

GCSE Mathematics: Our tips for avoiding common pitfalls in exams

We get to see a lot of exam papers. As the exam season approaches, help your students prepare with our poster of tips for avoiding common pitfalls.

This is just one of the resources we offer. You can find more free resources and support on our website All About Maths. Look inside for a snapshot of some of the materials you can access, or better still, take a look at aqamaths.aqa.org.uk and see what's available.

These useful tips are suitable for both our new and current GCSE Maths specifications.



Resources

Two and three-year route maps

(available for both the current and new specification)

These schemes of work are fully customisable – use them as they are or simply drag and drop the topics into the order that suits you.

They'll help you plan your course, build in additional content and link to lesson plans and activities for the topics.

Year 9, 2014 - Foundation 3 Year																
September				October				November				December				
Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8	Wk 9	Wk 10	Wk 11	Wk 12	Wk 13	Wk 14	Wk 15	Wk 16	Wk 17
Basic number	Factors and multiples	Angles	Scale diagrams and bearings	Basic algebra	Review and revision 1	Holiday	Basic fractions	Coordinates and linear graphs	Basic decimals	Rounding	Collecting and representing data	Year 9 Examinations and Revision	Holiday			
February																
Wk 24	Wk 25	Wk 26	Wk 27	Wk 28	Wk 29	Wk 30	Wk 31	Wk 32	Wk 33	Wk 34	Wk 35	Wk 36	Wk 37	Wk 38	Wk 39	Wk 40
Holiday	Introduction to circumference and area	Ratio and proportion	Basic probability	Review and revision 3	Holiday	Equations	Scatter graphs	Review and revision 4	Holiday	Transformations						
Year 10, 2015 - Foundation 3 Year																
September				October				November				December				
Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8	Wk 9	Wk 10	Wk 11	Wk 12	Wk 13	Wk 14	Wk 15	Wk 16	Wk 17
Review and revision 5	Standard form	Calculating with percentages	Measures	Review and revision 6	Holiday	Statistical measures	Indices	Constructions and loci	Year 10 Examinations and Revision	Holiday						
February																
Wk 24	Wk 25	Wk 26	Wk 27	Wk 28	Wk 29	Wk 30	Wk 31	Wk 32	Wk 33	Wk 34	Wk 35	Wk 36	Wk 37	Wk 38	Wk 39	Wk 40
Holiday	Further perimeter	w/b 29/2 w/e 6/3	Graphs recap and extension	Further circumference and area	Review and revision 8	Holiday	Simultaneous equations	Properties of polygons	Review and revision 9	Holiday	Real life graphs					
Year 11, 2016 - Foundation 3 Year																
September				October				November				December				
Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8	Wk 9	Wk 10	Wk 11	Wk 12	Wk 13	Wk 14	Wk 15	Wk 16	Wk 17
Review and revision 10	Volume	Algebra: quadratics, rearranging formulae and identities	Review and revision 11	Holiday	Inequalities	Algebra and graphs	Sketching graphs	Mock Examinations and Revision	Holiday							
February																
Wk 24	Wk 25	Wk 26	Wk 27	Wk 28	Wk 29	Wk 30	Wk 31	Wk 32	Wk 33	Wk 34	Wk 35	Wk 36	Wk 37	Wk 38	Wk 39	Wk 40
Solving quadratic equations	Quadratic graphs	Growth and decay	Review and revision 13	Holiday	Vectors	Revision	Revision	Holiday	Revision							

+ Versions available for teaching over three or two years

+ Drag and drop the topics into the order that suits you

+ Links to lesson plans and activities giving you a one-stop shop for planning and teaching

+ Save your scheme of work and share it with other teachers

Teaching guidance

Comprehensive step-by-step advice, written by senior examiners, on what your students should be able to do, including example questions. This is a powerful and essential planning tool, reviewed by teachers.



+ Topic tests

With the new performance measures, student progress will be even more of a focus. That's why we're giving you a range of topic tests to help you identify where intervention might be needed.

Use these alongside the route map to keep track of how well students are understanding the topics you're teaching.

+ E-library

The e-library on All About Maths is a new, growing collection of teachers' favourite online resources, mapped to our specification. To save you time, it pulls together some of the best resources the internet has to offer.

+ Mock exam analyser

This tool lets students interpret their own past paper mock exam results, showing a breakdown of their strengths and weaknesses. And it includes model answers showing students how to maximise their marks.

+ KS3 tests

Designed to support your students through KS3 maths, our tests look and feel like GCSE papers but with KS3 content.

The following resources are not included in All About Maths:

+ ERA

Our free online tool gives you instant analysis and online snapshots of performance. You can see the marks gained by individual students and groups in each topic and question, and by assessment objective.

+ Brand new textbooks

AQA-endorsed GCSE Maths textbooks completely aligned with the new specification. Available Spring 2015.

Support

AQA Maths team

Our team are experts in assessment. We're also experts at giving you the support you need, when you need it. You can contact our subject team direct with queries on our specification, suitable resources and how to get started. Email maths@aqa.org.uk or call **0161 957 3852**.

Advocates

We've got regionally-based advocates around the country, real teachers there to share their experiences of teaching our maths qualifications in the classroom. They can offer advice on teaching our Maths GCSE and support networking opportunities, as they're directly involved in the local maths teaching community.

If you're not sure who your advocate is, get in touch with the Maths team, who can let you know.

Take a look at **All About Maths:** aqamaths.aqa.org.uk and see how we can help you today.

10 tips for avoiding common pitfalls in your GCSE Maths exams:

1. There are lots of questions on the paper, if you can't do one don't panic.
2. Check if your answer is realistic. Can a second hand car cost £7 million? Does the earth weigh 4kg? If the answer doesn't seem right you could've made a simple error.
3. If you've spent more than 5 minutes on a question, leave it and come back. As a rough guide, think about "one mark per minute", though don't obsessively worry about the clock.
4. If you can't do part of a question, check the other parts before moving on. Parts are usually independent, so if you can't answer (a) you might be able to do (b).
5. Re-read the question after you've answered it and check you've done all that was asked. You'd be surprised how many students do lots of credit worthy work, but calculate an area when a perimeter was asked for, or give an answer in cm when the question wanted metres.
6. If you're stuck, just think about the maths that might be relevant and write something down. Identifying the key information in the question can help. In questions worth multiple marks, early marks can be scored for relatively simple steps, like rearranging an equation.
7. Make sure you clearly cross through any work you don't want marked. If there are two solutions, one right and one wrong, the examiner might not be able to give you full credit.
8. Try to organise your working out so you can follow it. This will help the examiner find work worthy of credit and also makes it easier for you to check your work later on.
9. For the calculator paper(s), use a calculator you are familiar with, and know the functions.
10. Use all the time you have. When you've finished, go through the paper and check all your work. Even if you cannot complete a question, you may pick up some marks for making a start.

Remember, this poster must not be displayed in the exam hall itself, in line with JCQ's Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations.

How we can help

Speak to the people who created the new specification.

T: 0161 957 3852 E: maths@aqa.org.uk

 [@AQAMaths](https://twitter.com/AQAMaths)

Speak to the people already teaching it.

Find your local maths advocate by speaking to the maths team.