



Dorset  
Mental  
Health  
Support  
Team in  
Schools



Dorset HealthCare  
University  
NHS Foundation Trust

# THE ULTIMATE REVISION GUIDE

**Top tips to  
navigate exam  
season**



This guide is brimming with top-notch revision tips and techniques. In this guide we'll also help you take care of your mental health too and help ease feelings of exam stress and worry. You got this!

# CONTENTS

- ✓ How to start your revision
- ✓ Tips to create a revision timetable
- ✓ Revision techniques for different learning styles
- ✓ Productivity tips
- ✓ How to deal with exam stress
- ✓ Exam Day

Take a look at our social media channels for more ideas, tips and activities to keep you busy and feeling good.



# How to start your revision

A good way to begin is to set short-term, smart goals, and not to do anything too ambitious or plan too far in the future.

Setting goals are important as it can help give you a sense of a direction and something to aim for. When setting your goals, try using SMART goals:

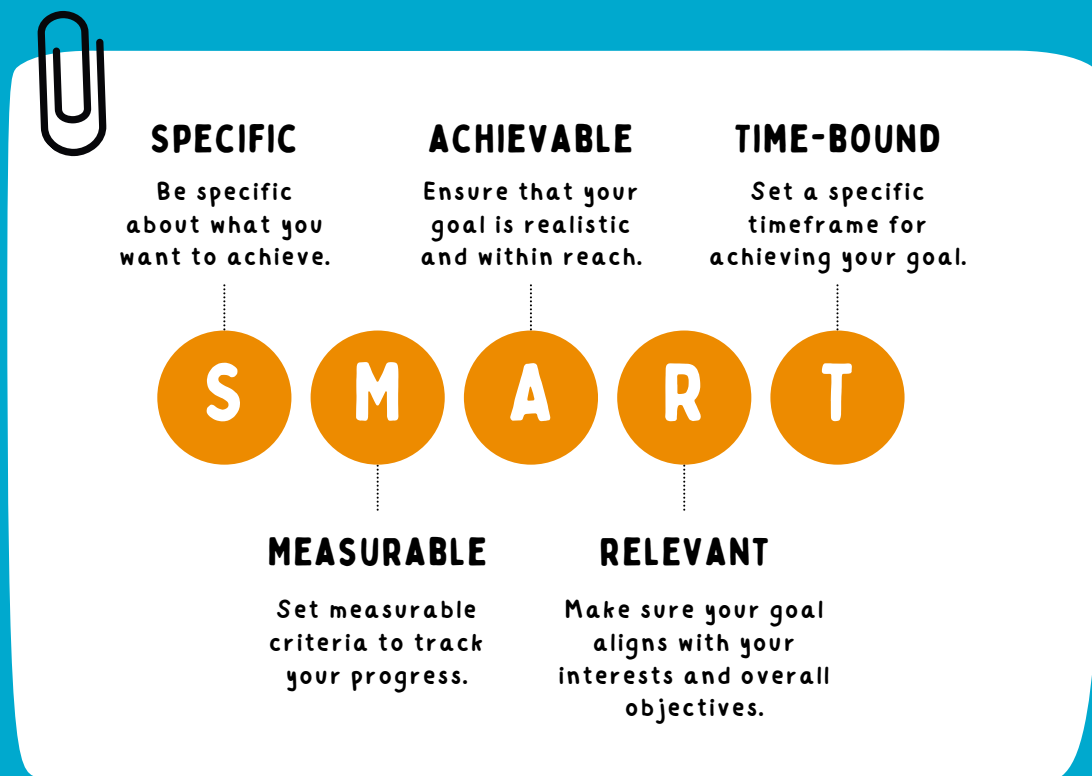
**Specific** – What exactly do you want to do?

**Measurable** – How will you know when you have reached it/are working towards it?

**Achievable** – What do you need to do to make this goal happen? Do things need to be broken down?

**Relevant** – Is this something you want to accomplish?

**Time-bound** – When do you want to accomplish it by?




Once you have started working on your goals, make them SMART-ER by:

**Evaluate** - Have you made progress towards this goal? If not, why? Is it still important? Does it need to be tweaked? What made this possible?

**(R)eward** – What are you going to do to reward yourself when you meet your goal?


# Create the perfect study space

You may thrive while typing away in a lively coffee shop, or you might require the quiet ambiance of a library. Regardless of your preferred study environment, make sure to optimise your study space so you can get the most out of your revision.




## Declutter your space

- An untidy desk or room can increase stress, hinder productivity, and lead to procrastination. Prioritise organizing your study area first.




## Eliminate distractions

- Avoid having tablets, TVs, or phones nearby. Consider using apps like SelfControl to block distracting websites while studying.



## Ensure comfort

- While studying in bed is not recommended, choose a comfortable workspace that allows you to focus without discomfort.




## Adjust lighting

- Avoid dim lighting that strains your eyes or overly bright lights that cause fatigue. Opt for natural light when possible to reduce negative effects.

## Control noise levels

- Find a space with consistent noise levels that suit your preferences. Headphones with calming sounds can also help.



## Personalise your space

- Add personal touches like photos to create a comfortable and motivating environment. Plants and colourful decorations can enhance your mood.


**YOU GOT THIS!**

**DON'T FORGET**  
to  
**TAKE A BREAK**



## Time management

- Keep a visible clock and revision schedule nearby for easy reference. Avoid using smartphones for timekeeping to prevent distractions.



## Gather supplies

- Keep essential stationery and snacks within reach to avoid frequent interruptions. Energy-boosting snacks like raisins and nuts can help maintain focus.

## Maintain cleanliness

- Regularly tidy your study space to prevent clutter. Dedicate a few minutes each day to keep your workspace clean and conducive to productivity.



# Motivational quotes

You can print these off and stick around your study space for motivation or make your own on pieces of paper or Post-It notes.



# Revision timetable

Not only will the timetable itself help you to make sure that you cover all of the important topics coming up in your exams, creating one will let you decide which subjects you need to spend the most time revising.

Above all else, a timetable will mean that you can spend enough time revising and enough time relaxing! Many students get overly stressed because they don't take a rest. It's important to be able to chill out away from your books, and following a timetable can help you do that.

The best thing to do is to find out what exams you have coming up and what they will be covering. You can then start to make plans for your revision, if you have multiple exams, or your exam will be covering multiple areas of study, you can work backwards from the exam date and revise sections individually. This way, you give each section enough time and you don't feel overwhelmed.

Find out your exam timetable - enter the times, lengths and which papers you will be sitting on a piece of paper. Next, on a separate piece of paper, list all of your subjects and target results. Give yourself a score out of five for each subject on how confident you are in achieving that grade:

1 = really not confident

2 = not confident

3 = maybe

4 = confident

5 = very confident

Decide which topics you need to spend the most time on from this confidence score. You may want to take a past paper in your main subjects and see which question areas you found the most difficult. List all of the different topics you'll need to know for each of your subjects and highlight those you feel the least confident in.

Decide when you work best and set out the times you are going to allocate to studying.

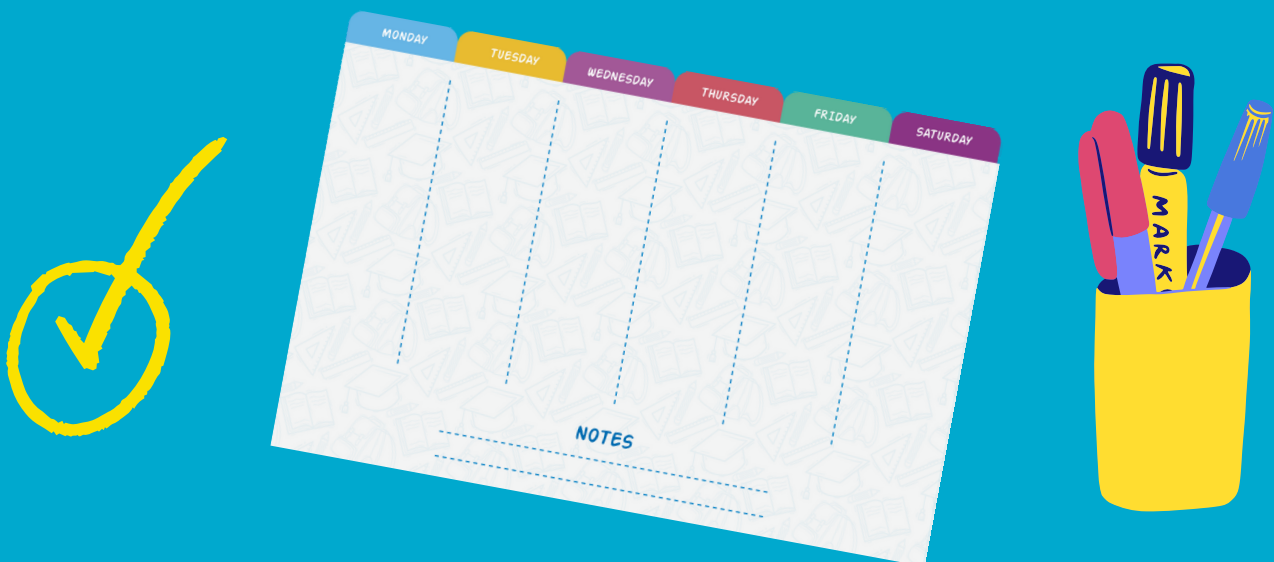
Now, calculate how much time you have to study and allocate this time between the subjects and topics - give the most time to the subjects you feel least confident in and have the most topics which need work on!

Timetable your studies, including the different topics you need to cover. Separate out your least favourite subjects to keep your motivation up. Plan in the topics you will study so that they naturally build on top of each other, i.e. don't do the difficult topics first, which demand that you know something you haven't planned to cover earlier.

Stick to your plan and revise. That way, you know that you'll cover all of the subjects and not feel guilty when you are relaxing. And, relax! Make sure that you take the time off that you've timetabled. That is just as important as revising, otherwise you'll burn out.

Take more tests, cross out topics you've covered and reassess as you go. If you start feeling more confident on certain subjects, make the most of your time and focus on something else you're not as confident on.

The best thing to do is to give yourself somewhere between one and three hours for revision. Doing this will mean that you've given yourself a manageable, bite-size revision period, that will not overwork you.



# Procrastination

Follow these tips and tricks to help if you procrastinate.

- 1. Write it down**

Write down your goal! Writing it on a piece of paper takes it from being an idea in your mind to a tangible, doable action.
- 2. Know your why**

Why is important for me to complete this goal? What will I gain from completing it? How will I feel when I'm finished? Write down your 'Why' on the same piece of paper.
- 3. Create a deadline**

Sometimes the pressure of completing a task before a deadline can push us to finish something. Write down the date and time when you must finish your goal on the same paper as your goal and why.
- 4. Break it down**

When you think of a task, seeing it in terms of a whole can make it seem daunting, and sometimes impossible. Breaking your task into simple, easy-to-complete steps takes it from overwhelming to accomplishable! Write down your steps on the piece of paper.
- 5. Get in the right mindset**

When you catch yourself having the "I don't want to do this" thoughts, reframe them into something more positive to "I'm going to feel so happy when I'm finished"
- 6. Set the mood**

Have a dance, sing, drink some water or go for a walk around on your street before you begin to prepare your brain.
- 7. Time to work**

Set a timer for 20 minutes and work steadily until you hear it go off. Next, set your alarm for 5 minutes and do something fun that will give your brain a bit of dopamine - dance to your favourite song, do some stretching away from your study space.
- 8. Celebrate your wins!**

The most important step is to CELEBRATE YOUR WINS! You did it! Tell yourself how proud you are of you.



# Revision techniques

## How to choose the right revision techniques for you

The first thing to realise is that not every revision technique works for every person. So, just because your best friend is using mind maps with great success it doesn't mean you do the same.

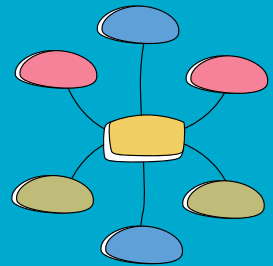
Before you start revising take some time to reflect on how you learn best. Use these prompts to help you.

- Write down three occasions where your learning has worked particularly well. They could be lessons from the classroom or from when you've been studying independently at home.
- Why did these learning methods work so well for you?
- What kind of environment do you need to be in to make your learning effective? Do you need quiet, gentle background noise, to be with other people who are studying or to be alone in silence?

When you've answered those questions you'll have a good idea about how you learn best. Next, you need to work out how you're going to apply those learning methods to revise at home.

## Here are some revision techniques to try:

- Begin your revision process by condensing notes down into manageable chunks, using flash cards helps. By doing this you are actually beginning the revision process.
- You can also consider creating your own mind maps so you can break a topic down further into keywords and phrases.
- Once you have condensed a topic down to single words or short phrases, put these on Post-It notes and stick them around your home.
- Remember to practice planning how to answer essay questions. Make sure you are confident in being able to break essay answers down to cover all parts of the question. Using Past Papers will help you to do this on a wide variety of questions.



# Revision techniques

- Revising on your own can be a lonely experience. You can mix this up by creating a study group. Participating in group discussions can help most students to focus for longer, they can give you a different perspective on the topic you're studying and will help you achieve a broader understanding of the subjects you're revising. Explaining concepts and ideas to others is also a key way of strengthening your knowledge and consolidating your learning.
- If you are really struggling with a particular topic ask your teacher for advice. This may save you hours of time. Your teacher should be able to share with you how they remember how to solve that particular equation or how they remember the meaning of a particular word etc. You should also speak to your friends as they may be stronger on some topics than you are, whilst you might be able to help them with other topics.
- Try and remain calm. Panicking about how much you've got left to study or how many seconds until the exam will only distract you from the reading in front of you. So, clear your mind, focus on whatever topic you're studying that day, and believe in yourself. You can totally do this.

“In my opinion revision shouldn't really be a time frame but a constant process and practice of being self-reflective. What areas or topics covered in a lesson did you not understand? What could you go back and revisit / relearn the concept, and then answer some exam style questions on it. What topic is your favourite / you understand a lot and you are good at answering those types or styles of questions. What could you do more practice or research about? when I was doing my GCSEs I started properly making revision resources, for science this was small flashcards on individual processes, equations or topics I kept on forgetting, for humanities it was more mindmaps to make connections between different arguments or concepts for example. For maths just practice questions over and over again, and English doing essay planning for the longer mark questions was helpful when I had remembered and reviewed the content for the play or book etc. Keep on going and keep at it by starting now! E.g. what did you learn in chemistry / physics / biology this term, is there a lesson you didn't really understand or you missed? Could you answer some exam style questions on the topic and mark them yourself? Make your revision active and proactive, not just passively reading a textbook. GCSE exam questions are about not just remembering but applying knowledge.”

-Advice from a young person

# Exam stress

Exam stress can be more than feeling nervous on the day of an exam. It can also be how you feel building up to exams, during exams and when waiting for results.

“ For me exam stress is mainly about worrying, but it's also a whole variety of emotions – a sort of mood swing. ”

Feeling stressed, worried, or under pressure around exams can be difficult to manage. But there are things that can help – it's about finding what's right for you.

Exams can be stressful on their own, but other things might cause you to feel worse. These might include:

- Feeling like you're not ready or prepared for exams, like leaving revision too late.
- Worrying about how you'll feel and perform during the exam, especially when you don't know what will be in it.
- Pressure from others, like parents, carers or teachers.
- Pressure from yourself to get certain grades.
- Comparing yourself to others, like believing you have to get the same results as your friends.
- Worrying about the future, like getting into university or getting a job.

# Circle of control

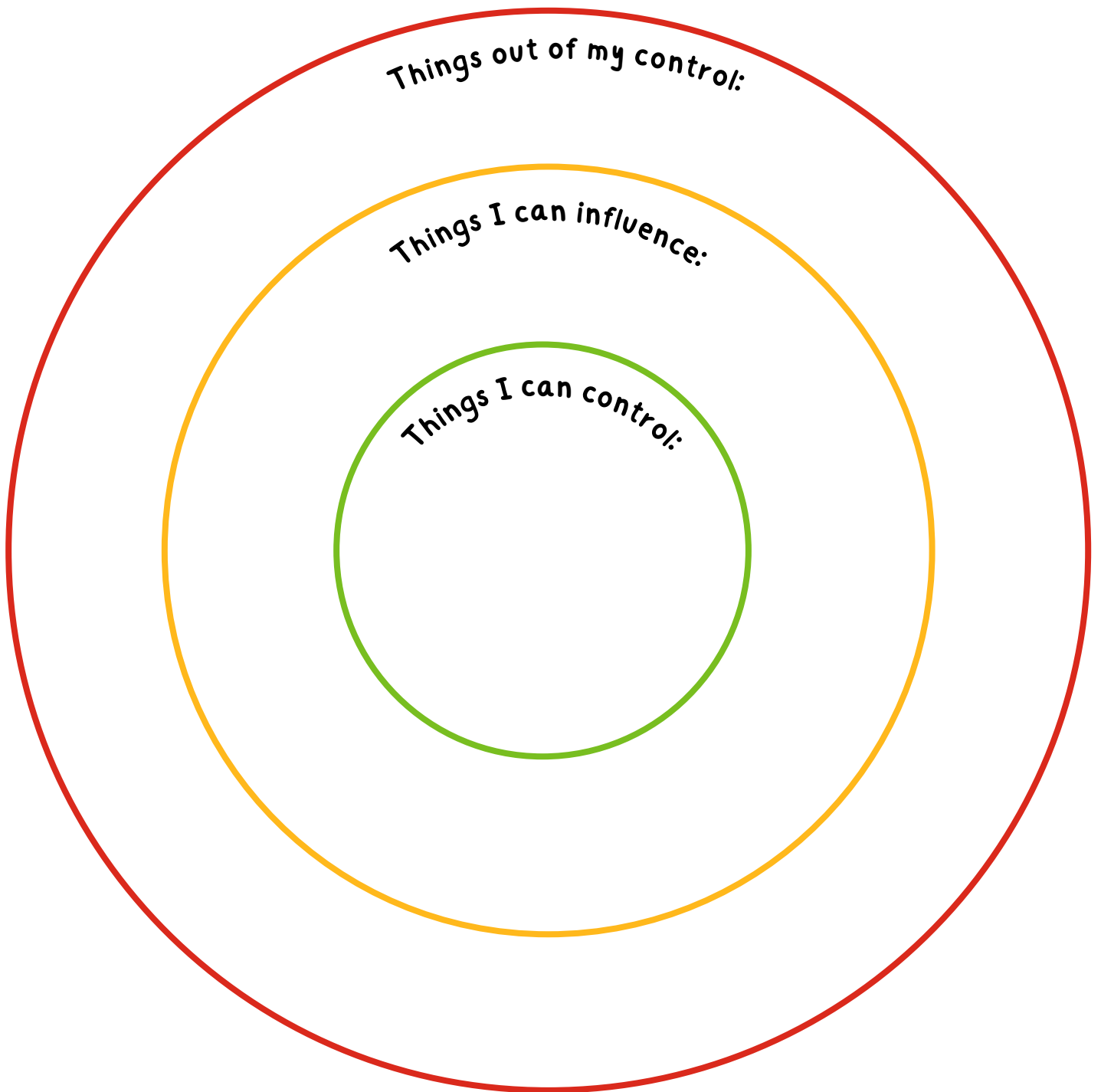
Preparing for tests and exams can be worrying and at times you may find yourself feeling overwhelmed.

This activity can help you think about what you can and can not control to allow you to focus on your exam preparation a little better. The inner circle is for the things you can control, for example, what you know and the things you can change. The middle circle is for the things you have some influence over but not full control. For example, your revision list or topics which will be on the test. The outer circle is a place for you to write down things you have no control over at all and can not do anything about. An example of this would be other people's actions and the questions on the exam paper. The things that you can't control it's important to let go of. The things you can control are the things you need to create a plan around and take control of.

## Example:



# Circle of control



# Stress

Stress is the feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope with emotional pressure. Stress is a hormonal response of your body to certain stressors and leads to inflammation: it shows up physically and mentally. Exam stress can creep up on you, so it is useful to know some of the signs and symptoms so you can make some changes or ask for help.



# How to deal with exam stress

## Reward Yourself

Have something other than a single track focus on exam day. Book in a break away with friends that you can start looking forward to. Research things to see and plan some activities to take your mind off the task at hand.

## Positive Self Talk

Talking to yourself with encouragement will make a difference.

## Get Some Sleep

If you go to bed feeling anxious, you'll find it harder to fall asleep. Avoid starting a new chapter of your revision book late in the day. It'll still be there in the morning when your mind is fresh.

## Don't Avoid Topics You Dislike

If a particular subject is causing issues, don't dwell on it for too long but don't forget about it completely. Change your study environment or talking it through with someone can work wonders.

## Avoid Negative Vibes

Avoid being a sounding board for moans from your friends. e.g. a 'Who's more stressed?' contest will do no-one any good. Tune your TV to a comedy series rather than the news.

## Fuel Yourself Effectively

Snacking on junk food while revising is all too easy, but won't do you any good. Brain foods like blueberries or avocado can help memory function. And don't be tempted to overdo the caffeine or drugs that claim to enhance performance - the downsides outweigh any supposed benefits.

## Flex Your Mind and Body

Any form of exercise is good during exam time like meeting up with friends to have a kick about. Yoga is particularly good at stimulating your brain to produce chemicals to control calmness. Deep, slow breathing techniques can aid relaxation. And even a few daily minutes of mindfulness can stop you feeling overwhelmed.

# Distraction techniques

Sometimes when we have tricky emotions or we are thinking about our worries a lot, it is helpful to do or think about something else.

This can help you to feel calmer and make your worries a bit smaller as you're not thinking about them all the time. Distraction exercises can bring focus to something else and bring you back to the present moment which can help quieten those thoughts or worries.

Everybody responds differently to distraction exercises. What works for one person, may not work for someone else. Our suggestions here can be used as a starting point to explore different types of distraction exercises that can be helpful to try when managing thoughts of worry or anxiety.

## 5-4-3-2-1

Look around and notice 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste.



## ABC GAME

Go through the alphabet and come up with an animal for each letter or food or country or names.

ABC D

## COUNT TO 100

Count to 100 and really focus on your breathing.



## SHAPES

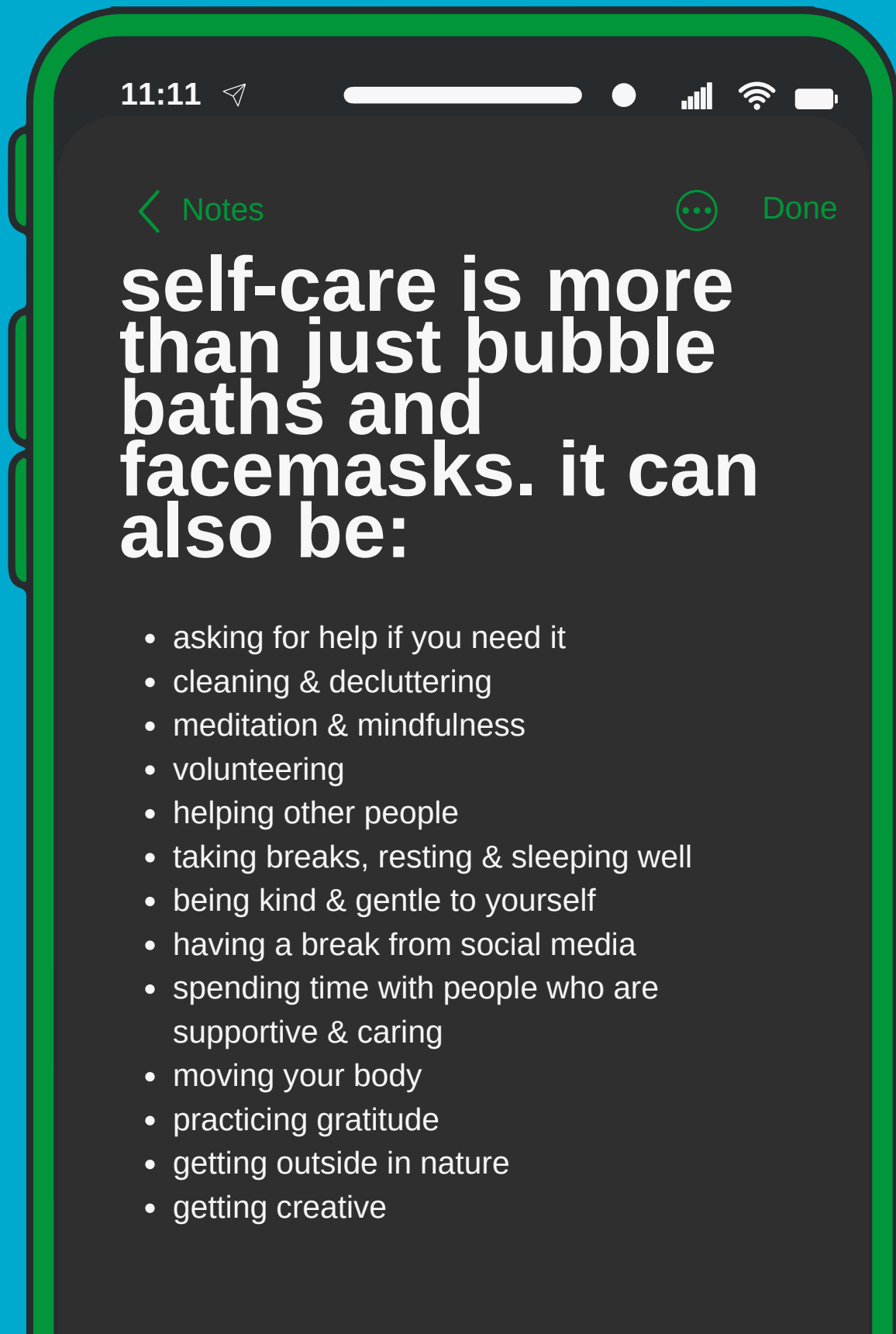
Look around you... what shapes are around you? How many squares are there? How many circles are there?





# Self-care

Above all, learn how to relax and take time for self-care. Rest boosts productivity in the areas of focus and decision making. A well-rested brain is better equipped to concentrate on tasks, process information, and make rational choices. All of which ultimately lead to increased productivity.



**self-care is more than just bubble baths and facemasks. it can also be:**

- asking for help if you need it
- cleaning & decluttering
- meditation & mindfulness
- volunteering
- helping other people
- taking breaks, resting & sleeping well
- being kind & gentle to yourself
- having a break from social media
- spending time with people who are supportive & caring
- moving your body
- practicing gratitude
- getting outside in nature
- getting creative

don't believe  
everything you  
think

I give up



I'll try a  
different way

I can't do  
this



I don't know how  
to do this yet

I failed



Mistakes are  
how I learn and  
get better

It's too  
hard



This may take  
me some time

I don't  
know how



I can learn how

if you are worried talk  
to your teachers, they  
are there to help you

pay attention in  
class

plan your time effectively

make sure you  
are prepared

don't  
overthink  
the exams,  
just try  
your best

# COPING WITH EXAM STRESS

## TOP TIPS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

teachers will tell  
you countdowns to  
the exams but  
don't let this  
overwhelm you  
because you can  
try your best

find time to check  
in with your  
friends and talk  
to people you  
trust

don't worry about  
your mock results as  
there is time to learn  
from these and revise  
more

find time to  
still do things  
you enjoy

**Remember that exams are  
just one aspect of your life  
and don't define your worth.**

# IT WILL BE OK



you're allowed to step back and take a break



remember it's always okay to ask for help



you can get through this



you are more capable than you know



take things one step at a time

**If you didn't feel nerves during exam time, you wouldn't be human.**

**Remember exams only count for a small fraction of your life, so don't forget about the rest of it. Be gentle to yourself. Be kind to your mind. And reach out for support if you need to.**


# Exam Day

After all the hard work and revision, Exam Day has finally arrived. Here are some tips to ensure you perform your best:

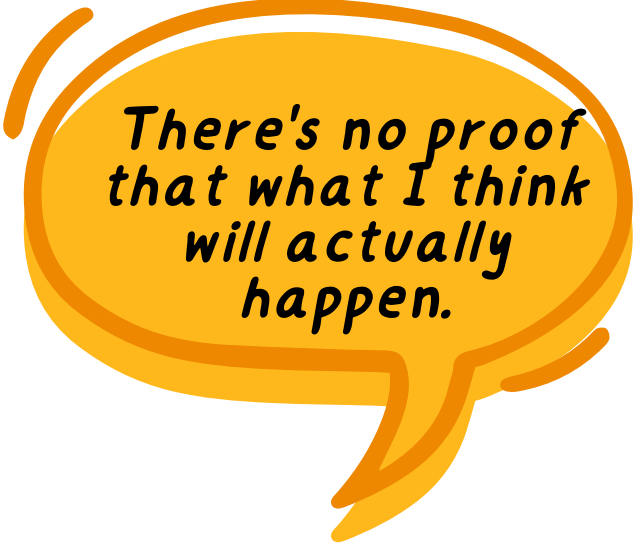
- Confirm the exam time and venue:
  - Before the exam, double-check the details such as the start time, arrival time, and location.
- Prepare the night before:
  - Instead of cramming, have a good meal and get to bed early. Review your flashcards, listen to recordings, and try to relax.
- Pack your bag ahead of time:
  - Organize the necessary equipment for all your exams the night before. Gather pens, pencils, rulers, erasers, calculators, and any other needed items.
- Wake up early:
  - Set an early alarm to give yourself enough time to get ready, have breakfast, and arrive at the venue on time.
- Eat a good breakfast:
  - Research suggests that students who eat breakfast before exams perform better. Opt for slow-release carbohydrates like whole grain bread, oat bran, rolled oats, or apples.
- Stay hydrated:
  - Dehydration can lead to tiredness, lack of concentration, and headaches. Stay hydrated before and during the exam.
- Stay calm:
  - Managing nerves before exams is crucial. Find ways to relax, like deep breathing, listening to music, or taking a walk.
- Don't dwell on one question:
  - If you encounter a challenging question, don't panic. Move on to the next one and come back later if needed.
- Triple-check your work:
  - Use any extra time to review your answers multiple times. Ensure you've answered all questions correctly and accurately.

## Always remember:


- **Go in there and try your best. You will do great. Trust in your knowledge and believe in yourself. You are capable.**
- **After the test, take time for yourself and remember you are not defined by your exam results - you are so much more than the letters that appear on a sheet of paper.**



*I can get through this. I have done this before.*




*There's no proof that what I think will actually happen.*



*Feelings come and go. This won't last forever.*



*Think about the things that make me feel happy & safe.*



*What did I do to calm down last time? Let me try that.*



*Everyone makes mistakes. It's really no big deal.*

# Positive Self-Talk

# WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

EVERYONE HAS  
MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is all about our feelings, the good and the not-so-good, and it's unique to each one of us. 🧠

You know how sometimes you're on cloud nine, feeling super happy and positive? And other times, you might feel a bit down or worried? Well, that's totally normal! Our emotions are like a rollercoaster, always changing, and that's all part of your mental health.

During exams, you may need extra support to help cope with exam stress, as well as your mental health. Remember: it's okay to ask for help at any time. You can get support from your school or college or talk to someone you trust.

Remember if you feel overwhelmed, support is available for you to talk things through. You deserve help as soon as you need it.

[chathealth.nhs.uk](https://chathealth.nhs.uk)

Connection - call 0800 652 0190 or NHS 111

[kooth.com](https://kooth.com)

Text 'SHOUT' to  
85258

Childline - call 0800 1111

For emergencies call 999

[youngminds.org.uk](https://youngminds.org.uk)

# TIPS TO SUPPORT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Evidence suggests there are 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.



connect

Having good relationships help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth and give you an opportunity to share positive experiences.



learn

Learning new skills can boost your self-confidence, help you to build a sense of purpose and connect with others.



take notice

Some people call this awareness mindfulness. Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

## Five steps to wellbeing



be active

Getting active and moving more can help raise your self-esteem, help you to set goals or challenges and achieve them and causes chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood.



give

Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by creating positive feelings and a sense of reward, giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth and helping you connect with other people.



# HELPLINES

**childline**



Call 0800 1111  
Open 24/7

**shout**  
85258



Text Shout to 85258  
Open 24/7

**SAMARITANS**



Call 116 123  
Open 24/7

**connection**



Call 0800 652 0190  
Open 24/7

Dorset Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) are working with a number of schools across Dorset to tackle the challenges children and young people experience, by helping them to feel more resilient, arming them with techniques to look after themselves and strategies to help them cope better with life's ups and downs. This includes support for things like mild-moderate anxiety or worries, exam stress and friendship issues through 6-8 sessions of low intensity Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (LI-CBT), counselling sessions, themed group work or information workshops.



get access to our resources

visit our website for more info

[bit.ly/dorset\\_mhst](https://bit.ly/dorset_mhst)



Dorset Mental Health Support Team in Schools



Dorset HealthCare University  
NHS Foundation Trust

Take a look at our social media channels for more ideas, tips and activities to keep you busy and feeling good.



@DORSETMHST

