**Approaching Exam Questions**

* Before you read the exam paper take three slow deep breaths, using a count of five for the in breath and five for the out breath, to calm your system and bring as much oxygen as possible to your brain. Note, this will only work if you have put in sufficient effort in the lead up to the test/exam. If you haven’t put in the work then your confidence will be low and you’ll feel anxious regardless of any breathing exercises.
* Scan the exam paper to see how many questions there are and to gain a feel for the topics. Start with a question that you feel confident with. This does not have to be question 1.
* Read the question through thoroughly once. Ask yourself what topic is being tested in this question? Reading through the question entirely will allow you to pick up clues from the examiner and show you the context and direction that the question will take. Sometimes later parts of the question are helpful in knowing how to answer earlier parts. According to AQA students often find the first part of questions difficult and give up. They actively encourage students to read through the question in its entirety.
* Read the introduction to the question again (this is described as the stem of the question), this time highlighting/underlining key command words (describe, explain, discuss, evaluate) and any key vocabulary or clues. The introductory section and part a), including sub sections are always related. Consider scribbling notes or drawing small diagrams to help you interpret the information
* Read the first question highlighting/underlying key vocabulary and key command words. Notice in particular the words that appear in bold, the examiner is trying to draw your attention to these words. Note the number of marks available.
* Answer the question using concise, precise bullet points; one for every mark available. Check that you have used key A level biological vocabulary. Use the space to demonstrate to the examiner what you have learnt in lessons. They want to be impressed with your knowledge. They’re not trying to catch you out.
* Check that you’ve answered what you’ve been asked. Check that you’ve used information from the stem of the question and any information included in tables, graphs and diagrams. Examiners frequently complain that students ignore the information that’s given to them.
* For maths questions, gain confidence by looking at the information and seeing if you can approximate what the answer should be. Then check your calculation to see if your answer seems reasonable.

**Use this advice when you complete your question packs at home. It will seem arduous at first, but with practice you will do all of it automatically and quickly.**