

Hints and tips

Before the exam

Revise regularly

Do not leave all of your revision until the last minute. It is far better to revise for 30-40 minutes 5 times a week than 2 hours in one night.

Do not work late the night before, but do get up early to go through your final revision notes.

Revise right up to the point when you are told to come into the exam room, but please do not bring any revision materials into the exam room itself. Leave them in your bag outside.

Use a variety of resources.

Do not rely purely on the past papers provided by your teacher to support your revision. There is a wealth of resources available for your use in several different formats.

These include:

CGP revision guide, work book, exam practise book and Grade 9 book – These are available through scopay at £2.50 each.

www.mymaths.co.uk - this website offers explanations for all topics as well as activities and assessments that offer immediate feedback, allowing students to measure their progress in that topic.

www.hegartymaths.com – students should have been shown this by their maths teacher. Students only need their details to get on. You can watch short videos and complete tasks on all topics, getting immediate feedback.

On the day of the exam

Be prepared!

Have pens and sharpened pencils at the ready. Do not use pens that leak or ones with broad tips. By the same measure, don't use untried new pens. They may let you down. Use a pen that you know is reliable.

Write clearly!

You might fully understand what you need to do but unless you write clearly the examiner will never know! Anything the examiner cannot read he/she cannot mark. If you are a poor writer, please take the time to write neatly.

Read the questions

This is not wasted time. Read every question once to get a rough idea what it is about and then read it again from the beginning - slowly. It is a good idea to tick off each line, including information in diagrams. Do not start until you are sure you thoroughly understand what is asked. The questions are usually graduated with the easier ones at the start of the paper.

Work your way through the paper. If you find any question particularly formidable, do not carry on with it. Come back to it later. You will lose valuable time being bogged down with one question. Get some easy marks in the bag first.

Look at the number of marks that the question is worth, if you have only written one line for a 5 mark question you have probably missed something and made a mistake.

Be Accurate!

Again, read the question! If it asks for 2 decimal places or 3 significant figures, then that is what it wants. Before going on to the next question, check you answer with the original question.

Use of Bold Print

This means that the question is not straight forward. Bold print is a cue to read the question again carefully, so you understand **exactly** what is asked.

Below are a few hints and tips for specific topic areas

Simultaneous Equations

The answers to exam questions tend to be 'nice' numbers usually whole numbers or decimals to no more than 2 decimal places. If they have a decimal, it is usually ends in .5, but these are rare. Answers with a line of decimals are probably wrong, so check for errors.

Inverse percentage questions

These are 'backward looking' problems. With current values given in the question, you have to calculate some original value before the decrease/increase occurred. Again, the answers tend to be rounded numbers. If you get a train of decimals, check back in your working.

Probability

Simply check that your answer is between 1 and 0; and of course, there are no negative values.

The Mean

Common sense here! Check that the number is not silly - too high/too low, and that it is between the highest and lowest values, and not outside them.

Rounding

Don't round the values on the calculator display numbers unnecessarily. If you do this and the calculation has a number of stages, your final answer will be incorrect.

Quadratic Equations (Higher only)

A question asking for significant figures or decimal places indicates you should use the quadratic formula.

Pythagoras

Look at your answer. You should never get a length longer than the hypotenuse.

Trigonometry

Look out for silly answers. Again, lengths should not be longer than the hypotenuse. Remember to use the inverse operation when calculating an angle e.g. \sin^{-1} .

Take care to read the question carefully to check if you are required to give the units. Marks can often be awarded for this.

Materials that you will need

Scientific Calculator –bring your own. We cannot explain how to use a calculator once you are in the exam room so make sure you know how to use it! These are available to buy through scopay at a cost of £6.50.

Tracing paper - useful for rotating shapes and is available on request during the exam.

Compass and protractor – needed for constructions and bearings.

Pencil, ruler and rubber – these are all essential when drawing graphs and other diagrams.

Pen – be aware that this needs to have black ink and it is a good idea to have a spare just in case one runs out.

When writing your answers

Remember

1. write small (but not too small!)
2. show all working
3. use words to describe your calculations/equation changes
4. where space is at a premium, draw a vertical line and work either side of it, rather than sprawl work across a page

After you have finished the exam

Go through the paper quickly reading or scanning it to get an idea of what is asked.

When you have finished do not sit with your arms folded looking up at the ceiling! You will not have scored 100%! There are some marks still to be had. Spend every last minute going through the paper carefully looking for errors. Trust me. There will be some!

There only remains for us to say good luck, but exams have little to do with luck. If you have done the work and revised thoroughly, you will undoubtedly do well. The fact that you are reading this shows your intent. So don't look at exams as impossible hurdles to jump. Look at them as opportunities for you to shine and show everyone just what you can do!