



Preparing for GCSE Geography – Advice from HLS Geography Department



Examination Series- AQA Geography - 8035

Paper 1- 1 hour and 30 minutes – 88 marks – Section A (Hazards), Section B (The Living World) & Section C (PLUK)

Paper 2- 1 hour and 30 minutes – 88 marks- Section A (Urban Issues), Section B (Economic World) & Section C (Resources)

Paper 3- 1 hour and 30 minutes- 78 marks- Fieldwork

Provisional Exam Dates – GCSE Geography

Tuesday 13th May 2026 - Paper 1- 1h 30 mins – Physical Geography

Tuesday 3rd June 2026- Paper 2- 1h 30 mins – Human Geography

Wednesday 11th June 2026 - Paper 3- 1h 30 mins- Issues Evaluation and Fieldwork

Revision classes

Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays- see timetable attached
All students are welcome and targeted support will be offered for individuals attending.

How do I prepare for my remaining trial exams and the real exams?

The Geography department have provided a range of resources on Google Classroom, including:

Knowledge Organisers

Case Study Sheets

Revision Booklets

You can also use the department YouTube page found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHWRWkIFFCVmfelFT9A3Uw/playlists>

Look for the playlists that say GCSE Geography- these cover a wide range of content. You can also look through exam paper walkthrough videos, found at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79XTp12K_44

What happens after Easter?

You will be going through some past paper questions in the style of walking, talking mocks. You will also attempt some questions on the pre-release to ensure that you are ready to take on Paper 3 and the 9 mark decision making question!

How do I know which topics to do extra practice on?

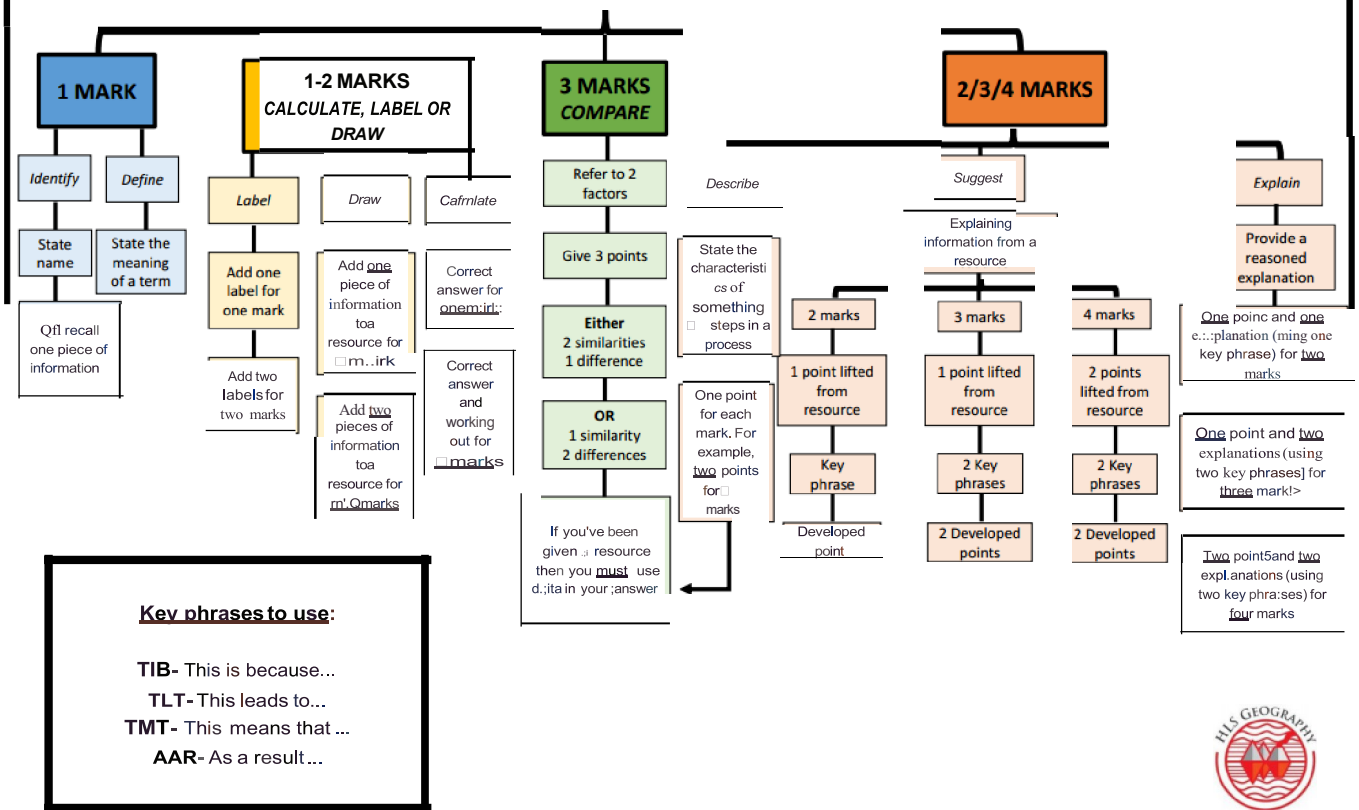
Use your Purple PLC and RAG Sheets – these are in your book from your trial exam and unit tests and tell you what to focus on

Where can I find extra practice questions?

- <https://www.physicsandmathstutor.com/geography-revision/gcse-aqa/> - have a range of revision resources and questions to attempt.
- <https://www.savemyexams.com/gcse/geography/aqa/18/revision-notes/> - There are exam question booklets, videos, worksheets and answers too!

Not sure what about command words. Use the information sheets below or come along to revision sessions for support!

HOW TO UNDERSTAND GEOGRAPHY QUESTIONS



QUESTIONS THAT REQUIRE TWO SIDES OF AN ARGUMENT

Evaluate, To what extent, Justify, Suggest, Discuss

000 STRUCTURE

1. ON ONE HAND...

2. ON THE OTHER HAND...

3. OVERALL...



6 MARKOOO

On one hand...	<p>P- What is the first side of the argument? Use terminology from the exam question.</p> <p>E- What evidence do you have? (Case study? Figure?)</p> <p>E- Use key phrases to explain this.</p>
On the other hand...	<p>P- What is the other side of the argument? Use terminology from the exam question.</p> <p>E- What evidence do you have? (Case study? Figure?)</p> <p>E- Use key phrases to explain this.</p>
Overall...	What is your opinion? Use terminology from the exam question.

9 MARKOOO

Opening sentence	Use the terminology from the exam question and any locational knowledge of your case studies to introduce your answer.
On one hand...	<p>P- What is the first side of the argument? Use terminology from the exam question.</p> <p>E- What evidence do you have? (Case study? Figure?)</p> <p>E- Use key phrases to explain this. 0</p>
On the other hand...	<p>P- What is the other side of the argument? Use terminology from the exam question.</p> <p>E- What evidence do you have? (Case study? Figure?)</p> <p>E- Use key phrases to explain this. 0</p>
Overall...	What is your opinion? Why is this your opinion? Use terminology from the exam question and key phrases in your answer.

QUESTIONS THAT REQUIRE YOU TO RANK

ASSESS

RANKING STRUCTURE



6 MARK RANKING

The most important/significant	D- What is the most important point? Use terminology from the exam question. E- What evidence do you have? (Case study? Figure?) E- Use key phrases to explain this.
The least important/significant	D- What is the least important point? Use terminology from the exam question. E- What evidence do you have? (Case study? Figure?) E- Use key phrases to explain this.
Overall...	What is your opinion? Use terminology from the exam question.

9 MARK RANKING

Opening sentence	Use the judgement terminology from the exam question and any locational knowledge of your case studies to introduce your answer.
The most important/significant...	0- What is the most important point? Use the judgement terminology from the exam question. E- What evidence do you have? (Case study? Figure?) E- Use key phrases to explain why this is so important.
The second most important/significant...	0- What is the second most important point? Use the judgement terminology from the exam question. E- What evidence do you have? (Case study? Figure?) E- Use key phrases to explain why this is important.
The least important/significant...	0- What is the least important point? Use the judgement terminology from the exam question. E- What evidence do you have? (Case study? Figure?) E- Use key phrases to explain this is not as important.
Overall...	What is your opinion? Why is this your opinion? Use the judgement terminology from the exam question and key phrases in your answer.

How to answer 'distribution' questions

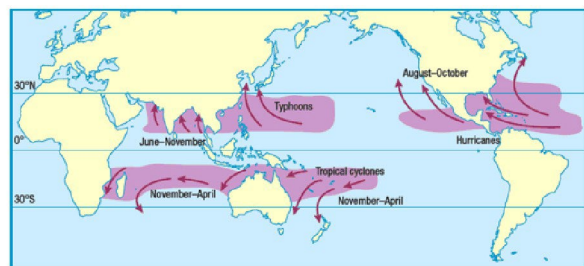
T = Trend: What is the general pattern of distribution?

E = Examples: Pick out examples from the map (use place names and compass directions)

A = Anomalies: What doesn't fit the trend?



EXAMPLE: Describe the distribution of tropical storms (3 marks)



TREND: The map shows that tropical storms form in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans which are close to the equator and between the tropics.

EXAMPLES: For example, many tropical storms start out in the Atlantic Ocean and travel westwards towards the Caribbean and Central America.

ANOMALIES: Tropical storms mainly affect places between the equator, but some reach north eastern parts of the USA which is not between the tropics.



EXAM
SUCCESS

This really useful guide is owned by:

G E O

G R A

P H Y

REVISION

Why is a GCSE in GEOGRAPHY SO IMPORTANT?

1 Lifetime Earnings

Geography ranks in the top five GCSE subjects for lifetime earnings. Each grade improvement adds an average of £11,598 to lifetime earnings. Students with a GCSE in geography earn over £50,000 more in their lifetime compared to those with just English and Maths GCSEs.

2 Education Foundation

A GCSE in Geography is a solid foundation for further studies like A-levels in Geography or Environmental Science, and degrees in geology, environmental management, or urban studies. It is also classified as a facilitating subject by the Russell Group, opening doors to a variety of university courses.

3 Transferable Skills

Geography develops critical thinking, data analysis, research, and problem-solving skills. These skills are highly valued in sectors such as environmental consultancy, urban planning, and government policy-making, making geography students highly employable.

4 High Employment Rates

According to the UK's Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), Geography graduates enjoy a 94.4% employment or further study rate within six months of graduating, reflecting the high demand and value of the skills gained through studying geography.

5 Global Awareness

Geography equips students with knowledge about pressing global challenges like climate change, deforestation, and urbanisation. Understanding these critical issues is essential, especially as climate change is identified as a top global risk by the World Economic Forum.

A wise person once said*

“if you don't revise, you're not going to do all that well.”



*We've no idea who the wise person was, or if they even existed, BUT if they did, they were talking sense. This guide is designed to help you smash your GCSE geography exam. Do yourself a massive favour and follow it.

WELCOME TO GEOGRAPHY REVISION

04 Trust US
START REVISING NOW

06 Revision
The 4 Rs of Revision

07 Step 1 - Ready
What do I need to revise?

09 Step 2 - REVISE
How to revise effectively

12 Step 3 - RECALL
Check your knowledge and
understanding

13 Step 4 - Review
Applying your knowledge to exam
questions

14 Command Words
Understand the question

Trust US

Start REVISING Now



The pressure of GCSE exams can feel overwhelming, especially when you're juggling multiple subjects. Geography is a subject that requires both understanding and retention of a lot of detailed information. So, why wait until the last minute? Starting your revision early could be the key to acing your GCSE Geography exam, and here's why.

1. Geography Covers a Vast Range of Topics

From physical landscapes like rivers, coasts, and tectonics to human topics like population dynamics, urbanisation, and development, Geography touches on a wide array of subjects. Each topic is layered with important details: case studies, statistics, processes, and theories. Trying to cram all this information a few weeks before the exam would be like

attempting to memorise an entire encyclopaedia overnight—stressful, and most likely ineffective. Starting early allows you to break the content down into manageable chunks, giving you time to understand each aspect fully without the panic.

2. Case Studies Need Time to Sink In

Geography relies heavily on case studies—real-world examples that support the theories you learn. For instance, knowing the details of how the Haiti earthquake impacted communities or how climate change affects coastal erosion requires not just memorization but also the ability to explain and analyse these examples. Starting revision early allows you to revisit these case studies multiple times, helping you build a deeper understanding. This makes recalling them in the exam easier and more fluid, so you can

focus on applying the knowledge instead of scrambling to remember facts.

3. Build Exam Technique Gradually

GCSE Geography isn't just about knowing facts—it's about applying that knowledge in exam conditions. Questions often ask for explanations, justifications, and evaluations. You need to be able to structure your answers clearly and concisely, which is a skill that takes practice. By starting your revision early, you have time to go over past papers, practice different types of questions, and perfect your timing. This gradual building of confidence will make you feel more prepared when the actual exam day arrives.

4. Avoid the Stress of Cramming

Cramming the night before the exam might seem like a rite of passage for some students, but it's not a strategy that works well in Geography. The subject demands long-term retention of knowledge, not short bursts of memory recall. Starting your revision early spreads the workload, allowing you to revisit topics multiple times and reinforcing your learning. This not only helps the information stick but also reduces stress levels as exam season approaches. You'll feel more in control and less panicked, knowing that you've prepared thoroughly.

5. Identify Your Areas for Development Early

Starting your revision now gives you plenty of time to assess where your strengths and weaknesses lie. Perhaps you're confident with physical Geography but struggle with human geography topics like urban issues or economic development. Early revision gives you the chance to target these weak areas, ask for help when needed, and practice until you feel more confident. The earlier you identify these gaps in your knowledge, the more time you'll have to fill them.

DID YOU KNOW?

Almost 300,000 students take GCSE Geography and you're competing with all of them for good grades.

6. Use Active Revision Strategies

When you start early, you have time to explore a variety of revision techniques that you. Flashcards, mind maps, quizzes, or even teaching a friend can all help reinforce what you've learned. The more active your revision, the more likely the information will stick. Early preparation allows you to find out what works best for you and apply it consistently, rather than resorting to passive revision like re-reading notes, which is less effective.

7. Geography Links to Current Events

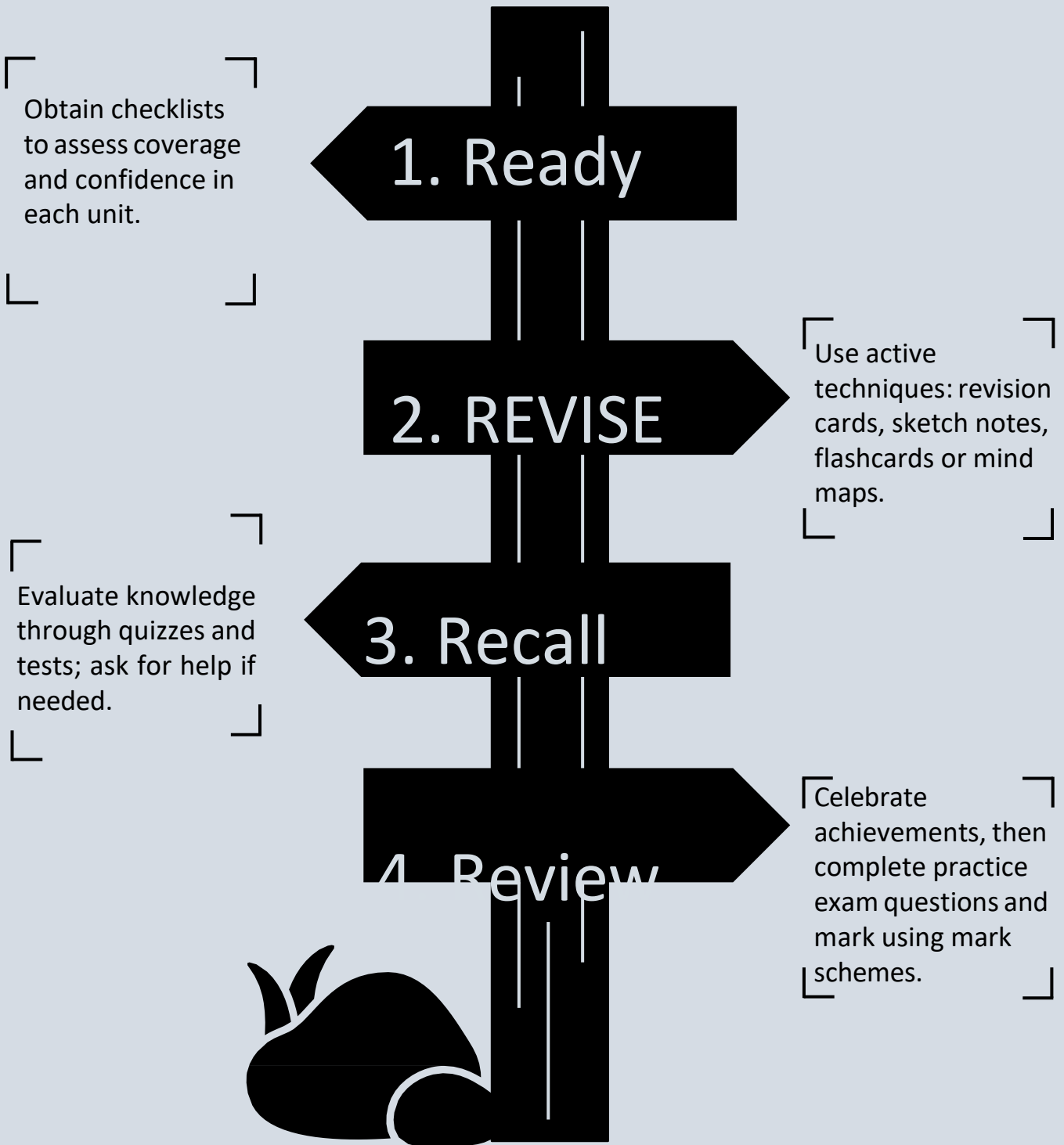
One of the unique aspects of Geography is its direct link to the world around us. Whether it's climate change, migration, or natural disasters, many of the topics you learn are being discussed in the news right now. Starting your revision early means you can connect your learning to these real-world examples as they happen, making the subject come alive. Keeping up with current events also adds depth to your answers in the exam, showing the examiner that you can apply your knowledge to contemporary issues.

The Bottom Line: Starting Early Sets You Up for Success

GCSE Geography is a subject that rewards early and consistent revision. It's not just about memorising facts; it's about understanding complex processes, mastering case studies, and honing exam techniques. By starting your revision early, you give yourself time to develop a deep, well-rounded understanding of the subject, which will ultimately lead to higher grades and lower stress. So why wait? Start now, and future you will thank you!

The 4 Rs

How to revise effectively



Find out more about these approaches in the next sections.

Step 1 Ready

What do you need to revise?



Yup, that's going to hurt! Before you 'dive' into your revision a little planning can save a sting in the exam.

At the beginning of our revision journey, it would be very useful to know what you need to revise and when you will revise it.

The overview to the right shows the structure of the AQA GCSE Geography course. You will complete three exam papers. Paper 1 covers living with the physical environment, paper 2, challenges in the human environment and paper 3 geographical applications.

Paper 1 and 2 will examine your geographical knowledge, understanding and some skills. Paper 3 will cover an issue evaluation (which you will have a copy of before the exam), fieldwork (unfamiliar and the fieldwork you have completed) and geographical skills.

To begin with, we're going to focus revision on paper 1 and 2.

Paper 1

The Challenge of Natural Hazards

The Living World

Physical Landscapes in the UK – two from:

- River Landscapes in the UK
- Coastal Landscapes in the UK
- Glacial Landscapes in the UK

Paper 2

Urban Issues and Challenges

The Changing Economic World

The Challenge of Resource Management – and one from:

- Food Resources
- Water Resources
- Energy Resources

Paper 3

Issue Evaluation

Fieldwork





SCAN ME


download support resources

AQA THE CHALLENGE OF NATURAL HAZARDS

Paper 1
The Challenge of Natural Hazards
PLC

Red = Not confident at all
Amber = Some confidence
Green = Very confident

 reference notes  interactive quizzes



	Red	Amber	Green
Natural hazards pose major risks to people and property			
I can give a definition of natural hazard.			
I can identify the different types of natural hazard.			
I know the factors affecting hazard risk.			
Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are the result of physical processes			
I know the main features of plate tectonics theory.			
I know the global distribution of earthquakes and volcanic			



Starting Revision in Year 10

Download the checklist for the unit(s) you have started studying in Y10 from tinyurl.com/REVstep1

Once downloaded, go through the areas covered so far and complete the checklist to identify how confident you feel about each section. This will help you prioritise your revision.



Starting Revision in Year 11

Download the checklist for the unit(s) you have started studying in Y11 from tinyurl.com/REVstep1

Once downloaded, go through the first unit you covered and complete the checklist to identify how confident you feel about each section. This will help you prioritise your revision. After revising this unit, repeat this for the next unit.

completed your checklist? move onto step 2.

Step 2 REVISE

How to revise effectively

**THESE
TECHNIQUES
DON'T WORK**



Highlighting

information



Copying

information



Reading

information



It's time to start revision. Exciting right? Probably not, but before you start you need to make sure you are using an effective revision technique. After all, some are better than others.

Three revision techniques you should avoid at all costs are highlighting, copying and just reading. Experts say these revision techniques have little or no impact on your learning.

Who doesn't love a good highlighter? Going through notes and highlighting makes you feel really productive. However, you may be disappointed to discover, highlighting does little to boost performance. In fact, it can hurt performance. So, put those beautiful colour sticks in the draw.

Similarly, copying mountains of notes from revision books and websites will make you feel good for being so productive. However, when it comes to learning, this technique has little impacts. Just don't do it. It's a waste of time.

Re-reading is a popular revision technique. However, re-reading notes or textbooks is rated very poorly as an effective revision strategy compared to other strategies you could be using. A wealth of research has

shown that passive repetitive reading produces little or no benefit for learning!

Hopefully, you're not too devastated these revision techniques have been thrown in the bin. The good news is, there are other strategies out there that are more effective, interesting and less time-consuming.

Effective revision should involve active recall, spaced repetition and challenge. This might sound complicated, but it's not.

Active recall is the most important technique that you can use to make your revision more efficient. It basically involves retrieving stuff from your brain because the act of retrieving information strengthens neural connections (brain cells talking to each other). Active recall can be done by testing yourself.

Spaced repetition involves revisiting the topic to help the information stick in your long-term memory. Don't just tick off a topic when you've completed it.

Challenge yourself by revising the stuff you find hard. Attack your pain points rather than ignoring them. Avoid the passive revision techniques and do something with the information you are revising.

THESE TECHNIQUES DO WORK



Revision
Cards



Sketch
notes



Mind
Maps

Sketchnotes

A sketchnote is a visual note-taking technique that combines both text and simple drawings and icons to summarise complex information in a way that is easy to understand.

Active recall

Cover your sketchnote and recall the information. Ask someone to quiz you.

Spaced repetition

Revisit the sketchnote after 24 hours, 3 days, one week then one month.

Challenge

Summarise information – don't copy.

1 INCREASE IN THE PROPORTION OF LIVING IN

2 HIC^s 1st TO URBANISE
 - Industrial revolution
 - Mechanisation of farms
 - Rural to urban migration
 UK 83% USA 82% EU 74%
 Slowing in HIC^s
 Counter-urbanisation in some areas

3 LIC^s STILL MAINLY RURAL BUT FASTEST RATE OF URBANISATION
 Africa 40% urban 2050 56%
 Asia 50% urban 2050 64%
 2014-2050 37% of urban growth
 India China Nigeria

4 FACTORS AFFECTING URBANISATION RATES
 MIGRATION Rural to urban
 NATURAL INCREASE +/- natural population change (due to births & deaths)
 High number of 18-35 yr olds
 ↑ birth rate
 ↓ death rate

5 MEGA CITIES
 2023 = 29 megacities
 2030 = 40+ megacities
 HIC^s Slowing | LIC^s Rapidly ↑
 Tokyo - 38 mill Delhi 28 mill Shanghai 24 mill Mexico City 20 mill

6 URBANISATION
7 PUSH FACTORS
 - Food shortages
 - Limited well-paid job opportunities
 - Limited services
 - poor transport infrastructure
8 PULL FACTORS
 + Prospect of better paid employment
 + Better schools and healthcare
 + Friends and family have already moved
 + Better access to services

What is coastal erosion?

Flashcards

Creating a flashcard involves writing a key question on one side of the card and the answer on the other. It can be used for definitions, questions and diagrams.

Active recall

Turn over your flashcard and recall the information. Ask someone to quiz you.

Spaced repetition

Use the Leitner System.

Challenge

Summarise information – don't copy.

Mind Map

A mind map is a highly organised diagram used to present information in an organised way around a central theme.

Active recall

Cover your mind map and recall information. Ask someone to quiz you.

Spaced repetition

Revisit the mind map after 24 hours, 3 days, one week then one month.

Challenge

Summarise information – don't copy.

wet
 - warm, moist air rises
 - cools
 - condenses
 - rainfall
 Global Atmospheric Circulation

soil
 - thin
 - infertile
 - heavy rain leaches nutrients

nutrient cycle
 - most nutrients stored in biomass
 - rapid decomposition of litter hot+wet = fungi & bacteria
 - small soil storage - rapid uptake of nutrients by vegetation

plant adaptations
 - drip tips - allow water to run off leaves
 - buttress roots - support tall sun-seeking trees and top soil nutrients
 - epiphytes

Characteristics

Tropical rainforest

THESE TECHNIQUES DO WORK



Condensing
/Chunking



Knowledge
Organisers



Dual
coding

Condensing/Chunking

Condensing text is a way of reducing a large amount of information into key words and images to memorise and retrieve information.

Active recall

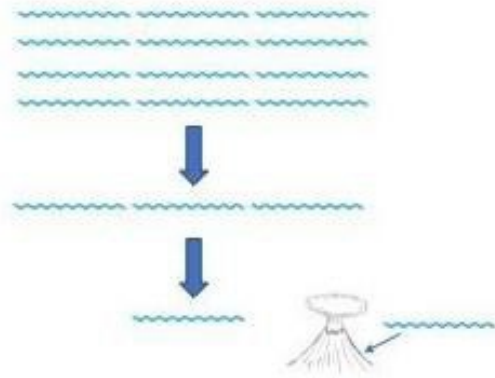
Talk about the subject using only the words.

Spaced repetition

Revisit the text after 24 hours, 3 days, one week then one month.

Challenge

Reduce a paragraph to the lowest number of words. Test your recall using them.



The Challenge of Natural Hazards

Term	Definition	
Natural hazard		Factors affecting hazard risk
Hazard risk		
Constractive margin		
Destructive margin		
Earthquake		Plate tectonic theory Structure of the Earth
Seismology		
Living form response		Convection currents
Slab pull		
Primary effects		Ridge push
Secondary effects		
Tectonic hazard		Global distribution
Volcano		

Plate margin	Description	Hazards	Diagram
Constructive margins			
Conservative margins			

Why do people live in areas of risk?

Hazards vary between contrasting wealth	LIC	HIC	Explanation
Earthquakes			
Primary Effects			
Secondary Effects			
Seismology			
Living form response			

Management	Planning	Prediction	Prevention	Monitoring
Definition				
Earthquakes examples				
Volcano examples				
How does it reduce risk?				

Knowledge organiser

Knowledge organisers summarise the key facts and essential knowledge you need to learn into small chunks in a structured way.

Active recall

Cover elements of the knowledge organiser and recall the key information.

Spaced repetition

Revisit the knowledge organiser after 24 hours, 3 days, one week then one month.

Dual Coding

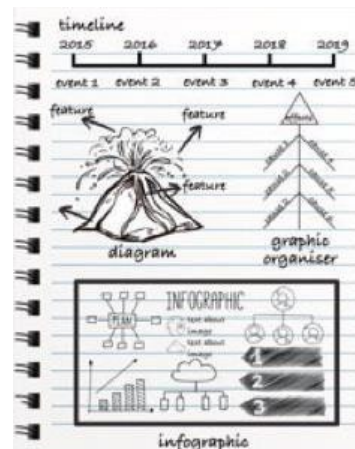
Dual coding involves combining text and images. There are many ways to present information visually, such as with infographics, timelines, cartoon strips, diagrams, and graphic organisers.

Active recall

Talk about the subject using only the images and text you included.

Spaced repetition

Revisit the knowledge organiser after 24 hours, 3 days, one week then one month.



STEP 3 RECALL

Check what you know

The whole point of revision is to improve your knowledge, understanding and remember important information for the exam. Once you've produced a set of revision resources, it's time to check what you can recall. There are several ways you can check to see how effective your revision has been so far. You could use quizzes, a revision clock or just a good old blank piece of paper. After checking what you know, go back and revise any gaps you have.

Quizzing

Quizzing is one of the best ways to revise because it helps you actively remember information rather than just reading it. Every time you test yourself, you're training your brain to recall facts, which makes it easier to remember them in the exam. Plus, quizzing shows you what you know well and highlights areas where you need more practice. By using flashcards or practice questions regularly, you'll build confidence and improve your memory, giving you a better chance to do well in your exams!



Revision Clocks

Revision clocks are a great tool to help you organise the information you can recall and make sure you cover all the important topics. By dividing your study session into smaller chunks, usually 10-15 minutes per section, revision clocks help you stay focused and avoid getting overwhelmed. They break down big topics into manageable pieces and ensure you're giving equal attention to each part of the subject. Using a revision clock also keeps you on track, helping you stay motivated and making your revision more efficient.



Blank Page

Blank page is a strategy for checking what you recall about a topic. It is an active revision technique that encourages you to think about what you have studied, what you can remember and encourages you to organise your knowledge and understanding. The strategy gives you an idea of what you already know about a topic, and what you need to work on. To blank page, simply write down everything you remember about a topic. Once finished, check your information against your revision notes. Cover the notes and add information you missed first time.

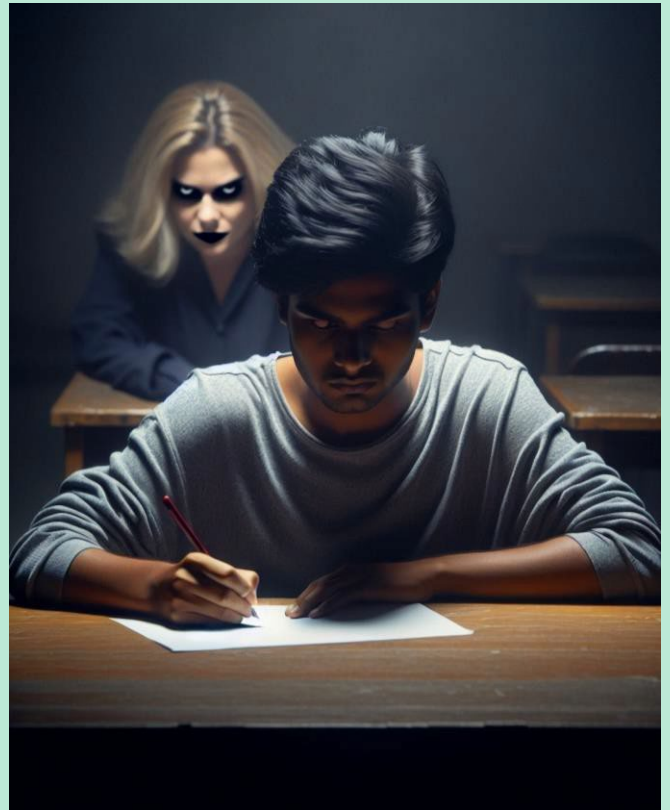


STEP 4 Review

Apply what you know to exam questions

You're probably not going to like Step 4. Step 4 involves applying your knowledge and understanding to exam questions.

Believe it or not, practicing past exam questions is one of the most effective ways to revise for GCSE Geography. It helps you become familiar with the types of questions you'll face in the exam and the way they're structured. By doing practice questions, you can learn how to apply your knowledge to real-world scenarios, which is a key part of Geography exams. It also helps improve your time management, so you can answer questions within the exam's time limits. Additionally, past questions highlight areas where you might need more revision, helping you focus on topics that need extra attention. Ultimately, practicing past exam papers builds your confidence and prepares you for the real thing (along with beating the examiner!).



Exam Papers



Paper 1

tinyurl.com/aqageogpaper1



Mark Schemes

tinyurl.com/aqageogpaper1ms



Paper 2

tinyurl.com/aqageogpaper2



Mark Schemes

tinyurl.com/aqageogpaper2ms



Paper 3

tinyurl.com/aqageogpaper3



Mark Schemes

tinyurl.com/aqageogpaper3ms

Command Words

Understanding command words in GCSE Geography questions is crucial because they tell you exactly what the examiner wants you to do. Command words like "describe," "explain," "evaluate," or "compare" each require a different type of answer.

If you misunderstand the command word, you might give the wrong type of answer and lose marks, even if you know the content. Learning these words helps you approach questions correctly and gives you the best chance to score higher marks!

Command words	Marks				
	1	2	4	6	9
Identify/State/Name/Give	x	x			
Define	x				
Calculate	x	x			
Label	x	x			
Draw		x			
Outline		x	x		
Compare		x	x		
Describe		x	x		
Suggest		x	x	x	x
Explain			x	x	x
Examine				x	
Assess				x	x
To what extent				x	x
Evaluate					x
Discuss				x	x
Justify				x	x

Assess - Make an informed judgement. Approach this similarly to other evaluative commands (evaluate, to what extent, discuss).

Calculate – Work out the value of something.

Compare – Identify the similarities and differences.

Complete – Finish the task by adding information

Describe - Set out characteristics – to say what something is, is like, or appears like.

Discuss - Present key points about different sides of an argument, issue or the strengths and weaknesses of an idea. Approach this similarly to other evaluative commands (assess, to what extent, evaluate).

Draw - Sketch a map or diagram.

Evaluate – Judge from evidence, weighing up both sides of an argument. Approach this similarly to other evaluative commands (assess, to what extent, discuss).

Explain – Set out the purpose or reasons – say how or why.

Identify / Name / State / Give / Define - Identify/name – name or otherwise characterise. State – express in clear terms. Give – produce an answer from recall. Define – state the meaning of a term.

Justify - Support a case with evidence – give detailed reasons for an idea.

Label - Add specific names or detail to the stimulus.

Outline - Set out main characteristics – to give a brief account or summary.

Suggest - Present a possible case, to propose an idea, solution or answer.

To what extent - Judge the importance or success of (strategy, scheme, project). Approach this similarly to other evaluative commands (assess, evaluate, discuss).

AQA have produced a useful guide to command words, with example answers:

tinyurl.com/geogcommandwords



Quick Links

AQA GCSE Online
reference Notes
(ideal for revision)



www.internetgeography.net/aqa-gcse-geography

AQA GCSE Online
Quizzes (ideal for
recall)



www.internetgeography.net/gcse-geography-interactive-revision

AQA GCSE Geography
Homepage



<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/geography/gcse/geography-8035>



Paper 1

Paper 2

Paper 3