

Beat Exam Stress with Ease

TIPS FOR EXAM SUCCESS



DISCOVER STRATEGIES TO STAY CALM AND FOCUSED

THE TOP 10 WAYS TO HANDLE EXAM STRESS

1. Create a Sensible Revision Schedule

Split each subject into manageable sections and plan them over time. Trying to cram everything into one evening rarely works – consistent revision is far more effective.

2. Revise Actively

Simply rereading notes isn't enough.

Mix things up by using flashcards, answering exam-style questions, explaining topics to someone else, or working through past papers.



3. Take proper breaks

Try the Pomodoro technique:

25 minutes of focused work followed by a 5-minute break.

Regular pauses help your brain stay sharp and avoid burnout.

4. Prioritise Sleep

Sleep plays a huge role in learning. When you're exhausted, it's much harder to concentrate, so aim for around 8–9 hours if you can.



5. Look After Your Diet and Hydrate

Drinking water, eating fruit, and having balanced meals will help keep your energy up.

Too much sugar or caffeine can increase feelings of stress.



6. Speak Up About Stress

Feeling under pressure is normal. Talk things through with friends, teachers, parents, or school support staff - you don't have to cope on your own.

7. Use Simple Breathing Exercises

Slow breathing can help calm anxiety. Try breathing in for 4 seconds, holding for 4, then breathing out for 6. Repeat a few times.



8. Keep a Balanced View

Exams are important, but they aren't everything. They don't define your worth, and there are always alternative pathways and second chances.

9. Keep Moving

A short walk, some stretching, or a bit of exercise can ease stress and help you refocus.

10. Acknowledge Small Achievements

Completed a topic or attempted a past paper? That's progress.

Give yourself credit and a small reward – you've earned it.





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THE BEST USE OF PAST EXAM PAPERS

Past papers are one of the best revision tools for GCSES - but only if you use them properly. Here is some tips on how you can get the most out of them.

1. START WITH THE RIGHT PAPER

Make sure you're practising with the correct materials by checking your exam board (such as AQA or Edexcel), the right subject, and the appropriate tier (Foundation or Higher). Where possible, use recent past papers so the format and style match your exam. If you're unsure, ask your teacher or look on your exam board's official website for past papers.

3. LOOK AT THE MARK SCHEME

When reviewing your answers, don't just look at whether they're right or wrong. Read the mark scheme carefully to see how marks are awarded, which key terms are required, and how much detail examiners expect. This helps you understand how examiners think and what they're really looking for.

5. CREATE A 'FIX-IT' LIST

Make a note of any topics you found difficult, recurring errors, and areas where you feel less confident. Use this list to guide your next revision session so you can focus on what needs the most improvement.

7. PRACTISE EXAM TIMING

Learn how to manage your time by knowing roughly how long to spend on different types of questions, from 1-mark answers to 4–6 mark questions and longer extended responses. Good timing can make a big difference to your overall marks.

9. DIFFERENT PURPOSES

Past papers can be used in different ways. You might complete a full paper, focus on questions from one topic, practise 6-mark answers, or work specifically on calculation questions. Mixing up how you use them can help keep revision varied and motivating.

2. TRY A PAPER WITHOUT NOTES

Approach past papers as if they were the real exam. Work under timed conditions, put your phone away, don't use notes, and find a quiet place to concentrate. This helps you get used to the pressure and manage your time effectively on the day.

4. LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES

Afterwards, reflect on your performance and ask yourself whether mistakes came from missing knowledge, misunderstanding the question, or poor time management. Every mistake is a chance to learn and improve for next time.

6. REDO THE SAME QUESTIONS

Once you've revised the topic, attempt the same or similar questions again and aim for full marks. This shows that you've understood your mistakes and made real progress.

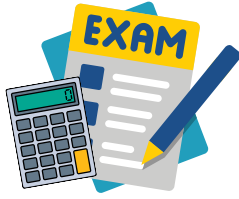
8. LEARN THE COMMAND WORDS

Make sure you understand what command words such as *describe*, *explain*, *compare*, and *evaluate* mean. These words tell you exactly how to structure your answer and what the examiner expects.

10. TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

Keep a clear record of your revision progress by noting down your scores, any weak areas you've identified, and the improvements you make over time. Tracking ⁴this information helps you see patterns in your performance and shows how far you've come, which can boost confidence and keep you motivated to keep improving.

USING PAST PAPERS EFFECTIVELY IN MATHS



Make sure you practise working without a calculator as well as with one. Spend time on both calculator and non-calculator papers so you're confident in each exam situation.



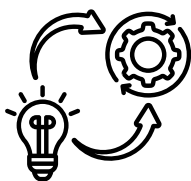
Look for topic patterns in maths papers, as areas like algebra, angles, graphs, and percentages often come up repeatedly. Use this to focus more on your weaker topics.

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

Make sure you know what's on the formula sheet and practise using it correctly in exam-style questions.

Read the question carefully. Underline key information. Write down what you know. Show your working. Check your answer.

Spend time practising worded problems, as these are often the most challenging. Take your time to read the question carefully and underline key information before you start answering.



Use simple exam techniques to check your answers, such as estimating, substituting values back into equations, and checking that units make sense.



Show all your working, as you can still earn method marks even if the final answer is incorrect.



Work on improving your speed by timing yourself during practice. This helps you pace your answers properly and avoid rushing the final questions in the exam.



Mark your work carefully by checking method marks and accuracy marks to see exactly where you lost marks.



Redo difficult questions and keep practising them until you can solve them confidently.



Learn from common mistakes such as rounding incorrectly, forgetting units, or rearranging equations wrongly. Being aware of these errors can help you avoid losing easy marks.¹⁰

USING PAST PAPERS EFFECTIVELY IN ENGLISH



Make sure you understand the paper format by learning what each section involves, such as **Reading**, **Writing**, and **Literature**.



Use **PEEL** or **PETAL** to structure your paragraphs: make a clear **Point**, support it with **Evidence**, **Explain** it, and **Link** back to the question.



Analyse language by using phrases such as **suggests**, **implies**, and **creates** to explain effects and meanings.



Improve your timing by avoiding spending too long on any one question.



Improve your **SPAG** by remembering that **spelling**, **punctuation**, and **grammar** all matter in exams.



Practise planning your answers by spending 2–5 minutes organising ideas before starting longer responses.



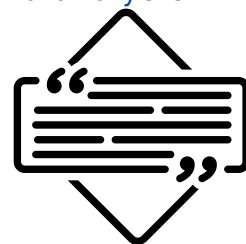
Learn key quotes for Literature by memorising short, powerful quotations that are easy to remember and use in exams.



Practise creative writing by trying descriptions, story openings, and persuasive pieces to build confidence and improve style.

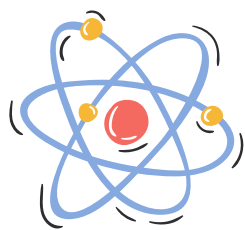


Mark your work using the assessment criteria by checking structure, vocabulary, and analysis.



Learn useful examiner-style phrases such as **"This shows..."** and **"The writer suggests..."** to strengthen your answers.

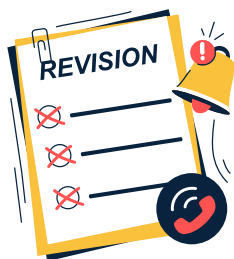
USING PAST PAPERS EFFECTIVELY IN SCIENCE



Use the correct papers by choosing the right subject (Biology, Chemistry, or Physics), the correct tier (Foundation or Higher), and whether you're taking Combined or Separate Science.



Use key scientific keywords accurately, as marks often depend on correct subject terminology.



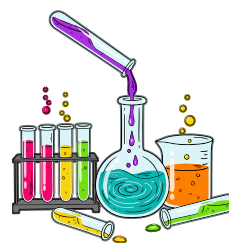
Revise your weaker topics by using past mistakes to guide what you focus on next.



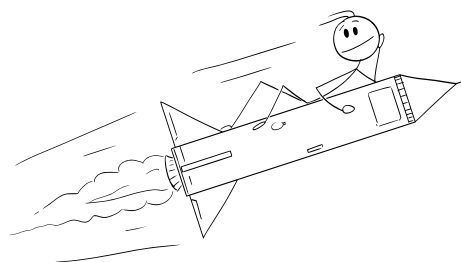
Study mark schemes carefully and look for key phrases and the exact wording examiners expect.



Memorise the required facts, such as key equations, processes, and definitions, so you can recall them confidently in exams.



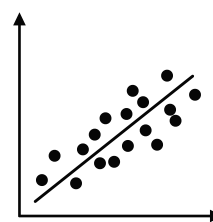
Learn the required practical methods thoroughly, as they often come up in exam questions.



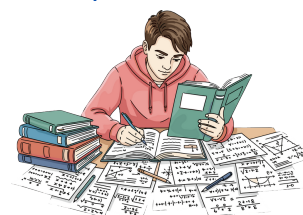
Practise calculations regularly, including questions on speed, density, energy, and magnification.



Answer in full sentences, especially for 4–6 mark questions, to clearly show your understanding.



Practise graph questions by learning how to label axes correctly, describe patterns, and explain trends clearly.



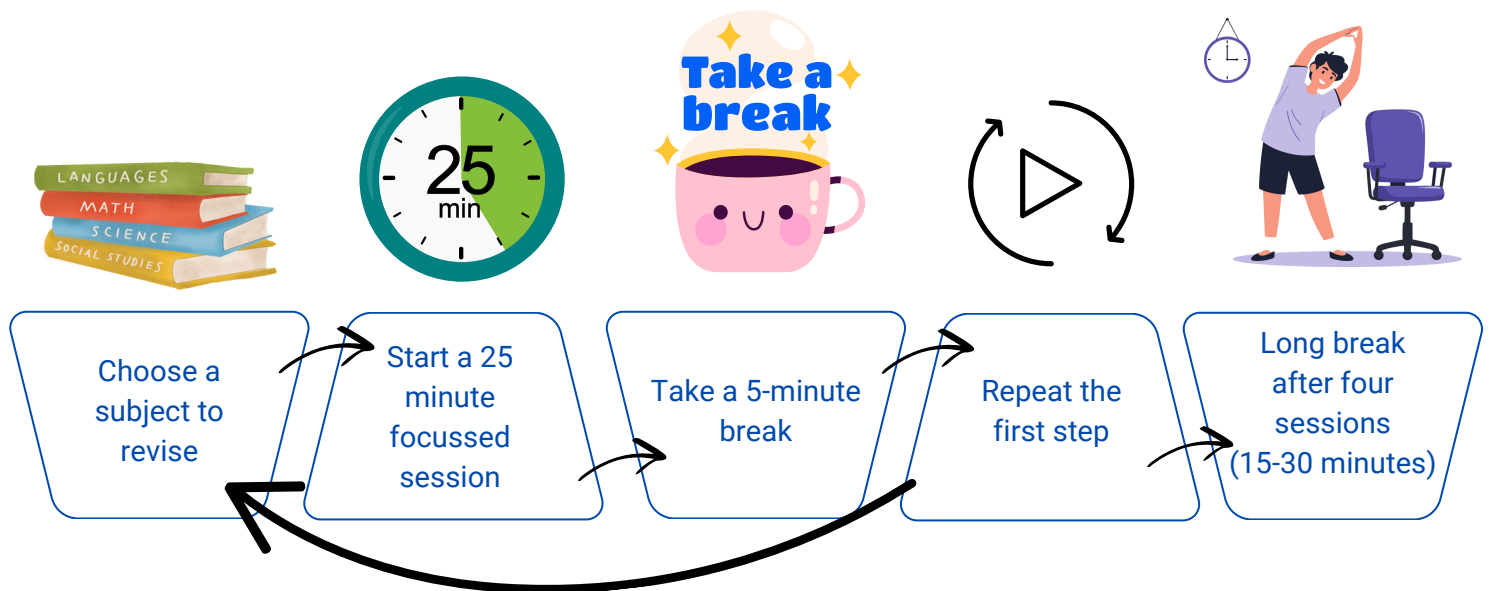
Redoing questions after you've revised is one of the best ways to prove and strengthen your improvement, as it shows you've fixed mistakes, understood the topic properly, and can now apply your knowledge with confidence.

THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE – A SIMPLE GUIDE

A time-management method that helps you focus by working in short, intense bursts with regular breaks. It's especially great when you're procrastinating, overwhelmed, or mentally fried.

A Pomodoro = 25 minutes of focused work, then a 5-minute break.

How the technique works



The Benefits of Pomodoro

- Supports sustained focus
- Encourages you to start tasks sooner
- Breaks revision into manageable chunks
- Reduces feelings of stress
- Protects against overworking

How to apply it to revision

One Pomodoro can be used to:

- Focus on one topic at a time
- Complete exam-style questions
- Make revision cards
- Memorise key quotations
- Practise numerical skills

What to do in your break

- Loosen up with a stretch
- Grab a drink
- Stand up and move
- Look away from screens
- Skip social media if you can

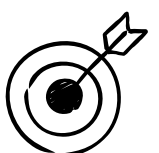
Best 5 Tips for success

- Put your phone somewhere else
- Use a proper timer
- Plan your tasks first
- Don't set unrealistic goals
- Give yourself a reward



Remember

*Focus matters more than time.
25 minutes of concentration beats hours without it.*



TOP TIPS FOR THE DAY OF YOUR EXAMS

Arrive Early and Stay Calm

Try to get to school earlier than you need to. Having extra time helps you avoid rushing, which can quickly increase stress and anxiety. Arriving calmly allows you to settle in, organise your belongings, and mentally prepare for the day ahead.

Eat Something Before the Exam

Have a light, balanced breakfast if you can. Food gives your brain the energy it needs to focus and think clearly. Skipping meals can make you feel tired, dizzy, or unfocused during the exam.

Read the Instructions Carefully

Before you start answering, take time to read all instructions and questions properly. This helps you avoid simple mistakes and ensures you understand exactly what is being asked.

Pause, Breathe, Refocus

If you start to feel nervous, pause for a moment and take a few slow, deep breaths. Breathing steadily can help relax your body, slow your thoughts, and improve focus. Remind yourself that you have prepared and are ready to do your best.

Manage Your Time

Keep an eye on the clock and plan how long to spend on each question. If you get stuck, move on and come back to the question later. This helps you make the best use of the time available.

Answer What You Know First

Start with questions you feel confident about. This builds confidence, helps you settle into the exam, and ensures you pick up easier marks early on.

Stay Positive

If you find a question difficult, don't panic. Everyone finds some questions challenging. Take a breath, do your best, and remember that one question does not define your whole exam.

Check Your Work

If you have time at the end, go back and review your answers. Look for missing information, spelling errors, or mistakes in calculations.

Ignore Distractions

Once the exam begins, try to focus only on your own paper. Other students finishing early, coughing, or turning pages can be distracting, but these noises are normal and nothing to worry about. Keep your eyes on your work and avoid looking around the room.

If you notice your mind drifting, gently bring your attention back to the question in front of you. Reading the question again or underlining key words can help you refocus. Remember, staying calm and concentrating on your own answers will help you perform at your best.



HOW TO USE AI FOR EFFECTIVE REVISION

AI can be a useful revision support that helps you practise, understand topics, and improve your skills. However, it should support your learning not replace your own thinking. Use AI wisely so it works with you, not instead of you.

Use AI to Support Your Revision

Understand Topics and Concepts

AI can help explain ideas in a clear and simple way.

- Explain topics using straightforward language
- Break down complex ideas step by step
- Help you understand difficult content

Try prompts like:

- "Explain the process of chemical reactions in simple GCSE-level language."
- "Explain the process of chemical reactions as if you were teaching a Year 7 student."



Summarise Large Amounts of Information

AI can help you manage long pieces of text.

- Condense revision notes
- Identify key facts
- Turn information into clear bullet points

Copy some text from a book and then try this prompt:

- "Summarise this text and select the 10 most important points. Present them as bullet points."

Practise Exam Questions

AI can help you practise exam-style tasks.

- Generate exam-style questions
- Create quizzes and flashcards
- Check answers using mark-scheme language

Try this prompt:

- "Create five AQA GCSE Science (Biology) exam-style questions. Include mark allocations, command words, and clear mark-scheme style answers."

Plan Your Revision

AI can help you organise your time effectively.

- Create realistic revision timetables
- Break subjects into manageable sections
- Encourage regular, shorter revision sessions

Try this prompt:

- "Create a GCSE revision plan for Year 11 GCSE Maths, with a maximum time of just one hour per day."

Improve Exam Technique



AI can support you in understanding how marks are awarded.

- Help structure longer answers (6–12 marks)
- Explain why marks may have been lost
- Show what higher-grade answers include

Try this prompt:

- “How can I improve my answer to reach a grade 7–9 using the (insert GCSE subject) mark scheme?”
- (Copy and paste your answer.)

Create Revision Materials

AI can help you produce useful revision resources.

- Make revision cards
- Create quizzes with answers
- Turn specifications into study tools

Try this prompt:

- “Create a set of revision cards with a question on one side and an answer on the other, using the GCSE specification for (Insert subject and paper)”

Using AI the Right Way

Always:

- Read responses carefully and make sure you understand them
- Check information against your notes or textbook
- Ask why something is correct, not just what the answer is

Never:

- Copy and paste answers directly
- Memorise information without understanding it
- Use AI instead of revising independently

High-Quality Revision Prompts

To Test Yourself

- “Test me on this topic. Don’t give hints unless I ask.”

To Improve Mistakes

- “Here is my answer. Where did I go wrong and how can I improve it?”

To Build Confidence

- “Explain this as if I’m in Year 7, then explain it again at GCSE level.”

What AI Must NOT Be Used For

You should never use AI to:

- Write coursework or controlled assessments
- Complete homework and submit it as your own work
- Copy answers without fully understanding them

A simple rule to remember:

If you wouldn’t be allowed help in the exam, don’t use AI for it.

Final Reminder

AI is a powerful revision tool, but your learning still matters most. Always check information, think critically, and make sure you understand the content yourself.

HOW TO CREATE AND USE A REVISION TIMETABLE

A simple guide for Year 11 students

Why Use a Revision Timetable?

A revision timetable helps you to:

- Stay organised and in control
- Avoid leaving revision until the last minute
- Balance schoolwork, revision, and free time
- Make sure every subject gets enough attention

It turns vague thoughts like “I should revise” into a clear and manageable plan.

Step 1: List Your Subjects and Topics

Write down:

- All of your GCSE subjects
- The main topics for each subject

This helps you see exactly what you need to revise.

Step 2: Be Realistic About Your Time

Look at a normal week and note:

- School hours
- Homework
- Clubs, work, and other commitments
- Time to relax

Then decide where revision can fit.

30–60 minutes a day is enough if you use the time well.

Step 3: Create Your Timetable

Choose a format that suits you:

- Planner or printed sheet
- Notes or calendar app
- Whiteboard

For each session, include:

- Subject
- Topic
- Time length

Step 4: Rotate Subjects

- Change subjects across the week
- Avoid revising the same subject for long periods
- Mix harder subjects with easier ones

This keeps revision fresh and focused.

Step 5: Use Active Revision

When you revise, make sure you are actively engaging with the material rather than just reading it.

Active revision includes:

- Testing yourself using questions or flashcards
- Explaining ideas in your own words
- Practising exam-style questions

Active methods help you remember information, identify gaps in your knowledge, and improve exam performance. If revision feels challenging, that's a good sign – it means your brain is working.

Step 6: Set Clear Goals

Be specific about what you will revise.

Instead of: English

Write: English – Macbeth key quotes

Step 7: Include Breaks

- Plan short breaks
- Leave time to relax
- Don't overload your timetable

Breaks help prevent burnout.

Step 8: Review and Adjust

- Check your timetable weekly
- Make changes if needed
- Move sessions rather than skipping them
- A timetable should help you, not stress you.

Final Tip

Consistency matters more than perfection.

A realistic plan you follow is better than a perfect one you don't.



EXAMPLE YEAR 11 GCSE REVISION TIMETABLE

Example Subjects and topics

- Maths: Algebraic fractions, graphs, and simultaneous equations
- English Language: Non-fiction texts, persuasive techniques, and transactional writing
- English Literature: Themes and characters in A Christmas Carol and unseen poetry
- Biology: Organisation, enzymes, and required practicals
- Chemistry: Energy changes and rates of reaction
- Physics: Forces, motion, and energy stores
- History: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–1939
- Geography: Urban issues and challenges, UK cities case study

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
4:00	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
4:30	English Lang	Maths	Biology	Chemistry	Physics
5:15	History	Spanish	Geography	English Lit	Maths
6:00	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
6:30	Music	Art	English	Religious Studies	Early Finish

Time	Saturday	Sunday
10:00	English Lang	
11:00	History	Focus on one Subject
12:00	Lunch	Lunch
12:30	Science	
1:15	Maths	
2:00	Art	Plan revision for the next week
3:00	Religious Studies	

On Sunday use this session to:

- Review what you revised during the week
- Identify topics that need more practice
- Adjust the timetable for the following week

Final Tips

- Rotate subjects to keep revision fresh
- Focus on one clear topic per session
- Use active revision methods (questions, recall, exam practice)
- Reward yourself for sticking to your plan
- A flexible and realistic timetable can make exams feel manageable, not stressful.

HOW YOUR BRAIN LEARNS

Revise smarter not harder

Learning Means Building Long-Term Memory

Your brain works a bit like a filing system. Information needs to be stored and retrieved, not just read once and forgotten. Actively recalling information helps it stay in your memory for longer.

Retrieval Practice Matters

Retrieval Practice Matters

Reading once isn't enough. Learning happens when information is stored and retrieved from long-term memory. Practising recall helps knowledge stick.

Reorganise Your Notes

Change information into new formats to improve understanding:

- Mind maps
- Flashcards
- Summaries in your own words

Space Your Revision

Short sessions spread over time are more effective than cramming. Revisiting topics several times builds stronger memory.

Teach It to Learn It

Explaining a topic to someone else (or yourself) helps organise ideas and reveal gaps in understanding.

How Learning Turns Into Memory



Top Revision Tips

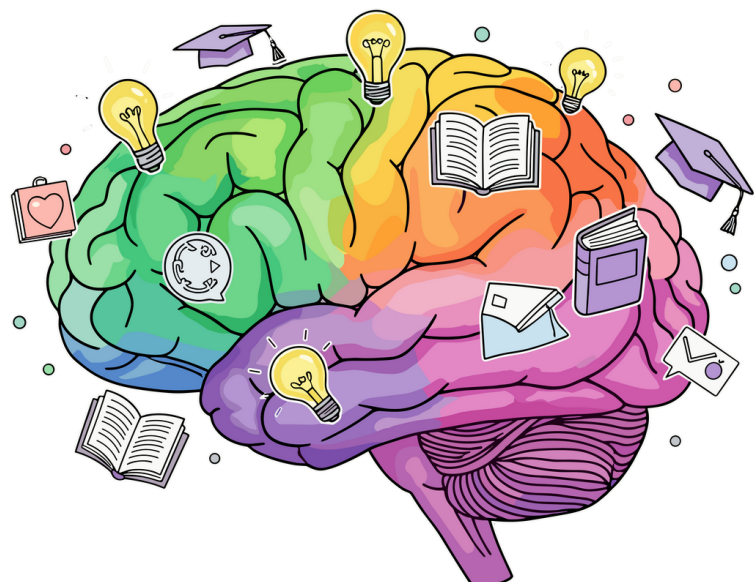
- Use past papers and quizzes
- Rewrite notes in new formats
- Mix up subjects and topics
- Revise little and often
- Teach someone else

Spaced Practice Works

- Revisiting topics multiple times strengthens memory.
- Three short reviews are better than one long session.

Revision Types to use

- Flashcards
- Quizzes
- Mind maps
- Past papers



USEFUL WEBSITES FOR YOUR REVISION

The logo for BBC Bitesize, featuring the letters 'BBC' in white on an orange square background, followed by the word 'Bitesize' in white text.

Great for:

Covers all subjects
Clear explanations
Videos • Quizzes • Exam practice
Perfect for regular revision

bbc.co.uk/bitesize

The Quizlet logo, consisting of the word 'Quizlet' in a blue sans-serif font, followed by a blue square containing a white letter 'Q'.

Great for:

Flashcards • Key terms
Ideal for quick revision
Search by subject and by exam board

quizlet.com

The Seneca logo, featuring a stylized white sunburst icon to the left of the word 'SENECA' in a white, uppercase, sans-serif font, all on a light blue background.

Great for:

Science • Maths • English • Humanities
Interactive courses
Quizzes that strengthen memory
Excellent for independent learning

senecalearning.com

The Maths Genie logo, with the words 'Maths Genie' in a white, cursive script font, set against a dark blue rectangular background.

Great for:

GCSE Maths support
Past papers • Topic questions • Video tutorials
Great for exam practice

mathsgenie.co.uk

The PMT logo, featuring a stylized book with glasses on its cover to the left of the letters 'PMT' in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. Below 'PMT' is the text 'resources • tuition • courses' in a smaller, black sans-serif font.

Great for:

Science • Maths • Psychology
Exam questions • Mark schemes • Revision notes
Great for exam-focused revision

physicsandmathstutor.com



Great for:

Science & Maths support
Clear notes • Exam questions

(Free and paid content available)

savemyexams.com



Great for:

GCSE video lessons
Structured courses
Great for catching up on missed learning

thenational.academy



Great for:

GCSE Maths • Science • English
Video explanations
Ideal for visual learners

youtube.com/@TheGCSEMathsTutor
youtube.com/@Primrose_Kitten
youtube.com/@MrSallesTeachesEnglish

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