

GCSE Geography

An Effective Guide to Revision

Stage 1

Complete a revision audit. This means listing everything covered in your syllabus then deciding how much you remember about it. This will give you an idea of what areas you need to focus on.

Stage 2

Once you have identified areas of weakness you need to start revising them. There are a range of techniques available to gather information for revision.

Stage 3

Take the test - practise your exam technique by completing past GCSE papers and questions.

Everyone prefers to revise in different ways. Here a few techniques you should consider.

Revision Cards

1. Make notes on an area of study. This could involve highlighting information in a revision book or writing information out. Grade C+ students avoid copying huge chunks of text. They read the information - then summarise it.
2. Once you have gathered notes summarise your notes on revision cards - blank postcards or post-it notes are good for this. You can then stick them all around your bedroom, toilet, bathroom etc!
3. Read your cards through regularly. Once you're confident about knowing the information write key words about the topic on a card. Then revise from these. As your knowledge base builds up you will need fewer prompts to remember information.

Mind Maps

A mind map is a spider diagram, which contains information in the form of pictures and text. Mind maps can be used to plot information relevant to the different topics in geography.

Once you start revising make sure you record your revision.

Key words

It is very important that you use geographical key words in your answers.

1. You should have collated a list of key words throughout the year. If not, they are highlighted in your textbook chapters.
2. Test yourself on the meanings/definitions of these words.
3. Practice using them accurately in your answers.

Tips for answering exam questions

Using the material you're given (data, graphs, maps, photographs)

- The most important thing is to **use** any stimulus material included with your exam paper. It's there for a reason!

Maps: Quoting map evidence means giving a grid reference. If you're asked for evidence of a vegetation type or an example of a residential area, then it can be appropriate to use a four figure reference (ie give a square or squares), but for a specific feature you will need to give a six-figure reference. Use the points of the compass ('south west of' or 'in the northern half of the extract', **not** top/bottom/edge of map). Use the scale on the map to describe distances (the squares on an OS map at 1:25,000 or 1:50,000 are one kilometre).

All GCSE Geography exams contain questions relating to Ordnance Survey map extracts. Make sure you can use:

- Four figure grid references
- Six figure grid references
- Contours to work out height on a map
- Scale
- Map symbols and keys
- Compass directions

Graphs and tables: Take care to read the scale properly (a small see-through plastic ruler can be useful). Take note of the labels on the axes and the units used (eg if a hydrograph has litres per second 'l/s' for discharge, don't write about 'cumecs' - cubic metres per second).

Consider:

- The overall general trends/pattern shown (increase? Decrease?)
- What are the highest/lowest figures?
- Are there any anomalies?
- Refer to the data to support your statements

Newspaper cuttings: Here you have to sift out the material you need to answer the question. Ask yourself if it is a factual piece reporting events or an opinion piece commenting on events (eg an editorial). Is the source likely to be reliable or biased in some way?

Source: If the source of an article or data set is given, this could be useful information. Data from a campaigning group such as Greenpeace, the CPRE or Friends of the Earth needs to be treated differently from official government statistics. Be aware of the possibility of bias. Newspapers don't have time to double-check research and data from opinion polls isn't always a true reflection of people's views and intentions (sampling issues).

Planning answers

If you're answering a question which requires an extended piece of writing, say more than four to six marks worth, then it pays to plan your answer out.

- Planning gives your answer a sensible sequence.
- Planning focuses on the question as asked.
- Making a plan helps you to recall material and select from it.
- A plan should help you to avoid writing 'all you know'.
- It ensures your answer is balanced and uses case study examples.
- Remember to P.E.E.
- Score out your plan by putting a line through it when you're finished with it.

To structure your answer easily, think about whether it is asking for

- Short term/long term
- Advantages/disadvantages
- Social, economic, environmental
- Primary/Secondary

Case studies and examples

Exam questions allow you to use studies you have made from the real world.

- Although you need to know the geographical models and concepts on your syllabus/specification, you also need to be able to apply them to the real world.
- Always refer to places you have studied, even if it doesn't specifically ask you to
- Always use specialist geographical terms wherever possible in your answers.

Try not to just provide a named example. You will get more marks if you really **use** the case studies you have studied.

- An example is not just a place name; it needs to be used to add to an answer. You won't get marks for saying 'for example China'. You need detail.
- Case studies should be used to illustrate and support your points as evidence
- It is better to start with one detailed example, than to list a lot superficially.
- Try to learn some data, and names, points unique to the specific examples.
- You should have in-depth case studies for all of the key topics - don't miss any out when revising.
- Hypothetical examples or guessing should be avoided.

Exam command words

When completing your GCSE Geography exam you must read the question carefully and answer it in the right way to make sure that you get as many marks as possible. Always use geographical terms in your answers e.g. compass directions, use the scale of the map, give grid references.

Here are some of the command words that you may be given:

Annotate - add notes or labels to a map or diagram to explain what it shows. Not just one word answers, use description. Make sure your arrows are accurately positioned.

Compare - look for ways in which features or places are similar or different. e.g. a city in an LEDC compared to a MEDC

Complete - add to a map or graph to finish it off.

Contrast - look for the differences between features or places. Often the question will ask you to compare and contrast.

Define - explain what something means e.g. freeze-thaw.

Describe - give details about what a map or diagram shows.

Discuss - usually wants a long answer, describing and giving reasons for or explaining arguments for and against.

Draw a series of diagrams - used to show a sequence of how something develops, e.g. a waterfall or meander. Labels should be detailed, using key words, and explaining the formation.

Draw a cross section - this is an image cutting through the heart of a structure, to show its features, not. Labels should be detailed, using key words.

Draw a diagram - used to show the key features of a structure, e.g. a volcano. Labels should be detailed, using key words.

Explain or account for - give reasons for the location or appearance of something.

Factors - reasons for the location of something such as a factory.

Give your (or somebody else's) views- say what you or a particular group think about something , for example should limestone quarries be allowed in the Peak District.

Identify - name, locate, recognise or select a particular feature or features, usually from a map, photo or diagram.

Mark - put onto a map or diagram.

Name, state, list - give accurate details or features.

Sketch - you may be asked to sketch a picture and to label it with the key features. Draw what you see, not just a standard diagram (e.g. of a waterfall)

Study - look carefully at a map, photo, table, diagram etc. and say what it shows.

With reference to /refer to examples you have studied - give specific details about your case studies.

With the help of/using the information provided - make sure you include examples from the information, including grid references if it is a map.