

Smash your SATs!

Here are a few ideas that we have put together to help you in the days approaching your SATs.

'We' are Gill and Chris Pawley – Gill runs Inkpots Writing Workshops (www.inkpots.org) and Dr Chris is a physicist. Between us, we reckon that we know a few things that just might be useful for you in the next few days.

So, we're going to look at **three** areas where we thought we could offer some ideas – **getting yourself organised**, your **diet and sleep** and **relaxation**.

Sort yourself!

One of the easiest and best ways to help yourself prepare for your SATs is to get organised! If you think you are already very well sorted, then give yourself a big pat on your back. But, most of us actually need a bit of support from time-to-time. Being organised should mean that you don't forget things or lose stuff which is important – and this means you can concentrate:

- ✓ **Organise your time** You may feel that everyone has been talking about the SATs for so long now but actually the exams themselves only last a short time. But in that time, you should focus on them. You may have to decide to let some things you would usually do go – so have a look and see if you think you can fit everything in.
- ✓ **Organise your work** If your folders and books are a mess, you may need to sort through and get rid of any scraps of paper you don't need; these will only distract you when you're trying to revise.
- ✓ **Organise your school bag** Have a really good sort out! Throw away any old pens and pencils that don't work any more. Do you really need all the clutter in the bottom of your bag? If your bag is free from junk, then you will be able to find things more easily – and this all helps to keep things running smoothly during exam time. Make sure you have your favourite pens, pencils, rulers and so on close to hand though.
- ✓ **Organise your space** We are sure that lots of you have beautifully neat and tidy bedrooms...you do, don't you? Even so, make sure you know where all your school things are so that there is no last minute panic. If your room or bedroom space needs a tidy, now might be a good time to do it. You'll be able to find things quickly and easily – and so things will be less stressful on exam mornings.



DR CHRIS SAYS:

Here's the science bit. Your brain sees disorganised spaces as unfinished tasks. While it knows that something has to be done, it will keep thinking about it many hours or days later. Fixing these small, unfinished tasks will free your brain to think about more important things.

Ditch the sugar!

You may not want to read this bit – but stop eating rubbish things. NOW! THIS MOMENT! STOP!

We all have times when we eat way too much chocolates, sweets and biscuits (even us!) but it's a really good idea to avoid lots and lots of sugar in the run up to the SATS. Go on – try some fruit! You may even like it! You should also try to eat at regular intervals to keep your energy levels up. Talk to the adult in your house who looks after food – because they are sure to want to help out.

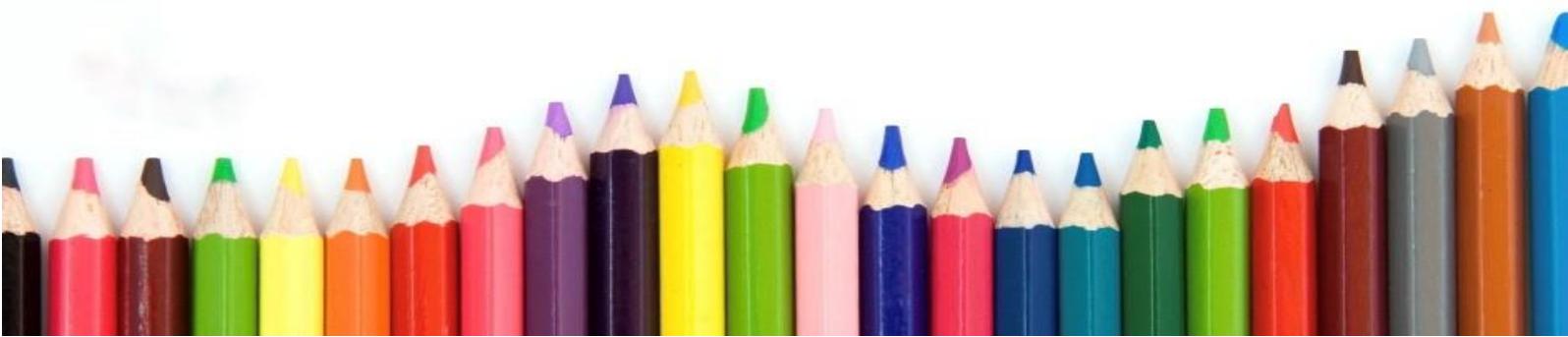
It's also really good to drink more water – to keep yourself hydrated. If you don't like the taste of water from the tap, try it as cold as possible. So add ice cubes, or keep a jug in the fridge. You may be lucky enough to have an ice dispenser in your fridge so make the most of that too. You could try flavoured water. Adding a slice of lemon or lime can make all the difference.

DR CHRIS SAYS:

Hydration is one of the easiest and biggest improvements you can make to both memory and attention. Keeping water in your brain lets the cells there work at their best. Your brain uses lots of your energy (about one quarter of everything you eat ends up powering your brain). To get this energy your brain needs glucose, which you can find in fruit and other good foods like nuts.

Sleep is important. Very important.

You should not be sleeping with your phone on your pillow! Get rid of iPads and turn the TV off well before you go to sleep. All these gadgets will keep you awake and that will not be a good thing on the days of exams.



DR CHRIS SAYS:

Many electronic devices give you a strange feeling. Computer screens, TVs, tablets and phones all have very white coloured screens. When it is late in the day, this white light is not normal (we're used to seeing a yellow/red light as the sun sets and it becomes night time). Your body thinks it's not night time, but actually lunch time! So then this makes it super difficult to go to sleep at the right time.

Chill out!

Some of you may already play lots of sports and may know that in the run up to SATs you'll be outside for some of the time. But in any case, it's important that at some stage – probably during the weekend before - get outside and get some fresh air. Leave your phone and iPad behind and just go out – get hold of some of your friends, take your dog for a walk or go into the countryside or visit the sea. The important thing is to do something that takes your mind off things and you can breathe in some lovely fresh air.

DR CHRIS SAYS:

Exercise releases two chemicals – one of them makes you feel happy and relaxed and that's what makes sport feel rewarding and enjoyable. The other one is a protective chemical which repairs damaged brain cells and makes new connections. This helps your memories to be made stronger and improves performance at important times (like SATs!).

And breathe...

This may seem really obvious because we are all breathing all the time, aren't we? But learning to breathe deeply and slowly when you feel yourself getting nervous, can really help you. You may have already been helped with this in class. Try these simple steps too.

- Close your eyes
- Take a big deep breath in through your nose
- Hold it for ten seconds – or count slowly to ten
- Then breathe out slowly through your mouth.
- Repeat – and think 'Calm IN. Stress OUT
- As you keep doing the slow breathing, think about a white light that is going to move from the top of your head all the way down your body.
- When the light gets to your feet, all your stress and worry will flow into the ground.
- Keep on breathing slowly and deeply for a few minutes. When you open your eyes, you should feel quite chilled out!



DR CHRIS SAYS:

Taking a few deep breaths helps to get more useful oxygen in to your body and pushes out more carbon dioxide. It helps your brain to relax and feel less anxious about the environment and helps lower heart rate and blood pressure. All of these factors help you to make your body relax and feel more confident that what you're doing is okay and that you can complete the tasks of the coming few moments. It's a way of you telling your own automatic 'fight or flight' system that nothing scary is going to happen soon.

If you follow these few simple steps, we hope that you will arrive at SATs week organised, calm and fresh. Your teachers and parents will have done everything to prepare you and you will know what to expect.

So now go and SMASH THOSE SATs!

Love from

Gill and Chris



GILL PAWLEY

Gill is a publications editor by training, and has run Inkpots for the past three years. She is passionate about helping children and young people express themselves through their reading, writing and drawing.

Gill has also seen Chris and his brother through lots, and lots of exams.



DR CHRIS PAWLEY

Chris is a lecturer in physics at Maastricht University in The Netherlands. His particular research interest is materials physics. Chris is also a visiting scientist at The University of Huddersfield, England.

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