



Knowledge organisers at Brownhills Ormiston Academy

What are knowledge organisers?

A knowledge organiser is a set of key facts or information that pupils need to know and be able to recall in order to 'master' a unit or topic. Typically, an organiser fits onto one page of A4 – this helps pupils to visualise the layout of the page which in turn helps them to memorise the information better.

Why are students using knowledge organisers?

New GCSE specifications require students to memorise more than ever before - from equations in science to case studies in geography to quotes from Shakespeare plays in English. Research suggests that students will learn and retain these vast bodies of information if they learn them over a long period of time and return to them regularly – rather than trying to commit everything to memory in the 18-month GCSE courses themselves. This is not to say that students will be beginning GCSE courses in year 7, but there is a good deal of knowledge they will be exposed to in Key Stage 3 that they will need to be able to recall and use in order to access their GCSEs in the future, and the Knowledge Organiser aims to support this.

GCSEs and BTECs are becoming increasingly challenging. Most subjects have lost their controlled assessments (previously known as coursework) and these have been replaced with additional exam papers. The focus of these exams is the retrieval and application of knowledge. This puts increasing pressure on our youngsters to know and retain even more information for longer.

The secret to success is to regularly **revisit the knowledge to be learned** (known as 'spaced retrieval'). This helps transfer the knowledge from the short-term memory to the long term memory. This not only helps to make 'learning stick' but it also frees up our short-term memory for day to day learning and experiences.

How will a knowledge organiser help my child?

Knowledge Organisers will be made available at the start of each unit to help them remember what they are learning and to help them to see the bigger learning journey in their subjects. Instead of forgetting previous learning, pupils continually revisit and retrieve prior learning from their memories.

How will a knowledge organiser help me to help my child?

Many of you ask us how you can help to support your children at home. Some of you are worried that you do not have all of the subject specific knowledge to be able to help your children. Some of you worry how to check that your children have done their homework and revision. The Knowledge Organisers will help you to do this easily. Family members can test and quiz students on the content of the Knowledge Organiser regularly and check their Retrieval Booklets show examples of individual Retrieval Practice.

Suggested activities for parents

Most homework set will be linked to all/some aspects of the KO. This might be to learn keywords, definition, the names of characters in a play, events of a historical period or spellings.



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Above and beyond any homework set by the teachers, we would recommend that pupils spend thirty minutes per week per subject learning the knowledge detailed in the organiser.

Here are some strategies that might help you to do this.

- Read through the organiser with your child – if you don't understand the content then ask them to explain it to you – 'teaching' you helps them to reinforce their learning.
- Try converting the information into a mind map or make your own version using clip art imagery if the organiser contains a lot of text. Display on the wall or the fridge door until the memory 'sticks'.
- Test them regularly on the spellings of key words until they are perfect. Make a note of the ones they get wrong – is there a pattern to the spelling of those words?
- Get them to make a glossary (list) of key words with definitions or a list of formulae.
- Try recording the knowledge from the organiser as an mp3 sound file that your child can listen to. Some pupils retain more information this way.
- Read sections out to them, missing out key words or phrases that they have to fill in. Miss out more and more until they are word perfect.
- Make self quizzing cards with your child and test them on key knowledge • Get your child to make a blank Knowledge Organiser and fill in all the gaps without looking.