

Revising for your A-Level Biology

1. **Get a copy of the specification** at this link. It is vital that you know what you need to know!
<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/science/biology/index.html>
2. Use the **specification to guide your revision**. Start at the beginning and tick off the statements that you are confident with. This will highlight the areas that you need to concentrate on.
3. **Don't simply read the text book!** You will not gain much by doing this. Your revision must be active work, where your brain is working hard. This is usually in the form of answering questions.
4. If making notes, do not copy from the text book. Instead, use the specification as your guide to the places in the textbook... don't forget to use the index of the text book.
5. **Past papers:** At present there are few past papers that are specifically relevant to the current course. However there are past papers from the old 'legacy' A-level specification available. There are a few available on the OCR website but the rest the Biology Department have made most of them available on the school network. Do not treat them as a memory test! You *must* use your text book to help you answer the questions you do not immediately know. You will then be learning. The mark schemes are important here. They are not there just to check your answers, but if the past papers are tackled in the correct manner, then the markschemes will show you that there are important facts you must concentrate upon in order to gather the most marks. You should endeavour to learn the form of words for 'standard answers' to questions that appear in one guise or another from examination session to examination session. Remember, scientific terms, definitions and descriptions gain marks, not vague, idiosyncratic interpretations of scientific phenomenon. You cannot 'waffle' and expect to gain marks. By the same token you should recognise that marks are generally given for each 'new' point made and not always for further elucidation of a single point.

When doing past papers you must commit yourself to *writing down* answers – do not just think to yourself “oh, I know that”. Only when you commit yourself to putting pen to paper will you appreciate whether, or not, you know the correct answer.

REMEMBER – JUST READING THROUGH NOTES, PAST PAPERS OR TEXTBOOKS IS NOT ENOUGH. IT WILL NOT WORK!

6. When answering questions on the exam, you must read them properly. Take your time and **read the full question**. Make sure that you understand and that you give yourself time to think about what is being asked. A lot of the time there is plenty of information in the question to help you.