

# Aldercar High School

## Sixth Form

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Getting to grips with A Levels

A+

## Student Handbook

# STANDARDS

Being successful in any aspect of life always stems from maintaining consistently high standards and expectations of yourself.

At Aldercar High School we want the best for our Sixth Form students. In order to strive for success we ask that you maintain 5 basic standards – the 5 P's.

1

**Be Punctual!** Lateness leads to lost learning so ensure that you are on time to every lesson.

2

**Be Present!** Absence means that you will have to catch up on work missed. Aim to be in school every day you have lessons! If for some reason you can't make it into school a parent/guardian must phone in and report the absence to the Head of Sixth Form as early as possible that morning. If you have an appointment booked, a note must be provided.

3

**Be Professional!** Treat everyone with respect and maintain a professional level of conduct and dress.

4

**Be Proactive!** Use your spare time to independently access and use resources relevant to your subjects.

5

**Be Positive!** Approach your A Level journey with a positive attitude, learn from your mistakes, reflect on feedback and be willing to try something new.

# ASSEMBLY

Assembly takes place every Monday from 8:25 – 8.55am. You all asked that form be removed, and a condition of this is that you attend ALL assemblies.

Every week the Head of Sixth Form will monitor your attendance, punctuality, organisation, dress and general conduct. There will be an update of this every Monday.

Assembly Monday	Briefing Followed by various assembly topics
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# ENRICHMENT

As part of your Sixth Form journey you are expected to complete one additional activity or qualification for enrichment. These opportunities look great on University applications and on CVs. These should be completed in your independent time.

What enrichment opportunities are there?

Sports Leaders

EPQ

Duke of Edinburgh Award

Work Experience

Yippy Yap Tutoring

## **Trips**

You will also be offered a series of trips during your time in the Sixth Form. These might include University tasters, or higher education fairs.

Trips will operate on a first come first serve basis. Bursary students will be able to have any associated costs covered for these trips



# FACILITIES

## Areas that you can use for independent study

P15 – Computer Room

P12 – Study Room

Canteen – Chill out area



You are also lucky enough to have your own social area in the refectory and kitchen in P12.

It is your duty to keep these clean and tidy at all times.

Thank you 😊





# BEFORE YOU START...

## YEAR 13

There are a number of items that you **MUST** provide for yourself in order to ensure you are suitably organised.

Use the checklist below to ensure that you are organised, equipped and ready to start learning.

Item	Purpose	✓
Lined paper / Note pad	You will need to provide your own paper to make notes on in lessons.	
Lever arch file per subject	For every subject preferably ensure you have a large lever arch folder and bring it to every lesson	
Dividers	Use these to separate out topics and units in your subject files.	
Pens, pencils, eraser, ruler	In the Sixth Form you should provide your own pens and stationery. Please don't turn up to lessons without a pen!	
Planner / organiser	Somewhere to log your homework, revision and plan out your time.	
Calculator	For all subjects where this may be required	
Textbooks	If you have been provided with Textbooks they should be brought with you to every lesson. Bursary students can apply to have textbooks bought for them from the Bursary	
USB drive	To store electronic work on.	

# KICK START THE STUDYING

What will help you to prepare for the start of Year 13?

Research the specification for your subjects and print a copy for the front of your file.

Read through past exam papers and mark schemes to get a feel for the types of questions that you will be answering.

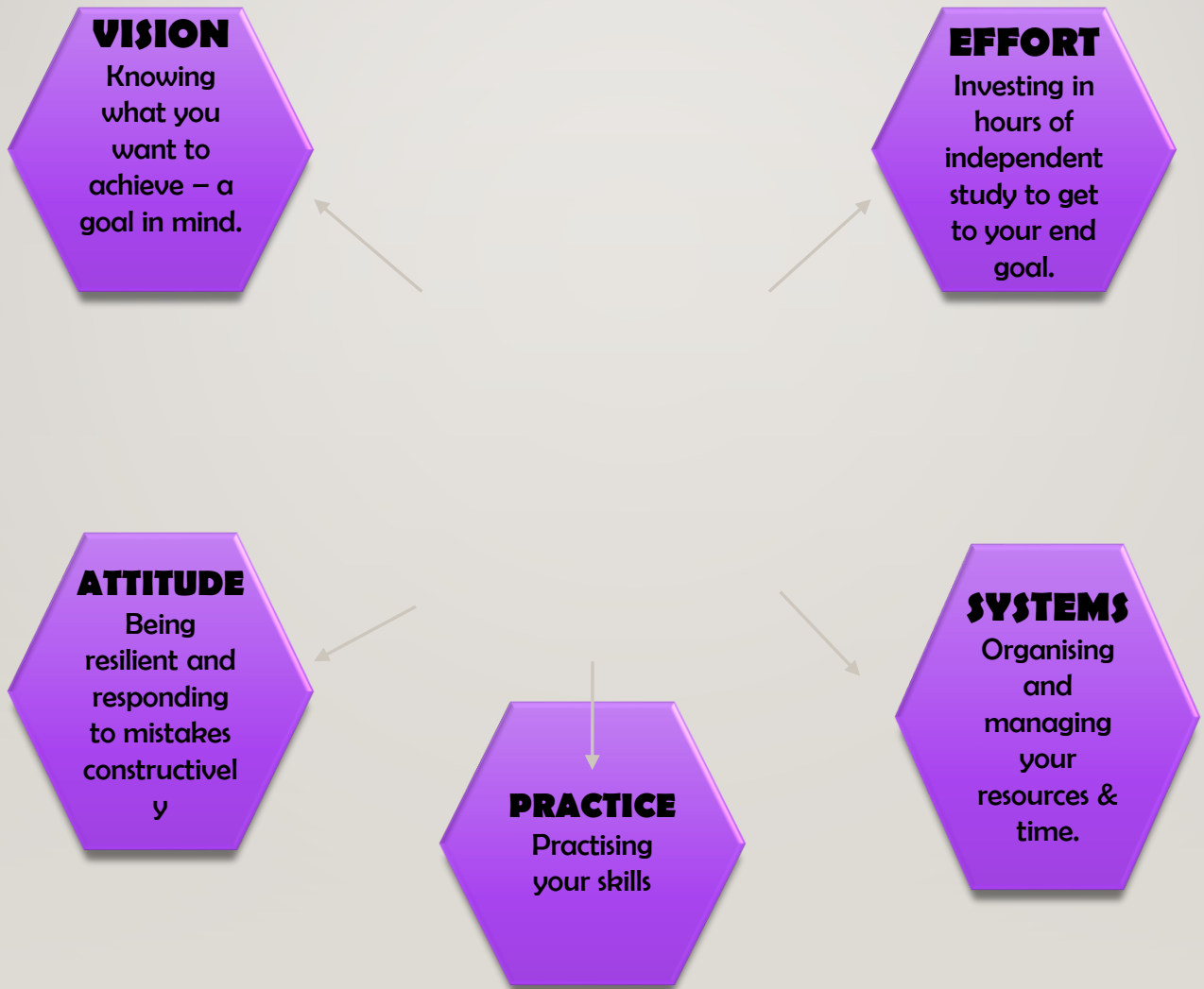
**Read ahead**  
Find out which topic you'll be taught first and research this in advance of the lessons.

Ask your teacher for textbooks, references, resources and reading lists.

# THE A LEVEL MINDSET

A Levels are not like GCSEs and require you to be more independent in your learning.

There are five aspects that make up a successful A Level Student – VESPA!





# A LEVEL MINDSET: VISION

## VISION

Knowing what you want to achieve – a goal in mind.

To find your vision, try out the following activities:

### Vision Activity 1: 20 questions

This activity will encourage you to reflect on your goals in a more meaningful way. Write down your answers to the following 20 questions.

- » If you could only take one subject what would it be, and why?
- » What lessons or elements of study do you find easy?
- » What do you do with your spare time?
- » Describe an interesting lesson you had recently. Why was it interesting?
- » What jobs do you avoid doing, and why?
- » When does time fly? What are you doing?
- » When does time seem to drag or stop? What are you doing?
- » What job would you do for free?
- » Who do you look up to?
- » What would you try if you knew you couldn't fail?
- » What puts a smile on your face?
- » If you had the afternoon off to work at home, which piece of work would you choose to do?
- » When you have a lot of homework, which subject do you do first?
- » Describe a homework task you have recently left until the last minute or not done at all. Why?
- » What do you get obsessed about?
- » When you're with your friends, what do you want to talk about?
- » What stresses you out?
- » If you had an hour off A level work and a laptop, what would you type into a search engine?
- » If you were given a small amount of money to start a company, what would it be?
- » List five words you associate with 'happiness'.

# A LEVEL MINDSET: VISION

## VISION

Knowing  
what you  
want to  
achieve – a  
goal in mind.

To find your vision, try out the following activities:

### Vision Activity 2: Dream or Goal?

A dream is different to a goal. A dream is something you imagine, where as a goal is something you take action towards. Distinguish between your dreams and goals in the activity below.

<b>Pure fantasy and pipe dreams</b> List here the things you would one day like to be or do but that you've never ever talked about. It's never been verbalised at all – it's just in your head.	
<b>Daydreams and conversations</b> List here the things you would one day like to be or do that you've talked about with a friend. You've admitted them and started exploring and discussing them.	
<b>Goals</b> List here the things you would like to do that you've taken action about. What was the action? When did you take it? What did you do when things got difficult?	

# A LEVEL MINDSET: EFFORT

## EFFORT

Investing in hours of independent study to get to your end goal.

It is recommended that you put in 1 hour of extra independent study per lesson you have. So if you have 15 lessons a week – you should be completing 15 hours of extra study per week.

How much effort have you really been putting in? Find out with the following activities.

### Effort Activity 1: Frogs or Bannisters?

Think about all the independent work you have been doing recently. Have you been eating **ugly frogs** (getting important tasks done) or **polishing the bannister** (completing easier jobs that aren't important)?

Frogs	Bannisters



# A LEVEL MINDSET: EFFORT

## **EFFORT**

Investing in hours of independent study to get to your end goal.

How many of the following do you do?

- Copy out notes
- Moan that homework demands are unrealistic
- Get into a deep discussion about something vaguely related to the work believing that it counts as 'independent learning'.
- Think – 'Well they're not doing it so why should I?'

Psychologists believe that the above are all methods of avoidance. You do an 'easier' task to avoid a tough important one as an excuse. These are all barriers to what are often perceived as boring but important tasks (e.g. completing an exam paper!)

However research suggests that if we complete tough tasks first, we are more likely to perform better in the long term. It's time to break down those barriers with the activity below!

## Effort Activity 2: The 10 minute rule

- 1) Tell yourself you are going to do just 10 minutes of work
- 2) Decide which 'tough' task it will be spent on.
- 3) Clear a space and sit down with the materials.
- 4) Start and continue for 10 minutes

YES 10 minutes is short but at least you've done 10 minutes more of tough or 'important' work than you would have done before!

# A LEVEL MINDSET: SYSTEMS



It's easy to feel overwhelmed at the amount of work or tasks you need to complete. Sometimes it's difficult to work out where to start. Try the following activities to help you manage your time and work load.

## Systems Activity 1: Eisenhower Matrix

	Urgent	Not Urgent	
Important	<div></div>	<div></div>	<p>Place all of your tasks into a box.</p> <p>Complete the red box first. These are tasks that are urgent (the deadline is looming) and important.</p>
Not Important	<div></div>	<div></div>	<p>Once you have completed the red box, you can make a start on the other boxes.</p>



# A LEVEL MINDSET: SYSTEMS



## Systems Activity 2: Managing Long Term Projects

If you are completing a long term project like coursework, it is more manageable if you break it down into three targets.

See the guide below.

Target 3	8 months before the submission deadline	These are the early stages. Find some examples of what you are going to achieve or produce. Make a list of what needs to be done. Get started on first drafts.
Target 2	4 months before the submission deadline	Reflect on where you would like to be half way through. Now it's time to pad out your first drafts. How many sections should have been started by now? What is your word count? What research have you done and incorporated?
Target 1	2 months before the submission deadline	Hopefully you have met the other two targets by this point. Now it's time to begin the final stages. What do you still need to do? How many words have you got left to write? Have you referenced your sources and formed a conclusion?

# A LEVEL MINDSET: PRACTICE

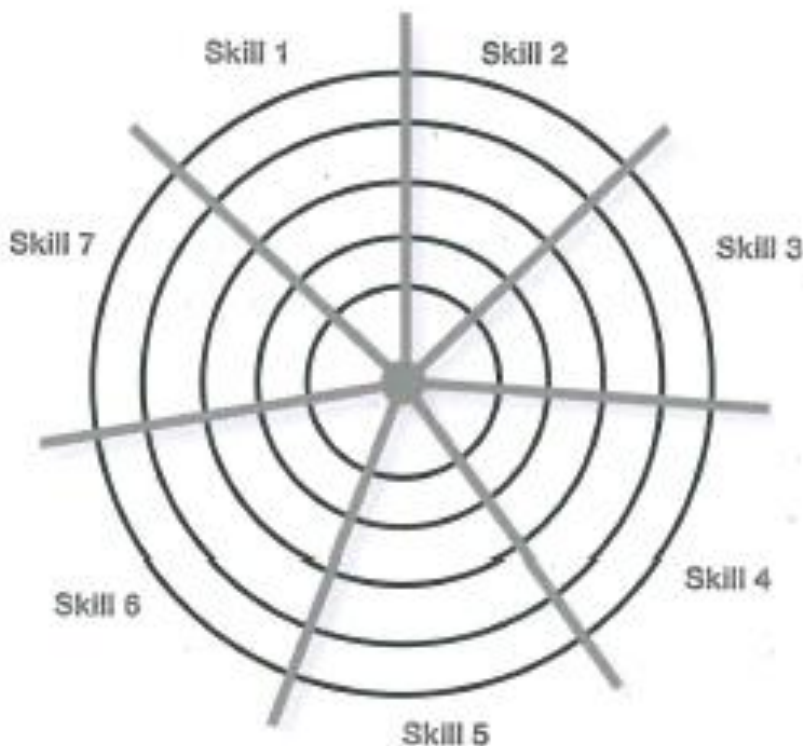
## **PRACTICE**

Practising  
your skills

Practice is all about developing your skills. The skills you need to demonstrate are often dictated by the Assessment Objectives (AOs) of the qualification e.g. evaluation, application.

Use the activities below to ensure that you are meeting the required skills.

### Practice Activity 1: Skills Target



Label the diagram with the skills that you need to get an A.

Shade in a slice of the diagram every time you feel confident or practised in a particular skill.

A full slice is a skill that has developed.

An empty slice is a skill you need to put more practise into!

# A LEVEL MINDSET: PRACTICE

## PRACTICE

Practising  
your skills

### Practice Activity 2: Learning from Mistakes

Type of Mistake	How to Respond
<b>Active Mistake</b> The wrong process is used – e.g. the wrong approach was used for a mathematical problem, or you don't know what to do to get a higher mark	Revisit the processes. Categorise them and attach them to questions, tasks and problems. Make sure you are using the right process for the relevant task.
<b>Slip Up</b> The correct process is used but errors are made in conducting the process. E.g. a paragraph is lacking in a particular detail or component, or an error is made part way through solving a problem.	Practise practise and practise the process. Collect examples of the process in action. Follow the same steps but with an alternative question or problem.
<b>Blackout</b> The information required to complete the task or problem is missing or forgotten.	Review your notes and re-cap your knowledge. Use textbooks to revise missing areas. Practise recalling the information through testing yourself.

# A LEVEL MINDSET: ATTITUDE

## ATTITUDE

Being  
resilient and  
responding to  
mistakes  
constructively

### Attitude Activity 1: What's your mindset?

Let's test your mind set! Complete the quiz below. Tick to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much.				
2. No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.				
3. You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.				
4. You are a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that.				
5. You can always change basic things about the kind of person you are.				
6. Music talent can be learned by anyone.				
7. Only a few people will be truly good at sports – you have to be “born with it.”				
8. Math is much easier to learn if you are male or maybe come from a culture who values math.				
9. The harder you work at something, the better you will be at it.				
10. No matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially.				
11. Trying new things is stressful for me and I avoid it.				
12. Some people are good and kind, and some are not – it's not often that people change.				
13. I appreciate when parents, coaches, teachers give me feedback about my performance.				
14. I often get angry when I get feedback about my performance.				
15. All human beings without a brain injury or birth defect are capable of the same amount of learning.				
16. You can learn new things, but you can't really change how intelligent you are.				
17. You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can't really be changed.				
18. Human beings are basically good, but sometimes make terrible decisions.				
19. An important reason why I do my school work is that I like to learn new things.				
20. Truly smart people do not need to try hard.				

See next page for scoring!



# A LEVEL MINDSET: ATTITUDE

## ATTITUDE

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**Scoring:** Now add up the scores in the boxes that you ticked to work out your total.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. ability mindset – fixed	0	1	2	3
2. ability mindset – growth	3	2	1	0
3. ability mindset – growth	3	2	1	0
4. personality/character mindset – fixed	0	1	2	3
5. personality/character mindset – growth	3	2	1	0
6. ability mindset – growth	3	2	1	0
7. ability mindset – fixed	0	1	2	3
8. ability mindset – fixed	0	1	2	3
9. ability mindset – growth	3	2	1	0
10. personality/character mindset – growth	3	2	1	0
11. ability mindset – fixed	0	1	2	3
12. personality/character mindset – fixed	0	1	2	3
13. ability mindset – growth	3	2	1	0
14. ability mindset – fixed	0	1	2	3
15. ability mindset – growth	3	2	1	0
16. ability mindset – fixed	0	1	2	3
17. personality/character mindset – fixed	0	1	2	3
18. personality/character mindset – growth	3	2	1	0
19. ability mindset – growth	3	2	1	0
20. ability mindset – fixed	0	1	2	3
<b>Total</b>				
<b>Grand Total</b>				

**Strong Growth  
Mindset =**  
45 – 60 points

**Growth Mindset  
with some Fixed  
ideas =**  
34 – 44 points

**Fixed Mindset with  
some Growth ideas**  
= 21 – 33 points

**Strong Fixed  
Mindset =**  
0 – 20 points

Turn over to  
find out  
what fixed  
and growth  
mindsets  
mean...



# A LEVEL MINDSET: ATTITUDE

## ATTITUDE

Being  
resilient and  
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constructively

## What Kind of Mindset Do You Have?



I can learn anything I want to.  
When I'm frustrated, I persevere.  
I want to challenge myself.  
When I fail, I learn.  
Tell me I try hard.  
If you succeed, I'm inspired.  
My effort and attitude determine everything.



I'm either good at it, or I'm not.  
When I'm frustrated, I give up.  
I don't like to be challenged.  
When I fail, I'm no good.  
Tell me I'm smart.  
If you succeed, I feel threatened.  
My abilities determine everything.

Created by: Reid Wilson @wayfaringpath ©©©© Icon from: thenounproject.com

Research has shown that individuals with a growth mind-set are more likely to become successful as they learn from their mistakes and see failure as an opportunity to grow.

## Attitude Activity 2: Changing your mindset

Below are a series of negative thoughts you might have about yourself. Try to rephrase them into a more positive 'growth' mindset.

*'I've never been good at exams'*

*'Stuff like this always happens to me'*

*'I'm only going to fail, so what's the point in trying?'*

*'If I fail this mock, the whole term has been a disaster.'*

# A LEVEL MINDSET: ATTITUDE

## ATTITUDE

Being  
resilient and  
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constructively

At some point in our lives we will fail at something. Feeling like a failure is a common experience.

The failing itself is not the crucial part, it's how you respond to the failure that determines how fast you progress.

There are two different attitudes to failure according to Maxwell (2012) : Failing backwards (slows down progress) and failing forwards (enhances progress).

<b>Failing Backwards</b>	<b>Failing Forward</b>
<b>Blaming others.</b>	<b>Taking responsibility</b>
<b>Repeating the same mistake.</b>	<b>Learning from each mistake.</b>
<b>Expecting never to fail.</b>	<b>Understanding that failure is part of the learning process.</b>
<b>Expecting to fail continually.</b>	<b>Maintaining a positive attitude.</b>
<b>Being limited by past mistakes.</b>	<b>Challenging outdated assumptions.</b>
<b>Thinking 'I'm a failure!'</b>	<b>Taking risks.</b>
<b>Withdrawing effort.</b>	<b>Believing something didn't work.</b>
	<b>Persevering – never giving up!</b>

# EFFECTIVE REVISION

Take the revision questionnaire below to find out what techniques you use the most for revision.

Revision Task	Technique	Always	Sometimes	Never
Reading through notes	C			
Using online resources	C			
Using textbooks	C			
Mind Maps & Diagrams	C			
Making / Re Making notes	C			
Highlighting	C			
Flash cards	C			
Revision posters/wall	C			
Writing exam answers under timed conditions	S			
Reading model answers	S			
Planning out answers to past exam questions	S			
Marking your own work with a mark scheme	F			
Studying mark schemes or examiners reports	F			
Working with other students	F			
One to one discussion with teachers	F			
Creating your own exam questions	F			

C = Content Techniques

S = Skills Techniques

F = Feedback Techniques

Student B will perform better in their exams even though they do less hours of revision! Be SMART with your revision

Student A: Does 15 hours revision per week – all of it content techniques such as reading class notes.

Student B: Only does 10 hours revision per week – 2 hours making mind maps, 2 hours flash cards, 3 hours writing timed essays, 2 hours working through past papers, half an hour doing the hardest question they could find and half an hour talking it through with their teacher. They then spend the other 5 hours watching TV.

# EFFECTIVE REVISION

Here are some useful revision strategies!

Use a combination of content, skills and feedback techniques.

Make your own revision notes and condense them onto one side of paper.

Test yourself!  
Practise recalling material and answering exam Qs regularly

Take a break!  
Your brain cannot concentrate for long periods. Have a rest break every 2 hours.

Treat yourself!  
After every block of revision reward yourself with a chocolate bar or an hour watching the TV!

Make a revision timetable and **STICK** to it!

Practise!  
Complete the same exam Qs over and over. You should notice you get better each time! Try them against the clock!

Prioritise! Don't keep revising the topics you're confident on. Tackle the tricky topics you're less confident on first!

Use Acronyms Mnemonics and Memory Short cuts where you can to help the information stick in your long term memory!



# EFFECTIVE REVISION

One way to effectively manage your revision is through a study timetable. Map out the blocks of revision that you will complete per week and stick to the schedule. Designate specific revision block to specific subjects.

	8-10 am	10-12 am	12-2 pm	2-4 pm	4-6 pm	6-8 pm	8-10 pm
Mon							
Tues							
Weds							
Thurs							
Fri							
Sat							
Sun							



# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

## Mentally & Physically!

**Remember.... you can't perform your best if you're not feeling your best! Take care of your health first and foremost by...**

Talking to a friend, family member or teacher when you feel stressed or low.



Drinking plenty of water instead of caffeinated drinks or energy drinks which will just make you 'crash' later.



Snacking on fruit or nuts instead of high sugar food like chocolate.



Eating three healthy meals a day! Avoid skipping meals. Family dinner time at the end of the day helps you both psychologically and physically!



Getting enough sleep! Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day as a routine. Avoid looking at your phone in bed!



Making sure you have some regular 'you' time. Relax any way you prefer – soak in the bath, listen to music or read a book.



Exercising. It's a great way to relieve stress and keep the body healthy!



Avoiding long periods of time on social media. It'll only make you feel bad about yourself!



Being kind. Do a random act of kindness for someone each day.



# FANCY A CHALLENGE?

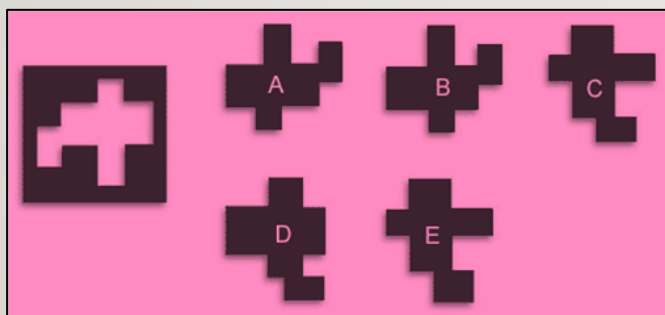
Psychological research has shown that the more you challenge your brain and use it, the more neural connections you form and strengthen. Have a go at the following brain teasers.

What is the **number** of the parking spot?

16   06   68   88      98

**People**  
buy me to eat,  
but never eat me.  
What am I?

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**WHERE IS THE PRISONER HIDING?**



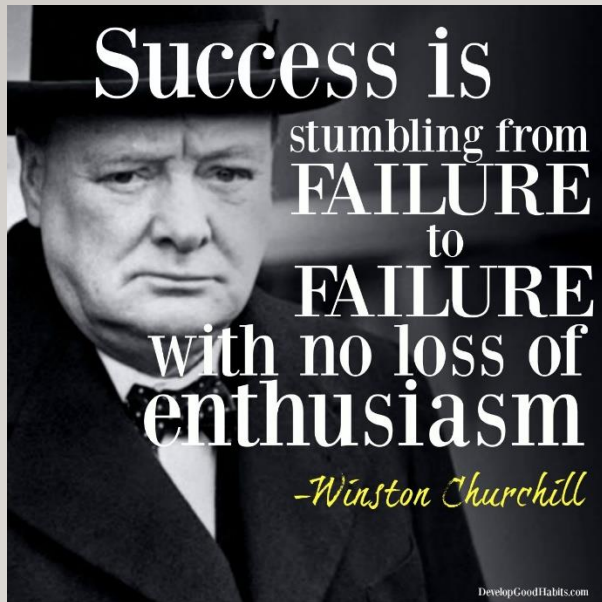
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$$\begin{aligned} \text{Apple} + \text{Apple} + \text{Apple} &= 120 \\ \text{Apple} + \text{Banana} + \text{Banana} &= 100 \\ \text{Banana} + \text{Grape} + \text{Apple} &= 105 \\ \text{Banana} + \text{Grape} &= ? \end{aligned}$$

BrainFans.com

$$\begin{aligned} \square + \square &= 8 \\ + & \\ \square - \square &= 6 \\ \parallel & \quad \parallel \\ 13 & \quad 8 \end{aligned}$$

# A LITTLE INSPIRATION...



"Most great people  
have attained  
their greatest  
success just one  
step beyond their  
greatest failure."

- Napoleon Hill

"HARD WORK BEATS  
TALENT WHEN TALENT  
DOESN'T WORK HARD"

THE BRIGHTER  
YOU ARE, THE  
MORE YOU  
HAVE TO  
LEARN.  
DON HEROLD

The capacity to learn  
is a gift; The  
ability to learn is a  
skill; The  
willingness to learn  
is a choice.

Brian Herbert

meetville.com



# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## Term Dates

Autumn Half Term 1	8th September 2025	24th October 2025
Autumn Half Term 2	3rd November 2025	19th December 2025
Spring Half Term 1	5th January 2026	13th February 2026
Spring Half Term 2	23rd February 2026	27th March 2026
Summer Half Term 1	13th April 2026	22nd May 2026
Summer Half Term 2	1st June 2026	23rd of July 2026

## INSET DAYS

4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> September 2025  
7<sup>th</sup> November 2025  
5<sup>th</sup> December 2025  
5<sup>th</sup> January 2026  
26<sup>th</sup> June 2026



# My Timetable

Fill out your timetable here – don't forget you can access your timetable on the Arbor App

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Period 1					
Period 2					
Period 3					
Period 4					
Period 5					