



**Rivers Academy West London**  
an Aspirations Academy

## Remote learning guidance for parents and carers



Dear parents, carers and guardians,

At Rivers Academy it is our continued goal to look for ways we can support our students' learning and progress and parental support is one of a number of important factors in determining a child's academic success.

The good news is that parents do not need to be experts in any of the subjects your child studies to make a real difference. Parents and students also do not need to give up other responsibilities – you just need to know how best to spend the time you have. This guidance booklet will aim to support you and your children in using their study time effectively.

One of the hardest demands on students is understanding the long-term importance of doing the best they can and learning to shelve short-term fun at times in the interest of long-term benefits (not easy even for us adults at times). Children will also differ in the levels of maturity, their ability to take responsibility for their learning, organisational skills and motivation. This is where parents come in. Your support, encouragement and interest can make a spectacular difference to your child's motivation and ability to cope with the academic and organisational demands of exam periods or remote learning.

If you have any questions, or want to share more ideas as to how parents and carers can support learning and revision at home, please get in touch with us.

## **Roles**

Your role in helping your child succeed will vary according to their needs and strengths. Your role may include some or all of the following:

### **Attendance Officer**

Making sure your child is logged on ready for lessons and understands the importance of making the most of learning-time.

### **Partner with school and child**

Asking questions about how you can best help your child at home through contact with their AM or teachers.

### **Provider of the tools for homework and revision**

A quiet space with no distractions (no TV, games consoles, mobile phones), a workbox of pens, paper and other necessities.

### **Study buddy**

Showing an interest in the subject, asking them questions about what they have been learning, testing them when they ask you.

### **Sounding board and adviser**

Helping your child to break tasks down so that they are manageable, keeping a subtle eye on progress and celebrating achievements, seeing a positive way forward when things go badly.

### **Project manager**

Agreeing the rule for homework or revision, helping them to make a realistic timetable, balancing work against the 'fun stuff'.

## **Top Ten Tips for supporting with exam preparation**

Exams are undoubtedly nerve-racking for children and their parents. Concerned parents and carers watch over their children in the run up to the exams as well as during the exam period itself and wonder to what degree they should be helping. So, with that in mind, here are our top ten tips on how to help children to revise effectively.

1. Encourage your child to make a revision timetable – and stick to it. They may wish to use an app to help them schedule and plan their time <https://getadapt.co.uk/>
2. Make sure your child has a quiet space to work, with no distractions (no TV, games consoles, mobile phones).
3. Help to find a method of learning and retaining information that works best for them. It could be reading and making notes, using flash cards or Post-it notes, looking at video clips, playing back recordings of their own voice, mind mapping or perhaps a mixture of these. *(See guidance on effective revision and learning strategies later in booklet)*
4. Encourage them to check the exam specifications. All exam boards publish these, along with practice papers and mark schemes too.
5. Search out revision apps and online resources – such as BBC Bitesize and Gojimo – to clarify areas your child feels less confident about. Teenagers sometimes concentrate on their best subjects and leave their weaker ones until the end but it is a good idea to tackle weak areas early on.
6. Encourage your children to break revision into manageable chunks and to take regular breaks in between revision sessions. It's far more effective to do 30 minutes of successful revision – rather than plough on for hours on end and not get anywhere. This is backed up by research by academics at the University of Sheffield who found that learning is more effective when spread out over stretches of time.
7. Exercise, fresh air, healthy food and lots of sleep are crucial. As a guide students aged 16 need around 8-10 hours a night.
8. Encourage them to take some time after revising to wind down. Anxiety is often worst at night and this means it is useful to encourage a good bedtime routine.
9. If your child is struggling with a specific subject, talk to the relevant teacher and explore whether they can provide additional help.
10. Most important of all, help your child to keep everything in perspective. Remind them the better they prepare and the more confident they feel in their subject knowledge, the less stressed they will feel when the exams start.

## **Effective revision strategies**

## Flash Cards

Studying with flash cards is one of the most well-known ways of mastering new information. However, there is more to it than simply writing a few words down on a piece of card. To make your flash cards truly work for you it is important to carefully control the information that you put on the cards to begin with. It is also a good idea to look into apps that can help you create and share cards. Practicing good study habits with your cards will help you learn the material as well.



**Keep the text brief.** Stick with short phrases instead of full sentences. Use abbreviations for words when possible. You will want to review the cards quickly and condensing the text makes sure that only the most important ideas make it onto the card. The very process of choosing the card's text will kick-start the learning process.

- For example, if you are studying history you might write, "US" instead of "United States." A shortened sentence might look like, "CC-America-1492," the longer version being "Christopher Columbus arrived in America in 1492."

**Take notes over a specific topic.** This is probably the most commonly used flash card study method. You put a topic on one side of the card and you add your notes on that subject to the opposite side. These types of cards are also sometimes called "summary" or "concept" cards. If you are making flash cards for a multiple classes, use different colored cards or keep them in rubber-banded stacks.

- If you notice that you are putting a great deal of information on the back of one card, it may be time to split that particular subject into multiple cards.
- This system is also used quite frequently for quick memorization of specific terms. You put the term on one side and the definition or alternate translation on the other.

**Create picture cards.** There is no rule that flash cards must only contain text. For visual learners, drawing a quick image on a card might be the most helpful. Keep the image basic and make it easily recognizable. Label parts of the image, if that will help you study.

- For example, if you are taking a biology class you might create a rough sketch of a cell and label the parts. You can then put the "key" on the back of the card. Flipping the card back and forth will allow you to learn the material.

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- A student practicing a foreign language might draw a picture of an object, such as a flower, on one side of the card with the translation on other side.
  - You can also make image flash cards by photocopying an image from the textbook or slide notes and then cutting it down to notecard size. If you do this many times you will create a slideshow to match your text notes.

**Add color.** To fight off boredom and more fully engage your memory, try applying a color scheme to your cards. You could use write in colored pencils, highlighters, or even fine-tipped markers. Underline particularly important information with color. Or, assign specific colors to particular card themes or topics to make for easier sorting. Have a plan when you start to use color on your cards, otherwise your cards could get cluttered and more difficult to study from.

**Put word games on your cards.** If you've come up with a quick way to remember a piece of information, put that down on a card. All types of mnemonic devices (or memory boosters) are helpful when studying. Keep it simple and put only one major piece of information on each card.

- A history student might put the question, "Who sailed the ocean blue?" on one side of a card with the answer, "Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492," on the other side. Rhyming is a mnemonic device that helps with knowledge retention.

**Carry your cards with you.** In the period immediately before a test, keep your cards close to you and study them whenever possible. Look for a few minutes here or there in your everyday routine. If you are watching TV, study during the commercials. Repetition and exposure to the information will make the difference in retention. Get creative and use clips to hang your notecards around the room. This allows you to study while cleaning up. Or, punch a hole in the corner of your card set and put them on a key ring for easy carrying

**Mix up the order of your cards.** Your mind will become bored if you go through your cards in the same order over and over again. Shuffle your cards, throw them on a table and mix them up, or put them in a jar and pull one out at a time. The card that you see each time should be unpredictable, just as a question will be on a test.

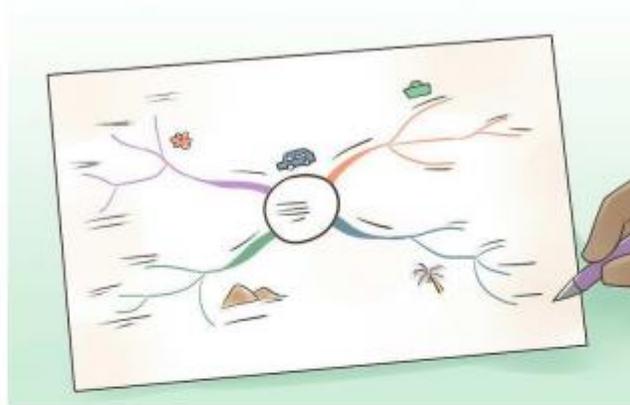
**Set aside the cards that you know.** Once you feel comfortable with the information on a particular card, place it in a new stack with others like it. This will allow you to spend more time working with the topics or terms that you've yet to master. However, don't forget this 'known' stack entirely, be sure to look it over too, just less frequently.

**Work with a study group.** Get together with a group of your classmates and go through your cards together. You may find that other people covered areas that you missed and vice versa. Try to teach each other the material to test your knowledge level. Quiz each other using the cards as a question bank.

**Treat studying as a game.** To make studying more exciting, it might help to get a bit competitive. Some apps with allow you to engage in flash card competitions against your peers or classmates. This is like having a study group that meets virtually. You can even set-up the competitions to follow a timer. Quizlet is one of the more notable apps in this category.

## Mind Maps

Make mind-maps or association maps rather than taking linear notes. Mapping your notes by radiating key words out in a pattern of links from a central point will make best use of your memory. If you use colour and images on the maps, you'll be harnessing the power of both sides of your brain - creative and logical.



### **How to mind map:**

1. Start with the theme in the middle of the page.
2. Then develop your main idea.
3. Each branch must relate to the branch before it.
4. Use only key words and images.
5. Key words must be written along the branches.
6. Printing your key words makes them more memorable.
7. Use highlighters and coloured markers to colour code branches.
8. Make things stand out on the page so they stand out in your mind. (This doesn't show up well on a black and white photocopied booklet! You should use a different colour for each main branch and all its sub-branches)
9. Brainstorm ideas. Be creative.
10. Design images you can relate to which will help you remember key information.

### SMART Goals

Timing your revision isn't always the best approach – particularly if you are inclined to keep glancing at your watch, wishing the hours away! While sticking to your revision timetable is important, try to set yourself small goals while you are working as well as time limits.

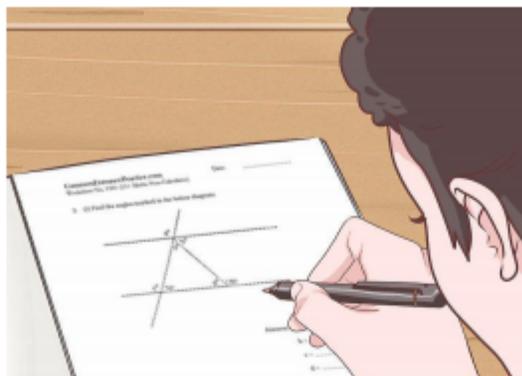
SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related. For example, a SMART target for an English Literature session might be: 'By the end of this session, I will have memorised five useful quotations from *Of Mice and Men*.'

Achieving objectives like this will help you feel good about your revision and boost your confidence.



## Past Papers

Practice should make perfect. These should be your constant companion in all revision tasks. For each topic you revise, consult the past questions on this subject and then attempt answers to them. Check your answers, fill in the 'knowledge gaps' where necessary, and file away the correct 'model answer' in your notes for future reference. You will also start to notice any trends in the questions asked.



**Mark Schemes.** Following the marking schemes are an invaluable aid to exam preparation. You can see how the marks are allocated for each question on the paper and what quantity or style of answer is required in each case. This knowledge will greatly inform your revision work and helps to remove the mystique of the exam.

**Try a dress rehearsal.** Each exam paper contains its own particular structure and challenge, with varying emphasis on answering style and depth. While much of your ongoing revision will be based on individual topics and questions, it is a very useful exercise to tackle an exam paper in its totality. It forces you to consider your strategy – the issues of timing, the number of points you will need to make in each part of a question. Having performed this exercise a couple of times, your confidence levels rise as you fix on your strategy for the exam and realise that there can't be any major surprises for you in the summer.

**The Examiner's View.** The job of examiners is to give you marks, not to take them away, but they are powerless to help you if you fall into the most common traps. Here are the biggest pitfalls identified:

- Not reading the paper correctly.
- Not finishing the paper. Mismanaging your time within the exam can easily cost you a full grade. The biggest exam 'crime' is to leave suitable questions unattempted. Remember: it is much easier to get the first 20% of the marks for any question than the last 5%. Therefore, if you find yourself stuck for time as you struggle through your third answer out of five, do not spend your remaining time extending and perfecting that answer. Instead, move on to questions four and five, even if your attempt is sketched or in point form. If you have answered only three questions instead of five, the highest mark you can get is 60%.
- Ignoring the marking scheme. You must take the marking scheme into account when you allocate time to each question or part of a question. If the marks allotted to a question clearly indicate that a few paragraphs are sufficient, do not write an essay on the subject. Avoid the temptation of writing everything you know about a topic – just give the appropriate amount of information.
- Repetition Make the point once. There are no extra marks for restating facts.
- Missing part of a question. Sometimes, part of a question can be carried onto the next page and, in the pressure of the moment, you don't see it. Always take time to familiarise yourself with the whole paper before you start answering it.
- Planning and working out. Include your planning and working out with your exam script – you might get some credit for formulae or calculations contained therein.

## **Other Advice**

### *Active Revision.*

This doesn't mean you have to do star jumps when remembering trigonometry – but it does mean you need to 'exercise' your mind! Simply re-reading your notes is a very ineffective way to revise. According to scientists, your brain will retain less than 10% of what you read, unless you also do something active to boost your brain power.

### *Listen to yourself.*

Bizarre though it sounds, some people swear by recording themselves reading their notes aloud and then listening back to the track on a laptop, mobile or music player.

### *Keep things colourful.*

Creating colourful A3 posters and drawing bright mind maps can be just as helpful as producing reams of text. Using bright stationary and colour-coding notes according to topics can also help to tackle the boredom you might feel with only working in black and white.

### *Post-It.*

Using Post-It notes can be a fun and powerful way to work on remembering important ideas, facts and definitions. Write single words on brightly coloured post-its and stick them around the house, placing them on everyday objects such as the kettle, the fridge door... even on top of the toilet!

### *Buddy Revision*

Independent revision can be highly effective, but combining this with revision with a friend, or as a part of a group, is the best approach. It's a great way to add variety to your routine, provided you concentrate on the task in hand. This can be done with your parents or siblings, teach them about the area you are revising. Or could be done over video call with your friends.

## **Strategies to support exam stress**

Watch out for exam stress and be aware of the signs. Signs of stress can include:

- Being irritable
- Sleeping poorly
- Lose of appetite
- Worrying
- Feeling negative
- Headaches and stomach aches

What can you do if you are feeling stressed?

1. Eat well – a balanced diet is vital to health and feeling well (avoid foods high in fat and sugar)
2. Get enough sleep – most teenagers need 8-10 hours a night, wind down before going to sleep and avoid late night cramming
3. Get some exercise – exercise can boost energy levels, clear the mind and improve your mood
4. Talk to someone about how you feel – this can be a parent, family member, friend or a teacher
5. Make time for rest, other activities and hobbies – this can help take your mind of the stress and help you feel refreshed
6. Ask someone to help with revision – working with a friend or asking a parent to test you can add variety to your revision

## **Additional home learning resources**

**Online resources:**

- [BrainPop](#)
- [Curiosity Stream](#)
- [Tynker](#)
- [Outschool](#)
- [Udemy](#)
- [iReady](#)
- [Beast Academy \(Math\)](#)
- [Khan Academy](#)
- [Creative Bug](#)
- [Discovery Education](#)

**Educational YouTube Channels:**

- [Crash Course Kids](#)
- [Science Channel](#)
- [SciShow Kids](#)
- [National Geographic Kids](#)
- [Free School](#)
- [Geography Focus](#)
- [TheBrainScoop](#)

- [SciShow](#)
- [Kids Learning Tube](#)
- [Geek Gurl Diaries](#)
- [Mike Likes Science](#)
- [Science Max](#)
- [SoulPancake](#)

**Resources to help with kids at home:**

\*Scholastic has created a free learn-from-home site with 20+ days of learning and activities.

[classroommagazines.scholastic.com/sup...tml](http://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/sup...tml)

\*Pretend to travel the world..Go on a virtual tour of these 12 famous museums.

[travelandleisure.com/att...urs](http://travelandleisure.com/att...urs)

\*List of thinking games by grade:

[allinonehomeschool.com/thi...ng/](http://allinonehomeschool.com/thi...ng/)

**Free learning websites:**

[starfall.com/h/](http://starfall.com/h/)

[abcya.com/](http://abcya.com/)

[funbrain.com/](http://funbrain.com/)

[splashlearn.com/](http://splashlearn.com/)

[storylineonline.net/](http://storylineonline.net/)

[pbskids.org/](http://pbskids.org/)

[highlightskids.com/](http://highlightskids.com/)

[kids.nationalgeographic.com/](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/)

[coolmath4kids.com/](http://coolmath4kids.com/)

[mathgametime.com/](http://mathgametime.com/)

[uniteforliteracy.com/](http://uniteforliteracy.com/)

[literactive.com/Home.asp](http://literactive.com/Home.asp)

[sciencekids.co.nz/](http://sciencekids.co.nz/)

[switchzoo.com/](http://switchzoo.com/)

[seussville.com/](http://seussville.com/)

[turtlediary.com/](http://turtlediary.com/)

[e-learningforkids.org/](http://e-learningforkids.org/)