



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

BEST REVISION AND STUDY TIPS

Helping you get the best grades
in your exams and assessments



Whatever qualification you're studying for, this guide will give you tips on how to:

- **study smarter**
- **plan revision for exams**
- **use scientifically proven methods to improve your memory**

Getting started with studying can feel a bit daunting. A good place to begin is to find out your learning style, so you can work smarter, not harder.

Use this quiz to find out what type of learner you are, and what techniques might suit you best.



WHAT TYPE OF REVISER ARE YOU? TAKE THE QUIZ!

?

You have to study 'Of Mice and Men' for your English exam. How do you prefer to revise?

A Watch the film or see it on stage

B Listen to an audio book or to the teacher

C Read the book alone

?

You have to do a report for media studies on a piece of popular news. How do you prepare?

A Gather loads of news stories and highlight the important bits

B Discuss the news stories with your classmates

C Make notes on current news stories

?

In classes like chemistry, what type of lessons do you enjoy the most?

A Experiments or demonstrations

B Listening to the teacher explain theories and discussing them

C Reading from your textbook and taking notes on the key points

?

Your friend wasn't in class and you have to tell them what they missed. How would you go about it?

A Draw a flowchart to show each part of the theory

B Explain in your own words or simplified terms

C Show them your notes and summarise

Everyone's brain works differently and it can be good to use a variety of different techniques when revising. Are flash cards your thing? Or do you prefer diagrams or mind maps? Take this quiz to find out.



If you mostly answered As

You remember things better when you see something visual that explains the topics you're studying.

Try these revision tips:

- Draw your own diagrams, cartoons or illustrations to remember big or difficult topics.
- Watch a video or documentary.
- You can't draw everything – add smaller doodles to your notes.
- Find infographics, posters and other visual resources online to help you.



If you mostly answered Bs

You learn best by listening to someone talk about a subject and then discussing it through.

These tips are also worth a try:

- Teach someone. This involves discussion, understanding and interpretation, and is ideal for remembering your topic.
- Make a podcast from your lesson notes with NotebookLM (find out how to do that on page 7).
- Record yourself talking about the topic, then upload it into an AI tool and ask it to identify any gaps.



If you mostly answered Cs

Old fashioned written notes work best for you, but try these tricks to save time and avoid boredom.

Why not have a go with these ideas?

- Post-it notes. Everywhere! Flash cards. For the epic note taker, these smaller cards help you focus on what's important.
- Try blurring. Write your notes down over and over again until you remember everything. www.bcu.ac.uk/blurring

BEST WAYS TO STUDY - THAT YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER HEARD OF

Have you heard of these revision methods? Whether it's the latest trend on studytok, or a scientifically proven way to learn, there's always a new trending study method with an odd name. From social media to study forums, we've found the revision strategies that students swear by - so you can make the most of your study time.

Active recall

Do you struggle to remember what you study? Active recall trains your brain to retrieve information when you need it. Instead of just reading and copying notes, test yourself repeatedly. It's one of the best ways to make learning stick.

Blurting

Study a topic, then put your notes away and write down everything you remember. After that, check for gaps and errors, then review that information and repeat until you've nailed it.

Feynman technique

This is a great method for talkers and practical learners. Teach a topic in simple terms to a friend, a pet, or even an AI tool. Identify what you don't fully understand, then simplify it more and try again.

TIP:



You could use the voice option of an AI like Google Gemini or Chat GPT as your student, and get it to ask you follow up questions.

Spaced repetition

This scientifically proven method boosts memory by reviewing information at increasing intervals. It helps you move knowledge to your long term memory while reducing overall study time. On page 8 we'll show you how to plan your revision using this method as you get closer to an exam or assessment.

Flashcards

Great for testing yourself! Write a question or prompt on one side and the answer on the other. Use apps like Anki, Quizlet or Gizmo to make digital flashcards with spaced repetition built in.

Pomodoro

Stay focused with short bursts of studying. Work for 25 minutes, take a 5-minute break, then repeat. After four rounds, take a longer break. This is a great method for ADHD or anyone who struggles with focus.

Mind maps

The humble mind map never becomes obsolete, plus it works for any kind of studying; coursework, exams, essays, presentations and more. Particularly good for visual learners, start with a central topic and branch out into key themes and details. Perfect for breaking down complex subjects and identifying connections.

Mnemonics

Make facts or names memorable with acronyms or silly phrases. For example "My Very Easy Method Just Speeds Up Naming" for the planets. The funnier the phrase, the easier to remember.

Traffic light system

Don't know where to start with your revision or studying? Use the traffic light system to find out what you need to work on most.



CONFIDENT

NEEDS REVIEW

NEEDS SERIOUS WORK

Focus on red topics first and plan more sessions for them, then move onto orange to strengthen your knowledge. Change the colours to ones you can recognise easily if you need to.

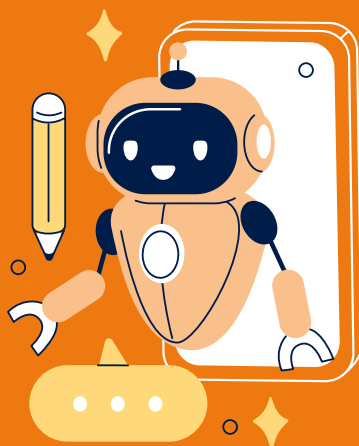


BEST APPS AND AI TOOLS FOR STUDYING, REVISION AND COURSEWORK

You might be wondering if you can use AI Large Language Models (LLM) like ChatGPT to revise. While it can be pretty tempting to let it do all the work for you, that won't help when you get to your exams or assessments and realise you can't remember anything. It's also important to remember that Generative AI can make things up and pose them as facts.

However, this doesn't mean AI can't be an amazing tool for revising, studying or even doing your coursework, if you use it in the right way. You can think of AI tools and apps as your research assistant, helping you organise your notes, identify themes and even test your knowledge.

We've listed the top AI tools and apps you can use to study like a pro and maximise your efficiency.



1. GOOGLE NOTEBOOKLM – TURN YOUR NOTES INTO PODCASTS

This can genuinely transform your studying and revision, plus it's FREE. You can upload notes, slides, audio files, YouTube links and more to create a personalised library or podcast based on what you've uploaded. Unlike other AI tools, it only uses the sources you've added, meaning it won't make mistakes or make things up - unless you upload incorrect information!

The podcasts it generates sound like a genuine conversation between two people, and turn the driest topic into an engaging discussion you can listen to anywhere. You can ask it questions, make a quiz, get ideas for flashcards, create study guides, and more.

TIP:

If you're struggling with a concept, upload your notes and ask NotebookLM to "explain it to me like I'm 5"!



2. GIZMO – CREATE FLASHCARDS AND QUIZ YOURSELF ON ANY TOPIC

TIP:

Gizmo uses active recall to help you study smarter not harder, read our [active recall blog](#) to learn more about this.



Gizmo is a free tool that uses AI to quickly turn notes, YouTube videos, recordings and more into flashcards. Plus, you can access a library of other users' cards, so you don't always have to start from scratch.

What makes Gizmo great is the different ways it quizzes you, like multiple-choice questions or open-ended prompts. If you're having trouble remembering something, you can ask it to explain and throw in more questions to really get the hang of it.

3. FOREST – FOCUSED STUDY SESSIONS

Our attention spans are shorter than ever and focusing on work can be challenging. This app helps you to stay focused by setting a timer to study and in each session you'll grow a tree, gradually building a forest as you work. But if you leave the app during the timer your tree will die!

It's essentially a Pomodoro timer with a bit of extra incentive. If trees aren't your vibe, there's also an app called Study Bunny which does the same, but you get to look after a pet rabbit instead.

TIP:

Use the [Pomodoro method](#) for your sessions: 25 minutes studying, 5 minutes break.



MY REVISION TIMETABLE

How to get started and plan your revision

Getting started is often the hardest part of revision. Here's a way to plan your study sessions and know when to start.

The 2, 3, 5, 7 method and spaced repetition

Spaced repetition is a scientifically proven method for studying that involves reviewing information at regular intervals. This boosts your memory retention long-term.

Combining this with the **2, 3, 5, 7** method provides a clear schedule for spaced repetition ahead of exams:

1. Start from the date of your exam and plan a revision session the day before
2. Two days before your last session plan another one
3. Then count three days back from that and plan another session
4. Count five days back and plan a session there
5. Then count seven days back and plan your first study session

Using this technique, you can plan your revision as little as 18 days away from your exams.

Here's an example timetable showing three exam dates and the revision sessions for them planned in.

“Set concrete goals, reward yourself when you complete the goal and think about what you will achieve by studying for the exam.”

SOTON | Sociology student

“Make your revision timetable as realistic as possible. Don't bother filling the whole day with revision if you know you won't stick to it, instead start off with revising for one or two hours a day and then increase the time as you get more into it.”

TINA | Psychology student

Download your blank weekly template at

bcu.ac.uk/month-planner

MONTHLY PLANNER

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	1	2	3	4	5 Revise Maths	6 Revise Computing
7	8	9	10 Revise Biology	11	12 Revise Maths	13 Revise Computing
14	15	16	17 Revise Maths Revise Biology	18 Revise Computing	19	20 Revise Maths
21 Revise Computing	22 Revise Maths Revise Biology	23 Revise Computing Maths Exam	24 Computing Exam	25 Revise Biology	26	27 Revise Biology
28 Biology Exam	29	30	31			

TIP:

The best way to be ready for an exam is to study all term or semester. Use tools like NotebookLM and Gizmo after every lesson to get ahead.

KEY DATES



Mock exams



BTEC exams and assessments



Exams begin



BTEC exams are over!



GCSE and A Level exams are over!



(Onwards) BTEC results



GCSE and A Level results days



ANSWERING EXAM QUESTIONS

YOU'VE LEARNED, YOU'VE REVISED, BUT NOW YOU'RE SAT IN THE EXAM HALL WONDERING HOW ON EARTH YOU'RE MEANT TO GO ABOUT ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS IN FRONT OF YOU...

Getting all that knowledge out of your head and down onto paper is more than tricky. So here are some key do's and don'ts to remember when it comes to the exam. If you're doing a coursework-only subject or qualification, your uni degree may well include exams, so these tips will be useful to help prepare you for all kinds of assessments.

DO

Prepare in advance

Get to know your exam. How many questions are there? How many marks are at stake? How long should your answers be? Ask your teachers, practise with past papers and find out how long you should spend on each section.

Use the question

The question is your friend, it's there to help. Make sure you understand it. Identify key words and what it's asking you to do. Discuss? Evaluate? Compare? Outline? Remember that BTEC examiners will be looking for specific command words in your answers; you can find these in the specification.

PEE!

Always remember to PEE all over your exam. Point. Evidence. Explain. A simple structure that's easy to remember and carry out. Make your point, back it up with some evidence and then explain it. Structure can make or break a good exam answer and this technique, as recommended by our student, Soton, is a winner.

DON'T

Panic!

You've got this. You've done your prep, you know your structure, so don't dive straight in, you have time so use it. Flick through the paper, read all the questions and spend a few minutes planning your answers. A good rule is to spend 1 minute per mark, so if the question is 5 marks then only spend 5 minutes on it.

Go on and on...

It's important to be clear and concise. Our student Andreea suggests writing down bullet points about the topic and then select the relevant bits to include in your answer.

Worry about it afterwards

Once your exam is over try not to go over it with your friends. Everyone will be feeling differently about it and this can lead to anxiety. Take a deep breath and let it go.

COPING WITH ANXIETY AND STRESS

Feeling stressed about exams or assessments? Or having an anxiety attack in the exam hall? Here are some practical ways to calm yourself down.

- Reduce your anxiety by getting out of your head and back in your body. Do some physical activity like walking, dancing or playing sport. You could also try a breathing exercise like the **physiological sigh**. Take a deep breath through the nose, then breath in again, now let your breath out slowly through your mouth. Do this a few times to relax.
- Try the **3-3-3 method**. Notice 3 things you can see, 3 sounds you can hear then move 3 parts of your body.
- **Talk to someone.** Tell your friends, family and teachers about how you're feeling. Even if you're not feeling anxious, talking to others can help you feel less alone.
- **Do something you love** that will take your mind off things. Even if it's just playing a video game for an hour a day or making a cake, do something that switches off your brain.
- **Don't forget to eat, drink and sleep!** When exams are looming, it can be tempting to pull an all-nighter or skip lunch, but staying healthy and alert is key to maintaining concentration.

WHAT IS CLEARING?



“

If you hadn't considered university before or your results weren't what you expected, go through Clearing. You have nothing to lose but potentially everything to gain.”

Charmaine

IF YOU HAVEN'T RECEIVED ANY UNIVERSITY OFFERS, HAVE DECIDED YOU WANT TO STUDY A DIFFERENT COURSE, CHANGED YOUR MIND ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY, OR ARE APPLYING LATE, YOU CAN STILL GET A PLACE THROUGH CLEARING.

A considerable number of students gain their university place through Clearing. Students may change their mind about where to go or what to study, their results were different to what they expected or they hadn't considered university until results day. Whatever the reason, Clearing might be an option for you.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

1. Start your research

It's never too early! Have a look at what courses and universities are available.

2. Follow social media accounts

Find the universities you're interested in on your favourite social media platform for the latest news and student stories. You'll find our accounts at the end of this guide.

3. Sign up for updates

Many universities send out regular emails, which are a great way to get to know more about the places you want to study, and be the first to hear about courses available in Clearing.

KEY DATES



Clearing opens
**Already got your results?
Beat the queue!**



A Level Results Day
Call us as soon as you have your grades.

Find out more about
Clearing on our website

www.bcu.ac.uk/clearing

1. I'M WORRIED ABOUT MY EXAM RESULTS

If you're worried you might not get into your first choice, why not plan a backup option just in case? Anisah didn't get the results she wanted, but with a bit of research she found out what Clearing courses were available.

“Your mind can be like, okay I didn't get the grades, it's all about grades, grades, grades. But it genuinely isn't. You're just readjusting your path.”

Anisah

3. I CHOSE THE WRONG SUBJECT

You may change your mind about what subject you want to study and you may be unsure as to whether you made the right choice.

When Hilary decided jewellery design was more her thing than the chemistry course she applied for, Clearing was the perfect option.

“I was happy to be free to try again and apply to a course through Clearing.”

Hilary

2. I CAN'T DECIDE IF I WANT TO GO TO UNI

Go to uni / don't go to uni / go to uni / don't go to uni. If you change your mind more than the weather, you've still got time to make your decision! That's just what happened to Building Surveying student Scott.

“At first, I didn't want to go to university but a lot of my friends were and I got caught up in the whole buzz of it.”

Scott

4. I CHOSE THE WRONG CITY

Deciding where you want to live can be a difficult decision, particularly if exploring a unknown city. If you have changed your mind about where you'd like to study, Clearing is an ideal chance to stay closer to home or pick a new city, like Suneet did.

“As soon as I'd found out I could go to a uni closer to home and better than my insurance choice, it was a no brainer for me to see if BCU had the course I wanted. Birmingham is somewhere I wanted to study - the nightlife is one of the best in the country and it's central to other cities.”

Suneet

CAMPUS VISIT DAYS



THERE ARE MANY WAYS YOU CAN DISCOVER THE RIGHT SUBJECT AND UNIVERSITY FOR YOU. OUR ON-CAMPUS EVENTS GIVE YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE COURSES YOU MAY WISH TO STUDY AT BCU. GET A FEEL FOR OUR COMMUNITY AND TALK TO STAFF AND STUDENTS.

 **VIRTUAL TOUR HERE**
www.bcu.ac.uk/virtual-tour

Can't visit in person?

Experience a day in the life of a student at BCU on a virtual tour here.



HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF A CAMPUS VISIT DAY

We know that Open Days and Offer Holder Days can be exciting but overwhelming with so much information to take in, so here's our guide for how to get the most out of your visit.

1. Be prepared

Before the day, we'll send you a schedule of talks, tours and info about the drop-in information desks you'll find on the day. Take some time to read through it and make yourself a plan of action.

2. Get your questions answered

Think about what questions you want to ask before the day and write a list. You might want to ask students about accommodation or ask tutors about work placements. Make sure you write it all down so you don't forget on the day.

3. Get a second opinion

Bring a parent, carer or friend with you. They might see or hear things you miss or give you a fresh perspective on your course or subject. Remember where and what you study is ultimately your choice but it's always nice to get someone else's opinion.

4. Get to know the city

Try to spend some time soaking up the atmosphere. If you apply to BCU, Birmingham could be your home for the next few years, so get off campus and get a glimpse of the city.

OPEN DAYS

Open Days are a big part of picking a university. They are your chance to get a flavour of what being a student is like at different unis. You are welcome to attend these at any age - you may wish to visit when making your mind up about what to study at level three at sixth form or college. Or you may want to attend once you have done your research about where you might like to study. And you can attend as many as you like!

Some people like to come by themselves. Some like to have other people's opinions too. Parents and friends are welcome to come with you and have a look around.

You get the opportunity to go to subject talks, meet academics from the course you are interested in, chat to current students about uni life and have tours around the campus and accommodation. Book your place on our next open day: www.bcu.ac.uk/visit



OFFER HOLDER DAYS

These days are for students that receive an offer on the course they have applied to. Although you don't have to attend these to get onto the course, you'll get to experience what it'll be like to be a student at BCU with taster sessions for your course. And you'll get to meet some of your future classmates too!

Our Offer Holder Days help you to make your mind up about whether you definitely made the right choice and prepares you for your transition to university.

Learn more about Offer Holder Days: www.bcu.ac.uk/ohd

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