language used, the vocabulary, the ideas discussed etc. To do well in this group of subjects, you need to develop a similar writing style to a high-achieving student. In order to develop a similar writing style, answer essay questions as early as possible.

- 2) Past Papers** – Ultimately you'll be taking an exam so you have to get into the habit of practising them. These usually come in the form of past papers. In certain subjects, such as maths, you will be tested on a number of areas as opposed to just a single topic. That's why you need to answer a wide range of questions. How strong is your memory retention to recall several maths concepts at once? You'll also address other exam factors such as time management, accuracy, maximising your mark in every question etc. etc.

- 3) The Mark Scheme/Review** – This is probably the most important part of your revision yet many students tend to disregard it. Students tend to focus on answering past papers alone but don't dedicate as much time checking their answers. Remember, taking past papers alone does not guarantee progress. There is no point completing a past paper if you don't plan to review your answers too. By taking past papers repeatedly, students will hit a plateau. This means you will struggle to better your grades. It makes perfect sense; if you complete past papers repeatedly without learning anything new along the way, you are expected to get the same score in every paper. Hence, very little or no progress. That's why it's very important to review your work after each paper. See where you are going wrong and why? Try not to make the same mistake twice. With this attitude, your results can only improve with each new paper you take. For essay-based subjects, get feedback from multiple teachers as these subjects are subjective.

4) Areas of Weaknesses – By following the two pointers above, you will identify your areas of weakness. These are typically the questions you get wrong often. You should ask yourself why do I keep losing marks in this area? You may have to spend a little more time on your weaknesses as opposed to your strengths. Your strengths are called strengths for a reason. You should not have a problem recalling on your strengths in the exam. It is your weaknesses that will bring you down and prevent you from scoring the A/A* grades. That's why you should dedicate a little more time to your weaknesses; maybe do some further reading (from a larger textbook) or answer extra practice/exam questions. Do this until you're convinced that a weakness has turned into a strength.

5) Memory Retention – As you'll be taking a number of exams in quick succession, your memory retention has to be stronger than ever. By fulfilling all of the above, your memory retention will naturally become stronger. Inevitably, you will come across areas that you keep forgetting or areas that you feel are important to remember. That's why you should keep a notes page during your revision. At first, your notes page will be a little long; for instance 9-10 pages, but as time goes on and you complete more past papers, you can cross off certain concepts. This is because they've been retained in your memory banks. The aim is to shrink your notes to only 1 or 2 A4 pages, by the time of your exam. This is ideal as you don't want to be referring to heaps of information. Then, use my TAP, PI and WAR memory retention techniques to remember these key points for your exam.