

EXAMS, TESTS, REVISION

Pocketbook



Strategies, activities
and techniques
for teaching
examination classes.
Get set, sit, succeed!

Mike Gershon

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LAUREL HOUSE, STATION APPROACH,
ALRESFORD, HAMPSHIRE SO24 9JH UK

Telephone: +44 (0)1962 735573
Fax: +44 (0)1962 733637
Email: sales@teacherspocketbooks.co.uk
Web: www.teacherspocketbooks.co.uk

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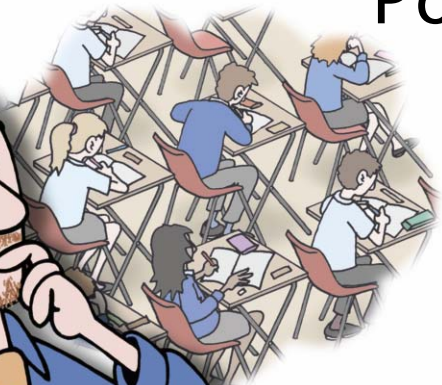
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By Mike Gershon

Cartoons:
Phil Hailstone

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Teachers' Pocketbooks

Laurel House, Station Approach,
Alresford, Hampshire SO24 9JH, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1962 735573

Fax: +44 (0)1962 733637

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Website: www.teacherspocketbooks.co.uk

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Welcome



When it comes to exams, tests and revision, there is no magical solution guaranteeing high performance across the board (at least, not one that doesn't involve gaining access to the answers well in advance!). But there are many things we can do to give our students the very best chance of success. These include:

- Using time efficiently
- Modelling
- Focusing on exam technique
- Planning engaging revision activities
- Making good use of mark-schemes, past papers and examiners' reports
- Promoting independent learning
- Calling on the findings of cognitive psychology

This book will provide you with a host of practical strategies, activities and techniques connected to these areas. You'll find the tools you need to make revision lessons engaging, to guide students through the exam obstacle course, and to maximise the effectiveness of the time you and they spend together.

So read on and enjoy! And good luck – to you and your students.

The big picture



We start with the big picture. And that means this is not a book about teaching to the test. That approach doesn't square with the wider goals of teaching – goals we all seek to achieve. Things like opening up ideas and understanding for our students; like inspiring them to take an interest in the world around them; like giving them the tools to question and think for themselves.

This book is about squaring the circle. It's not about teaching to the test, but teaching *with the test in mind*, with an eye to the final assessment.

To put it another way, it's about preparing students to excel in exams without spoon-feeding them and while maintaining their motivation and engagement.

Not just revising



When we talk about revising, it's important we're thinking about the active cognitive processes this ought to include. Good revision doesn't mean incessant re-reading, copying out notes verbatim or endless highlighting.

It actually means:

- Practice testing
- Revisiting material and looking at it afresh
- Re-analysing what has been learned
- Returning to prior knowledge and understanding
- Re-presenting and restructuring familiar material

Understanding this ourselves is important. So is communicating the message to our students.

Making sense for students



When it comes to students, you need to help them make sense of three things:

- The exams, tests and assessments they will sit
- What good revision entails
- How the course fits together and what it aims towards

The last point is actually the best place to start. Make sure your students have an overview of the course from the very beginning and that this connects **what they will learn** with **how they will be assessed**.

Without this knowledge, they will find it much harder to connect the dots and make sense of what is expected of them.



A roadmap for success



What we want is to provide students with a roadmap for success, right at the outset. They can then return to it as the course progresses so they will always know where they are and where they are heading.

Roadmaps come in different forms, eg:

- An A4 sheet detailing every topic students will study, followed by a list of the exams they will sit
- A timeline showing when different topics will be studied and how this relates to the timing of exams
- One A4 sheet per exam, listing topics students will cover, the order in which they'll cover them, and the relative importance of each for the final assessment



Qualities for exam success



As well as knowing where they're going, what the final exams will entail and how to revise effectively, your students need to know one more thing:

What are the qualities that students who are successful in exams possess? ie:

- Resourcefulness
- Confidence
- The ability to troubleshoot and problem-solve
- Thinking strategies
- Careful organisation

The strategies, activities and techniques that follow will help you teach your students to develop these qualities.

Timescale



It's helpful to have a timescale in mind when preparing students for exams, eg:

	Year 10 GCSE	Year 11 GCSE
Sep	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Analyse past papers, mark-schemes and specificationsShare roadmap with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Share examiner's report with studentsIncrease frequency of practice testingRevisit roadmap
Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mock exam practiceStart building practice testing into lessonsReflect on roadmap with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Revision should begin at homeMock exams and feedbackStart planning revision lessons
Mar/ Apr		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teach revision lessonsFeedback on revisionPractice testingFocus on exam techniqueRehearsal
May/ Jun		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students sit examsExtra revision sessionsPastoral support
Jun	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assess student strengths and weaknessesFurther mock exam practice and feedback	
Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Analyse Y11 results; draw conclusionsAssess student targets for next year	