



Baldragon Academy



Revision Advice



Revising For Exams



Revising for an exams can be stressful, upsetting and cause real panic!! These pages are written to support you in your bid to reach your potential.

Remember exams are about YOU. They are not about what your friends get, or what your brothers or sisters got or even what your parents want you to get. If you do the best you can who can ask for more?

The 'I will start to revise tomorrow' attitude will not help. At some point you need to just sit down and get on with it. The longer you put off starting to revise the less time you will have to prepare and the more stressed you will feel. If you start revising early enough you will have plenty time to revise, ask questions and do past papers. Then you can enter exams confident in the knowledge that you have done the work, made the effort and put in the time. There is nothing worse than panicking before an exam because you only revised the night before!

Environment



Preparation of the Revision Area

You must have an area to revise in. This may be in your bedroom, a computer room, dining room or the school library.

If you are using your bedroom - TIDY UP NOW!!!!

If you plan to use your bedroom as the main revision area - tidy it up. Put the CDs, DVDs, toys, dirty washing etc where they are meant to be! The main reason behind this is - it is amazing how much time can be spent tidying up a bedroom instead of revising. Unwittingly you will find all sorts of jobs to do instead of committing to the task of revising. So if you plan to use your bedroom get the place organised.

If you are using a shared area in the house you may have to have a discussion with your parents/carers about leaving books there, keeping younger brothers and sisters out of the way etc. I know you are teenagers but it can be beneficial to talk to your parents/carers!



Conditions

The area should be warm and well lit. It should be warm enough so that you do not feel cold. Likewise it should not be too hot, this too will make concentrating difficult.

It should be well lit so that you can see the pages clearly without straining your eyes otherwise this can lead to tiredness and a lack of motivation.

This may mean opening blinds or curtains, in the evening or dark days. You might even need a desk lamp.



Work Area

The work area should be large enough for you to spread out the text books, notes and past papers that you are using. Everything should be close to hand. This means that you do not have an excuse to go walk about! In addition to your school stuff you should also have blank paper, lined paper, pens, pencils, rubber, ruler, coloured pens/highlighters to hand. It is easier to revise if everything you need is close by and ready to be used.

Water

Have plenty of cold water available to drink. It will help keep you hydrated and prevent tiredness setting in too early.

Music/TV

Many people say that they work best with the TV on or music playing. Please be sensible. Why is the TV on? Is it to deliberately give you a distraction? Can you really focus on revision while singing along to the Go Compare advert? If not, ditch the TV / music and concentrate on doing the best for yourself.



Boyfriends/Girlfriends

Exam leave is great - you can spend time revising as a happy couple. NO NO NO NO!!!! This will be a major distraction. If you really care leave them alone to revise!

Revision Plan



Planning is vitally important for successful revision. You have more than one exam and should revise for all of them. To do this you will need to plan your studying carefully.

Study Plan

You should devise a study plan. As you are at school you will only have evenings and weekends.

1) The first thing you should do is block off all those times when you will not be able to do any revision.

For example - if you work Thursdays between 5pm and 9pm, or train for football on a Friday night etc.

This is important as you must have some time to yourself to socialise, play sport etc.

2) Do not revise when you are too tired as you may not achieve anything.

3) Create blocks of time that you are prepared to revise for - longer than half an hour at a time and you may lose concentration and/or motivation.

4) Build in regular breaks. These breaks may include a small treat, e.g. watch television as a break, listen to a favourite song, read a chapter in a book, 10 minutes on the internet, eat a chocolate biscuit etc. During these breaks have a drink, stretch your legs, get away from the work area.

This plan can be modified when you go on exam leave as you will have more time during the day to revise.

Print off a study plan.

Remember

- Do not try to study all day.
- Schedule breaks in your working day for fun, food, relaxation and exercise, but not all at once!
- Too much work can be as unproductive as too little work.
- Try to give each subject enough time; do not concentrate on one subject at the expense of another.
- Do difficult tasks at times when you are at your most productive.
- Be realistic - don't plan a schedule you can't manage.
- Be disciplined - stick to what you say you will do.
- Be flexible - you never know when an emergency will crop up.
- Leave time at the end for reviewing what you have done and what you must still do.
- Reward yourself when you achieve targets or goals.
- Don't try to do all of the hardest topics at once. Spread them around evenly with the easier ones.

As you become accustomed to revising for half hour periods your ability to concentrate for a half hour block will improve. This will make you more productive and you will get more out of each session as your ability to concentrate improves. This will also help for the actual exams. It is about disciplining yourself to stick to the plan that YOU make. If you cheat the plan you are simply cheating yourself.



Revision Techniques

Most pupils feel that revision is reading their notes and doing past papers. There is so much more to revising for exams than this. Anyone can read their notes 20 times. Some people will remember some information; others will not remember a thing. This section deals with some successful methods of revising.

Remember revision is personal! What works for you may not work for your friends and vice versa.

1) Traffic Lighting

For many subjects you will have been issued with a list of learning outcomes. (Things you have got to know!) Do one unit or topic at a time,

Many people gain confidence in themselves when they realise that they do not have to sit down and try to learn everything.

You will need a red, orange and green pen or pencil.

Read each learning outcome carefully. Do you know what it means/can you state or describe what it asks?

For example.

Describe the different functions of a settlement. Be able to identify these kinds of towns on an OS map.

If you are 100% positive that you know the right answer put a **green** dot beside it.

If you are not quite sure and would need to check your book to get it right or are having a guess put an **orange** dot beside it.

If you have not got a clue what the answer is... Put a **red** dot beside it.

Go through the entire unit traffic lighting each learning outcome as shown above. You will find you have some dots of each colour. In order to focus your revision you should spend some time revising the areas marked red and orange. There is no point in revising stuff you already know. This only works if you are completely honest with yourself!

Once you have revised the unit you can do the traffic lighting exercise again. This time there should be more greens and less oranges and reds. This can be repeated as often as necessary or until you run out of time.

2) Bullet Points

Some pupils find that it is helpful to read their notes and then produce shortened 'bullet point' versions.

For example-Explaining Input devices.

Input devices are used to put information into the processor. There are many input devices which are used in different ways. A keyboard can be used to enter numbers and texts. Most keyboards are of the QWERTY type. People can use a mouse. It can be used to move a pointer around a screen and select different items. This is done by pressing a button. A scanner can be used to put in graphical information. Some scanners, e.g. flatbed ones move automatically to scan images. Joysticks can also be used as input devices. It moves objects on a computer screen. It is often used for games and can be used instead of a mouse.

Imagine trying to remember all that!!!!

Okay so what is important?

Input devices

1. Keyboard - input text and numbers
2. Mouse - move pointer, make selections.
3. Scanner - input graphical data.
4. Joystick - move object on screen, games

Some pupils find this easier as they are not remembering bulky text.

3) Talk to Yourself

Some of you will learn well by reciting facts and talking to yourself. Repetition and talking to yourself can help. Okay you may find that your parents think you have lost the plot but if it works.....

For example in Modern Studies:

Advantages of the Additional Member system

1. *Makes parliament more proportional - MSPs reflecting the views of people in Scotland.*
2. *Strong link between constituent and constituency MSP*
3. *Less confrontation in politics*
4. *Gives smaller parties opportunity to have their say.*

Read them two or three times to yourself. Then read them out loud. Cover up the information and try reciting it. Come back a few minutes later and recite them.

4) Post It Notes

If you have short snappy pieces of information to remember write them on post it notes and stick them on your bedroom walls!! If you see things often enough you will remember them. Move them about now and again so that they do not become stale.

*For Example
In English*

"In years to come, Harry would never quite remember how he managed to get through his exams when he half expected Voltemort to come bursting through the door at any moment." Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone p 190

"It didn't take them long to find the empty can of kerosene and there was a bonus. The forensic people found minute scrapings from the same can on the rim of our chute." Fighting Back, p 84

"I know a little place we can get cheap, but they ain't givin it away." Of Mice and Men, p 65.

As you learn them you can take them down. Try using these along with the traffic lighting or reciting technique.

5) Flashcards

Just because you are not sitting in your bedroom does not mean that you cannot revise. On the bus, in the car, lunchtime etc can all provide important and useful times to revise. Get some postcards, or cut up blank A4 paper or simply fold up some A4 paper. On each part write down a piece of information, formula, description or statement that you want to learn. Then when you have a few minutes have a look through your flashcards. You can recite the information out loud or try to recite it in your head.

6) Posters

Make your own posters!! This could be of diagrams that you need to learn. Then you will be looking at them all the time. You can also try drawing them with your back to the poster - check what you have done and try again.

For Example in History:



7) Use a Mnemonic

It's surprising how easy it is to remember stupid sayings rather than the proper technical terms. You can share these with your friends.

For Example

The Order of the Electromagnetic Spectrum

Ronald MacDonald Is Very Ugly Xclaimed George

Stands For Radio, Microwaves, Infrared, Visible, Ultraviolet, Xrays, Gamma Rays

Or

In Chemistry - for oxidation and reduction equations you may use:

O I L R I G

which means Oxidation Is loss Reduction Is Gain

8) Make up a Quiz

Write out some questions and answers and get your parents, brothers and sisters to ask you them. Remember to get them to be precise with your answers. Being close will not do you any good with the exam board they want precision!

9) Highlighters

Use highlighters to pick out important bits of your notes or descriptions you want to learn. DO NOT go mad or it will just be confusing! Only pick out the important bits not the whole thing!

Good example-Explaining Photosynthesis

Photosynthesis is the process by which green plants manufacture food. Photosynthesis takes place in the chloroplasts of plant cells. The chlorophyll (which gives the plant its green colour) inside the chloroplasts trap light energy from the sun. Chlorophyll and light are essential to photosynthesis. The energy from the sun is used to make the raw materials carbon dioxide (from the air) and water (from the soil) combine. The products of this combination are glucose (sugar) and oxygen. The glucose is either used straight away from by the plant or converted into starch and stored in the chloroplasts

Bad example-Explaining Photosynthesis

Photosynthesis is the process by which green plants manufacture food. Photosynthesis takes place in the chloroplasts of plant cells. The chlorophyll (which gives the plant its green colour) inside the chloroplasts trap light energy from the sun. Chlorophyll and light are essential to photosynthesis. The energy from the sun is used to make the raw materials carbon dioxide (from the air) and water (from the soil) combine. The products of this combination are glucose (sugar) and oxygen. The glucose is either used straight away from by the plant or converted into starch and stored in the chloroplasts

Can you spot the difference? The bad example is a classic example of a person who has bought a new packet of highlighters and is determined to use them all!! If you are likely to end up as the bad example - I would suggest you do something else!!

10) Use Technology

Use mobile phones, MP3 players, CD players etc. to record the important pieces of information that you want to learn. For example, in French you can use your device to do listening activities, learn vocabulary and prepare for speaking assessments. You can revise as you walk about! This can be changed as often as you want depending on what you are revising! Use the internet but do not waste hours searching for something useful - this is a waste of time and you will simply become distracted!

11) Units and Quantities

Every time you get a unit wrong or miss one out in physics it will cost you marks. This can be expensive in an exam. Make an A4 sheet of units and quantities. Stick it on the wall, get people to test you, carry it in your pocket

For Example

<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Unit</i>
<i>Charge</i>	<i>Coulombs (C)</i>
<i>Voltage</i>	<i>Volts (V)</i>
<i>Current</i>	<i>Amps (A)</i>
<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Hertz (Hz)</i>

12) Use Past Papers

When you feel that you have covered a unit or topic try some past paper questions on them. For example, you may be given a revision booklet with examples from past papers in it. Get your teacher to mark them. Where did you go wrong? Make a list of the facts you did not know. This gives you areas to work on.

13) Revise a Unit More Than Once

Revise a unit using all or some of the techniques above. Then move on to the next unit. Do not spend all of your time on one topic or unit. You can always come back to the unit when you have done the rest.

14) Ask For Help

As you are revising you may find that you are getting stuck! Ask for help. Check with friends, try using the internet, text book, notes etc. If you still do not get it write the question down. When you have enough problems for either one subject or a variety of subjects go to school and ask your teachers for help. Make notes of their answers. If you are not yet on exam leave ask for help whenever you need it.

15) Timed Questions.

Set yourself a number of questions in a given time. This is good exam practice. Do the questions then mark your answers. Be honest!! It's the best way. Anything you were unsure of can be revised or a note made.

16) Mind Maps

Some people find drawing a mind map helps them to link concepts ideas and theories. It can help to do one for a topic and pin it on your wall. It will help you see how the topics fit together. Mind maps stimulate multiple parts of the brain so help you learn. These can be done on paper but there is also a programme called Inspiration on the LRC computers where you can design your own mind maps.

17) Use Colour

Some people find that writing notes in coloured pens helps them. The text appears less boring and so they can concentrate and focus more easily.

18) Rewriting Notes

Some people find it useful to rewrite their notes. If you are thinking of this do not just copy blindly, this can make you feel like you have done a lot of work when actually nothing has sunk in.

Try this technique instead, as used in RMPS and Philosophy. First try traffic lighting your notes - this will cut down on the work and focus on weak areas. Read your note thoroughly. Do you understand it? Can you explain it in a shortened way in your own words? This is what you should write down. Do this for a whole topic or part of it. Then revise using some of the other techniques. At the end of revising the unit you may rewrite the notes again. Only keeping in the information that you are still unsure of.

For Example

Descartes believed that nothing can be truth except what is perceived. Descartes spent his life investigating reality, the mathematician-philosopher René Descartes decided his first step would be to discover some fact that was indisputable. He then realised that he never doubted that he existed. "I think," he wrote, "therefore I am." It didn't matter to Descartes whether this thinking was part of a dream or a hallucination or even if he was crazy, to him, the fact that thought was going on proved that he existed because there had to be a thinker.

Version 1 - Initial Shortened Version

Descartes believed

- *Only what could be perceived as the truth*
- *Rejected everything that wasn't indisputable.*

After rejecting everything, only one thing was certain - I think, therefore I am.

Version 2 - Second Shortened Version (Skeleton of an answer to be expanded in exam)

Descartes rejected everything that wasn't indisputable and therefore perceived truth. Being a thinker was indisputable therefore I think, so I am

Version 3 - Final Version (Needs expanded greatly to give marks in exam but less to remember)

Descartes wrote 'I think, therefore, I am'

Eventually this would disappear from your rewritten notes as you have learned the information.

19) Brainstorming

Some people find it useful to brainstorm. They get a piece of paper, put a topic in the middle and round it write everything that they know about the topic in detail and colour. Then you can check what you have left out and make a note of it. Also check that the information written is correct. This can then be stuck on walls etc.

20) Revise With A Friend

This is not social time to discuss who did what to who with what and when! Ask each other questions, work on problems together - if the person is just hindering you- Ask them to leave!!

21) Make Up Silly Stories

Some people find it useful to explain and remember concepts by inventing silly stories. For example to explain real and apparent weight in a lift at higher level you might want to think about the lift gremlins!

Or to explain internal resistance you may think about the baby resistor that lives in the battery while the big resistor goes out to work. The baby steals some of the currency (current) from the big resistor so lost volts can be explained!!

Make up your own silly stories if it helps. Usually the ruder and the stupider the easier it is to remember!

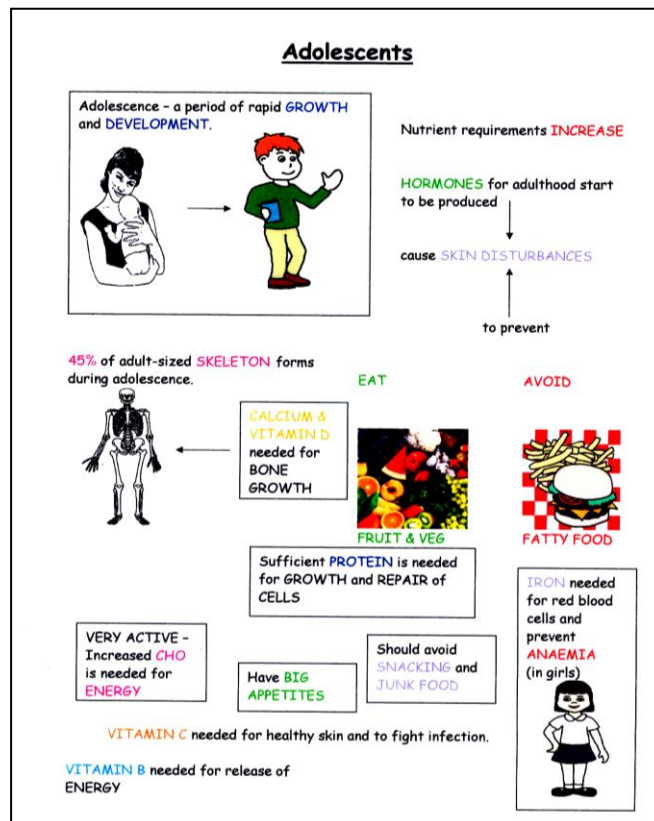
22) School Revision

Many departments offer study support. Some may also offer a revision class the day before the exam. This will be a good opportunity to get some last minute help. Focus the revision and iron out any remaining problems. Check with the department to see if this is happening. Only attend if it will help you! Again it is not a social event.

23) Memory Game

Look at the information you need to revise for one minute - then look away and see how much you can remember. Repeat. This is good for remembering facts.

For example the sheet below is an example from Home Economics.



24) Practice, Practice, Practice.

The more you do something, the more likely you are to remember it!
For example in Music the easiest way to remember a piece of music is to practise it again and again. It is worth starting off with a little bit at a time and practise that until you get it right. Then you practise the next bit and so on until you have remembered the whole piece.

You will need to figure out what works for you! You may find 5 or 6 techniques useful in which case use each of them when and where you feel it is relevant. You are an individual and you will revise in your own way.



The Day Before The Exam



The day before the exam should be spent revising one or two things, doing some final practice of past papers, checking a few pieces of information.

This is NOT the time to start your revision!!

If you have put in the work you should not need a late night, or a panic fest! Relax, do a little bit of work and use the study techniques and revision plan.

- ✚ Make sure that you have an early night before the exam as turning up tired has never helped anyone to perform well.
- ✚ Check the time of your exam and where it is happening.
- ✚ Set your alarm clock. Get up at a sensible time.
- ✚ Have a bit of chill out time.



The Day Of The Exam

The day of the exam is an important time. Try not to do a mad crushing session. At most you could have a quick look at a few points that you want to check up on. Otherwise relax.

- ✚ **Have Breakfast** - All that concentrating and thinking in the exam uses energy. Make sure you have a **decent** breakfast before the exam. I do not mean a bag of crisps and a bottle of Irn-bru! A bowl of cereal with milk, or toast with butter and marmalade or some other food that will fill you up and not just give a sugar rush.
- ✚ **Relax**- Watch some TV, listen to music to help you to relax. After all if you have put in the work there is nothing to worry about. Worrying about the impending exam will not help you.

- ✚ **Mobile Phones**- Leave it at home. Otherwise you must ensure that you do NOT take it into the exam hall. The SQA are extremely strict on this matter.
- ✚ **Walk away from arguments** - Arguing is stressful. Avoid fighting with brothers, sisters, parents or friends on the day of the exam. Walk away - you can fight later!
- ✚ **Mascots** - If you have a small item that you feel brings you luck e.g. a piece of jewellery, a photo, small toy put it in your bag and bring it with you to the exam. Knowing it is there can be a comfort.
- ✚ **Get to school on time** - this will be one less thing to worry about.
- ✚ **Go to the toilet before the exam!** There is nothing worse than trying to concentrate and worry about the toilet at the same time!
- ✚ **Take appropriate equipment** - Calculator, pen, spare pen, pencil, rubber
- ✚ **Leave all revision notes at home.** Having them with you will only make you wish you could look at them instead of concentrating on the exam.
- ✚ **Leave for school to arrive in plenty of time for your exam.** It never helps to come charging in and go straight in to the exam.
- ✚ **Do not discuss what you have learned** or know with friends before the exam, it will only put you off!
- ✚ **Never listen to friends showing off** about what they know. They may be wrong or may unsettle you - tell them not to do it.
- ✚ **Wear a watch** - this way you can keep an eye on the time that you have left and not panic when the invigilator shouts " 5 minutes to go"
- ✚ **Go into the exam thinking "I CAN do it"**, this is half the battle. If you go thinking "I can't do this, it will be impossible", then you probably will find it difficult and might as well take a fifth of the marks off straight away. Your frame of mind **REALLY** makes a difference. Have a bit of faith in yourself.



In The Exam

People always panic in exams, here are 4 common issues.

Your Mind Goes Blank!

You know the feeling - you walk into the exam and your mind goes blank! You panic, you rush the questions, you walk out early and feel upset and disappointed.

Stop! Think! This happens to the best of us in exams. If it happens to you simply close the exam paper. Shut your eyes and breathe out and in slowly ten times. This often happens as a result of pure panic. By stopping and taking time out you will find that you calm down and your knowledge will return.

Another method is to recite something simple in your head e.g. the alphabet or count to 50 slowly.



Everyone Else Is Walking Out of The Exam

So what! Are you a sheep? Do you have to follow the crowd? Just because some people leave the exam hall early does not mean that you should. You have to do these exams for yourself. It does not matter if you are in the exam hall until the end. What matters is that you answer the questions to the best of your ability.



You Cannot Do the First Question (Or a question)

Stay calm. Miss the question out and work through the rest of the paper. Sometimes when you continue to work and persevere the answer will come to you as you calm down. Spending 20 minutes thinking 'I can't do this, I'm going to fail' etc is very disruptive to good exam technique. It also is not very positive!

The Actual Exam

The exam should not be a surprise. If you have prepared well, you should be ready for the style of question, length of exam, number of multiple choice etc.

- **Read the instructions carefully.** Read the front of the exam paper. What instructions are you given? Is there important information for you here?
- **Check The Data Sheet** - Check the inside cover of the exam. In some papers there is a data sheet with information on it that you may need to answer some questions.
- **Data Booklet** - Remember that in some exams you are now given a data booklet with the formulae in it. Open it to the correct page at the start of the exam. There is no excuse for making up your own formula!!
- **Dictionary** - In Modern Languages you may be given a language dictionary. Remember to use it if you need it.
- **Read the question carefully** - What are you actually being asked to do?
- **Answer The Question Asked** This seems obvious, but in the panic of the exam it is easy just to spew knowledge onto the page without actually answering the question. After you answer a question check that what you have written answers what is asked.

- **Look at the marks** - If it is a 1 mark question it is highly unlikely that you will need to write 5 sentences! Typical calculations in physics, for example, are worth 2 marks, if it is worth 3 marks there is something extra you must do. A 2 mark description needs more than a one word answer. Make what you write fit the marks allocated.
- **Underline Important Information** - it is perfectly acceptable to underline information in the question.
- **Check each page**, so you do not miss a vital part of a question.
- **Pace Yourself**- in the exam there is normally plenty time to complete the question paper. Manage your time so you have enough time to answer each question without spending too much time on those that are easy and not enough on the ones that you find more difficult.
- **Multiple Choice**- Multiple choice is not multiple guess! There are no patterns in multiple choice. You can have three A's in a row, or 4 B's etc. so consider each question separately. If you do not know an answer take an educated guess, do not just say well I only have one B in the whole paper so I'll make this one a B!
- **If Required Watch carefully** - for example in PE you may have to watch a video and evaluate what you see.
- **Listen carefully** - Some exams have listening parts, e.g. Music and French.
- **Answer every part of each question in full.** Do not miss out parts of questions as this can be expensive!

- **Show your working** - in several subjects you get marks for working even if you get the final answer wrong!
- **Write neatly** - examiners are not there to figure out what you have written. Make your answers clear.
- **Cross out any mistakes neatly** - do not spend a fortune on Tippex!.
- **Units-** Check that when you have calculated a quantity that it has a unit. Each time a unit is missing it may cost you a mark!
- **Save a few minutes** - at the end of the paper to read through your answers and make any last-minute corrections. Do not change things just for the sake of it.

After The Exam



Okay you have sat the exam and you are skipping out with joy in your heart because some kindly examiner wrote a paper that suited you perfectly!

There are some tips to help here too.

- ✚ **Avoid Exam Talk** - Do you really want to compare answers and find out that your answers are all different? This will simply stress you out and cause panic. Remember you may have other exams to sit!

- ✚ **Have Fun**- even if you have other exams to prepare for you need a wind down period. This may be going out with friends for a while, playing video games, watching a bit of TV, reading a book etc.

- ✚ **Don't Panic!** - You will not be the only person who sat the exam who is feeling anxious. Even those who 'don't care' or found it 'easy' will still be feeling a bit worried.

- ✚ **Answers** - do not rush straight to your notes or teacher to check your answers. There is no point! It's too late now anyway. Put the exam behind you and move on.

- ✚ **Fresh air and Food**- exams are exhausting. Get outside into the fresh air; get some juice and some food inside you! You will start to feel better.

- ✚ **Think Positive** - if the exam did not go as well as you wanted what can you improve for the next exam?



One final note.

We wish you luck, and we hope you achieve the grades that you need, want and deserve!

