

GETTING THE REVISION RIGHT

Use diagrams to help you organise your notes

Diagrams can help you to focus on key information. You could make a spider diagram about a topic, with a different branch for each main section of the topic. Flow diagrams are great for learning narratives, as well as causation and consequences. Timelines can help you remember when things happened. Keep your diagrams tidy, and use different colours, highlighters or pictures to make them memorable.

Learn when events happened

It might seem obvious, but for history you need to know when things happened. You need to write about relevant knowledge from the right time period, and in the right order. For topics that cover a short range of time, like 100 years or less, you should at least know the year of important events – for very important events, it can be a good idea to also know the month or the date. For thematic studies that cover hundreds of years, you should at least know the right century, and whether it was early or late in the century. You should also learn the names for historic periods as well. For example, early modern Britain is often used to describe the years from c1500-c1750.

Pay attention to the causes and consequences of events

When you learn what happened, pay attention to why events happened, how they happened, and what the consequences were. This will help you to write analytically instead of just describing what you know.

Learn some key examples for each topic

It isn't possible to remember every fact, but it is a good idea to pick two or three facts for each topic to memorise. Then you can use these in your exam answers to support your explanation with specific examples, instead of relying on vague or general information.

Use practice papers

There are plenty of practice papers available for you to use. You could ask your teacher or visit the exam board website. Get used to understanding what the questions are asking. Don't forget to try answering the questions – you could ask your teacher to mark what you wrote. The more practice you get before the exam, the better prepared you will be on the day of the exam.



HANDLING THE EXAM

Use your time wisely

The opening questions on most history papers are only worth a few marks, so don't spend too long on them. You need to leave enough time to complete the longer questions, especially any essays. At the start of the exam, you could make a note of what time you need to be starting the longer questions so that you don't lose track of the time.

Plan out longer answers

With shorter answers, you might not need to plan. But for longer answers, you should always start by planning what you'll write. For example, you could use a spider diagram or a list. Your plan should include the main points that you need to mention. If the question needs a conclusion, include that on the plan.

Pay attention to the dates in the question

History questions usually have dates. You need to make sure that your answer focuses on the years in the question. You won't get marks for using information that is not from the right time period.

Use analytical language

In questions that require explanations, judgements or analysis, you need to write analytically. This means that instead of just describing the events, you will use language that shows why the knowledge you have included is relevant for answering the question. Some useful phrases to help you include 'this meant that...', 'this shows that...', 'this led to...' or 'as a result...'

Read the sources and interpretations carefully

If the question includes one or more sources or interpretations, it is very important to read them carefully to make sure that you understand what they are saying. You might need to read them more than once. If it is a picture, study it carefully. You could highlight important words or details to help you. With historical sources, you should always read the provenance as well – the information that tells you where the source is from and when it was made – because this may help you to make judgements about the source.



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