

Making a Revision Timetable

Adapted from:

<https://www.theexamcoach.tv/the-blog/how-to-make-a-revision-timetable-that-works>

*Use these
three
guiding
principles:*

- Focus the majority of your effort on topics **most likely** to come up in the exam and carry the **most marks**.
- Measure progress based on **topic coverage** rather than time studied for.
- **Adapt** your timetable to accommodate for the rate at which you are able to understand and memorise information as time goes by.

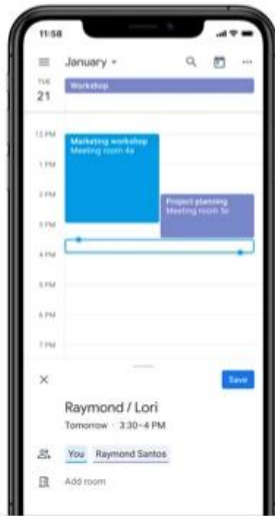
Go digital?

Some people find it helpful to make their timetable using an online calendar (e.g. [Google Calendar](#)).

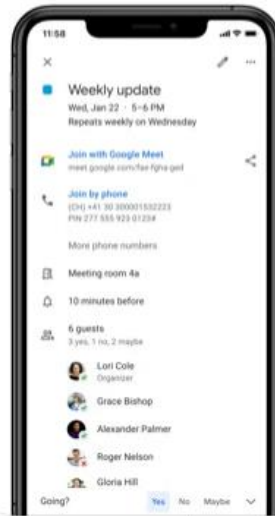
Intelligently manage work, school, and personal calendars



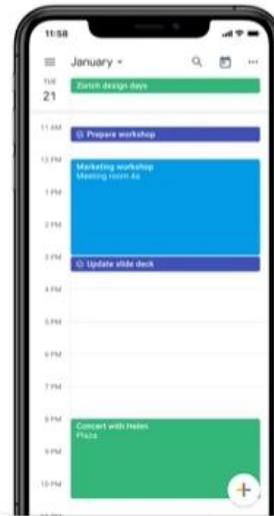
Quickly create and schedule meetings



Easily view and join events



Create and manage tasks



Why?

- ✓ A digital calendar is likely to always be with you, as you can sync it to your smart phone.
- ✓ Flexibility - This can be helpful for adapting your revision plan as you go along. It will stay looking neat and clear!
- ✓ Use it to set reminders and manage your time effectively.

Paper Plan?

- Some people prefer to make a paper plan (e.g. in their homework planner).

Why?

- ✓ You can more easily coordinate this with homework and other commitments
- ✓ More personable - you can make it your own.
- ✓ Sometimes crossing off something on your to-do list in pen is more satisfying than a notification disappearing..!



Step 1 - Work Out How Much Time You Have To Revise

Are you currently on school holidays and have a set period of time available time before you go back to school?

Is it term time but you want to get some revision done before and after school?

Is it exam season and you're on study leave?

Whatever category you find yourself in, set a clear deadline so you have something to work towards.

How do you set an effective deadline? Two psychologists have looked into this and came up with something called the Yerkes-Dodson Law:

"This law states that a relationship between stress (resulting from the combined awareness of the potential consequences of failing to complete an important task and the limited time remaining to complete it) and task performance exists. Such that there is an optimal level of stress for an optimal performance".

Essentially, **a person's performance increases as their stress increases, but only up to a point, after which performance starts to suffer as the person becomes overwhelmed and anxious by the impending deadline and the consequences of failing to meet it.**

The lesson? **Give yourself just enough time to make your revision goals achievable.** You want to feel a little bit of time pressure, but not too much. Strike a balance between ambition and realism.

On your calendar, make sure you fill in your current commitments and day to day activities. For example; when you're at school, having meals, exercising or just doing the other hobbies and activities you do during your standard week. Your schedule could end up looking something like the image on the next slide.

Create

March 2019

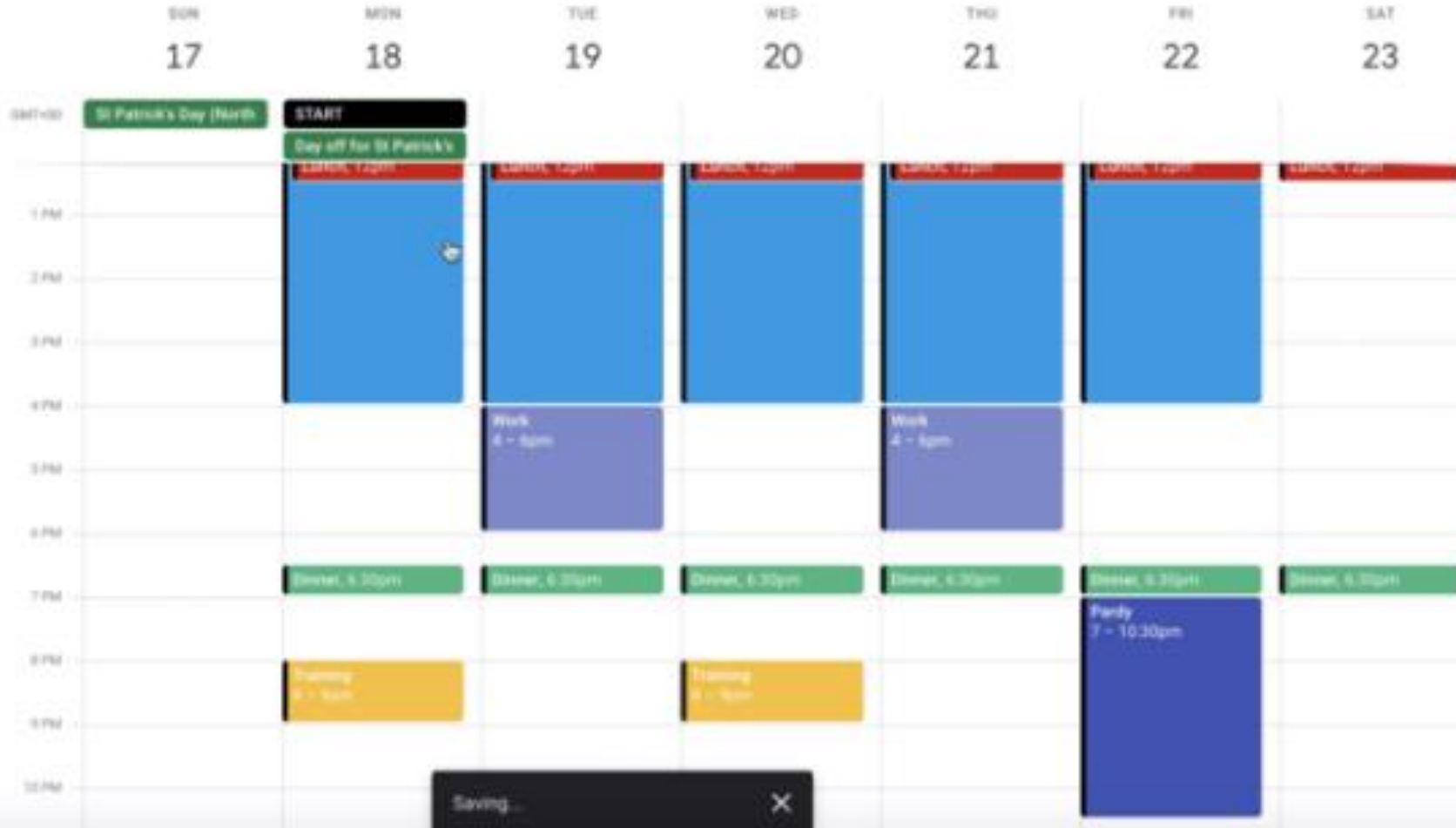
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Add calendar

My calendars

Other calendars

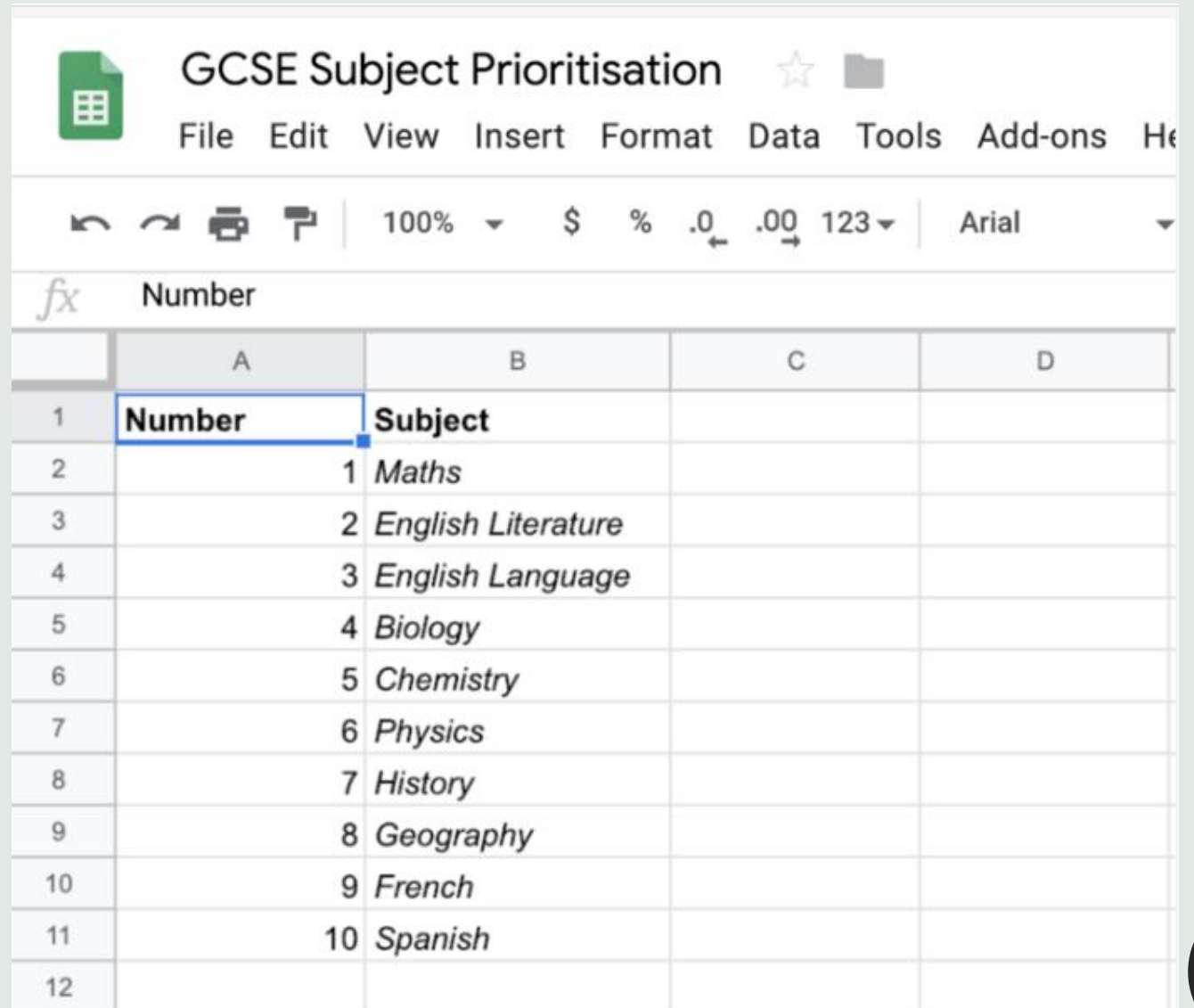
Terms - Privacy



Saving...

Step 2 - Prioritise Your Subjects/Topics

- The next step requires some introspection. You need to decide which subjects you currently feel the **most and least confident about**.
- The best way to do this is to make a list. Write the **subjects you're weakest at towards the top and those where you're strongest towards the bottom**.
- Give each of them a number as a reminder for when you input them into your timetable. See the screen shot for an example including GCSE subjects. If you're studying only one or two subjects do this same exercise for each of the modules or topics within those subjects.



The screenshot shows a Google Sheet titled "GCSE Subject Prioritisation". The sheet has a menu bar with "File", "Edit", "View", "Insert", "Format", "Data", "Tools", "Add-ons", and "Help". Below the menu bar is a toolbar with icons for undo, redo, print, and insert, along with a zoom level of 100%, currency symbols (\$, %), and a font size of 123. The sheet contains a table with the following data:

	A	B	C	D
1	Number	Subject		
2		1 Maths		
3		2 English Literature		
4		3 English Language		
5		4 Biology		
6		5 Chemistry		
7		6 Physics		
8		7 History		
9		8 Geography		
10		9 French		
11		10 Spanish		
12				

When you're making this list take into account a couple of other factors such as:

- The **amount** of material to be learned within each subject.
- **Mark weightings** within subjects.
- The **order** of your exam timetable (if you have it already). You're going to have more time to revise some subjects than others based on where they are positioned within your exam timetable.
- **What your grades currently look like** – for example, if your Physics grade is rock bottom, you might want to prioritise it above the English Literature class you've already got 60% in through nailing the coursework (if applicable).

Step 3 - Break Subjects Into Topics

- Subjects as a whole can be overwhelming, and it can be difficult to know what to prioritize within those.
- If your timetable only instructs you to revise a subject, let's say, Maths, you're probably not going to revise what you actually need to revise within Maths. [A University College London Study](#) supports this claim. The lead researcher, Dr Nobuhiro Hagura, summed up the findings as follows:

"Our brain tricks us into believing the low-hanging fruit really is the ripest". Conversely, when one option is harder to get, we're more likely to think it's the wrong choice.

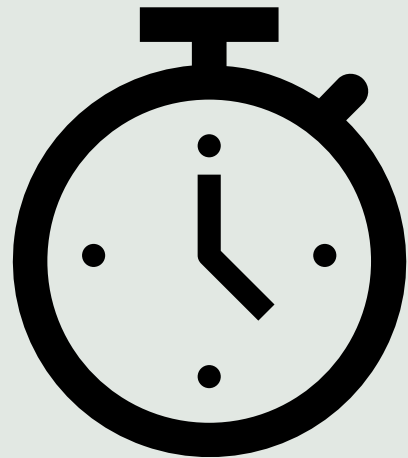
- This metaphor helps explain how we, and many other things in the world, naturally take the path of least resistance and post rationalising.
- This is why you need to be fully aware of what you don't know and consciously choose to meet those challenges head on. **Feel the urge to bail out and take the easy route, but resist it.**

Step 3 - Break Subjects Into Topics

Not sure how to break your subject or into topics? That's ok, every exam board creates a **syllabus or specification** which contains **EVERYTHING YOU COULD POSSIBLY BE EXAMINED ON.**

Not sure how to find these? Use some **initiative**, type the name of your exam board into a search engine and locate the exams you're taking on their website.

Step 4 - Allocate 30 Minute Time Slots To Revise



Allocate 30 minute time slots to study each topic. Here's the workflow you need to follow when scheduling your sessions:

- Position topics you're likely to find challenging when you know you tend to **work best** in the day.
- Use **colours** to differentiate subjects from one another in your calendar and make sure you write the subject and topic you need to revise
- Find a balance between topics you're less familiar with and those which you think you'll be able to get through quickly. **Use the list you created in Step 2.** This will keep a nice balance between revision being a challenge and you making good progress.
- Leave a few time slots blank towards the end of the day for some rapid reviews and testing.

Why 30 mins?

- The reason for this time frame is it breaks the day up more so we have the chance to vary what we're revising in each session. There are three benefits to this:
 - ✓ Revision becomes **less monotonous** and slightly more interesting.
 - ✓ **Time distortion:** smaller chunks of time add the helpful illusion that we're doing more, this sense of progress can help build positive momentum.
 - ✓ **Interleaved practice:** cognitive psychologists believe that by varying what we study regularly stronger distinctions and memory associations will be formed between each set of information.
- **A time goal:** it provides a time goal for each session so we are held more accountable to actually revising the topic when we're at our desk, not day dreaming for some of the time and using the time we've studied for as the vanity metric for success which makes us think we know more than we do.
- **The Pomodoro Technique:** 30 minutes is also around the study interval time recommended by the 25 minute Pomodoro technique. This is a well-known revision technique used to build momentum and focus. Why do I recommend 30 minutes and not 25? If you want to be at the top of your game you have to take what high achievers are doing and modify those techniques to result in more output without impacting the effectiveness of the technique.

*Momentum
and
flexibility.
Remember
this.*

AN IMPORTANT NOTE ON MOMENTUM (NEVER GIVE IT UP)

- Just because we've allocated 30 minute time slots does not mean you have to stop revising each topic at 30 minutes. In fact, one of the biggest rules about this revision timetable is to never give up your momentum.
- Don't take a break just because your timetable said so. Keep working until you start to lose concentration and efficiency, then take a break. Especially when trying to understand difficult concepts, freeing up larger extended blocks of time can be the key to unlocking a breakthrough moment.
- If one of your 30 minute sessions runs over into the next, adjust things, figure out a new way to make it work in the time you have remaining. Do you now need to cover something you already had a decent understanding of faster than planned? Make decisions on the go.
- However, we also wouldn't recommend revising too solidly (for example, for two hours solidly), as you will be less efficient and are more likely to waste time.

*Watch this
video to
find out
more (13
mins)*

- <https://youtu.be/SbWtYLd-cJk>