

The Year 13 *Survival Plan*

A term-by-term plan for A-Level Chemistry and Maths: a guide for parents and a toolkit for students, so the final year ends with results that reflect real ability.

A-LEVEL CHEMISTRY

A-LEVEL MATHS

2026-27

For parents

What really changes in Year 13, the dates that matter, and how to help without becoming the homework police.

For students

A weekly rhythm, a past-paper method that works, an error log, and subject-specific priorities.

Why Year 13 catches good students out

Every year, families call us after a set of mock results that didn't make sense. The student is bright. They work hard. They got top grades at GCSE. And the usual explanation is that the teacher was the problem.

Sometimes it is. Far more often, something else is going on. The methods that carried a capable student through GCSE (re-reading notes, last-minute cramming, relying on being quick) stop working at A-Level. The content is deeper, the questions are synoptic, and the exams reward students who can apply ideas to situations they have never seen before.

A new teacher rarely fixes a strategy problem. A student who learns to diagnose their own mistakes takes that skill into every subject.

Signs it is a strategy issue

- ◆ Hours of revision, but marks don't move
- ◆ "I understood it in class, then went blank in the exam"
- ◆ Strong on familiar questions, lost on unfamiliar ones
- ◆ Marks dropped in long multi-step or "explain" questions
- ◆ Avoiding past papers, or only doing the easy topics

What changes when it is fixed

- ◆ Your child can tell you *why* they lost marks
- ◆ Revision becomes shorter, more focused and calmer
- ◆ Conversations at home get easier
- ◆ They approach teachers with specific questions
- ◆ Confidence comes from evidence, not hope

This guide gives you the full year in one place: the key dates, a plan for each term, how to support your child, and a toolkit they can start using this week.

Nader Fadaee

Founder, Better Life Tuition · Chemistry Learning Mentor

Key dates, 2026–27

Mock dates vary by school, so add your child's own dates to this list. Exam board timetables are confirmed nearer the time; check the final timetable with the school.

15 Oct 2026	●	UCAS deadline: Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary 6pm UK time. Most schools set an earlier internal deadline.
Nov–Jan VARIES	○	Year 13 mock exams Often the first full-length papers under exam conditions. Results can shape predicted grades and how much time is left to respond.
13 Jan 2027	●	UCAS equal consideration deadline 6pm UK time, for most undergraduate courses.
Feb HALF-TERM	○	Mock review and gap-closing The best week of the year to fix weak topics before content teaching ends.
Easter HOLIDAYS	○	Full past-paper practice Timed papers, marked against the mark scheme, with an error log.
w/c 10 May 2027	●	A-Level exam season begins Most subjects finish by Friday 18 June.
2 Jun 2027	○	UCAS reply deadline For applicants with all their decisions by 12 May. Unanswered offers are declined automatically.
12 Aug 2027	●	A-Level results day Clearing is already open by then. Have a plan B ready beforehand rather than making it on the day.

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Roughly 25 school weeks between October and the first exam. Each one counts. The plan on the next page splits them into three phases, each with a clear job.

Three terms, three jobs

Each term has one main purpose. Students who know what phase they're in stop trying to do everything at once.

AUTUMN · SEP-DEC

Build the engine

Habits before hours

STUDENT

- ◆ Set a fixed weekly rhythm (see page 6)
- ◆ Close Year 12 gaps now: they resurface in synoptic questions
- ◆ Start an error log from the first homework
- ◆ One timed past-paper section a week
- ◆ Finish personal statement and UCAS early

PARENT

- ◆ Find out mock dates and predicted grades
- ◆ Agree when study happens, not how long
- ◆ Ask what they're stuck on, not what they did

SPRING · JAN-APR

Turn mocks into data

Diagnose, then target

STUDENT

- ◆ Sort every lost mark into a cause: knowledge, method, reading the question, or time
- ◆ Rebuild the revision plan around the top three causes
- ◆ Switch from notes to retrieval: flashcards, blank-page recall, questions
- ◆ Easter: full timed papers, marked strictly

PARENT

- ◆ React to the analysis, not the grade
- ◆ Ask the school which topics cost most marks
- ◆ If marks aren't moving by February, get help early

SUMMER · APR-JUN

Exam mode

Sharp, rested, rehearsed

STUDENT

- ◆ Mostly past papers and mark schemes now
- ◆ Re-test every error log entry once more
- ◆ Practise in real exam timings and conditions
- ◆ Protect sleep: memory consolidates overnight
- ◆ Short daily review, not all-night sessions

PARENT

- ◆ Keep the house calm and routines steady
- ◆ Food, sleep and a bit of exercise matter more now
- ◆ Talk about plan B before results day

The one habit that matters most

After every test, homework or past paper, your child should be able to answer one question: *"Exactly why did I lose those marks, and what will I do differently next time?"* Students who can answer it improve. Students who can't tend to repeat the same mistakes, however many hours they put in.

How to help without becoming the homework police

At 17 or 18, your child needs to feel the work is theirs. The goal is to build agency, so their effort comes from within rather than from pressure at home. What you say, and when, makes a real difference.

What to say instead

INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
"How much revision did you do today?"	"What did you get stuck on today?"
"You got an A* at GCSE, what happened?"	"What's different about these exams compared to GCSE?"
"Your teacher clearly isn't explaining it."	"Which questions lost the most marks? What would you ask your teacher about them?"
"You need to work harder."	"Is it a knowledge gap, a method gap, or running out of time?"
"Don't worry, you'll be fine."	"What's your plan for the next two weeks? How can I help?"

The 48 hours after bad mocks

- ◆ Let the disappointment land; don't rush to fix it
- ◆ Wait a day before going through the papers together
- ◆ Focus on the pattern, not the grade
- ◆ Agree one or two concrete changes, not ten

Questions to ask the school

- ◆ What are the current predicted grades, and what are they based on?
- ◆ Which topics or question types cost the most marks?
- ◆ Are there intervention sessions or clinics?
- ◆ When does content teaching finish?

Your Year 13 toolkit

You don't need more hours. You need a method that shows you where marks are going and fixes it. Here it is.

1 · The weekly rhythm

- ◆ **Within 24 hours of each lesson:** 15 minutes of recall. Close the book and write down what you remember, then check.
- ◆ **Twice a week per subject:** mixed questions from older topics (spaced practice).
- ◆ **Once a week:** one timed past-paper section, marked with the mark scheme.
- ◆ **Sunday, 20 minutes:** review the error log and plan the week.

2 · The past-paper loop

- ◆ **Attempt** under timed conditions, with no notes.
- ◆ **Mark** strictly with the official mark scheme. Read the examiner's report too.
- ◆ **Diagnose** every lost mark: knowledge, method, misreading, or time.
- ◆ **Fix** it: redo the question a few days later without looking.
- ◆ **Log** it, and re-test in two weeks.

3 · Your error log

Copy this into a notebook or spreadsheet. This one table will do more for your grade than re-reading any set of notes.

PAPER / Q	TOPIC	MARKS LOST	CAUSE	WHAT I'LL DO NEXT TIME	RE-TESTED
Paper 2 Q5c	Buffer pH	3 / 4	Method	Write [HA] and [A ⁻] before substituting; check which is which	✓ 2 wks

Why this works across every subject

Recalling information, spacing it out and getting honest feedback are among the most reliable study techniques in learning research. Once you can see the cause of your mistakes, you're in control, and that carries into every subject and well beyond Year 13.

Where the marks hide

These are the areas where capable students tend to lose the most marks. Check them against your own exam board's specification.

A-LEVEL CHEMISTRY

Calculations

Moles, K_c and K_p , pH and buffers, and Born–Haber cycles. Show every step and units. Method marks can still earn credit when the final answer is wrong.

Organic mechanisms and synthesis

Curly arrows have to start and end in exactly the right place. Build one synthesis map that links every functional group, and practise multi-step routes.

Practical skills

Questions on required practicals, uncertainty, and evaluating methods come up on the written papers, not just in the lab. The practical endorsement is assessed separately.

Explain and compare questions

Learn the mark scheme language. “Stronger intermolecular forces” earns nothing unless you name the force and say why.

A-LEVEL MATHS

Pure: proof, calculus, algebra

Integration techniques, differential equations, and proof by contradiction. Small algebra slips cost the most marks, so write neatly and check each line.

“Show that” questions

The answer is given, so the marks are all in the working. Every step needs to be visible and justified.

Statistics and the large data set

Hypothesis testing conclusions need to be in context. Get to know your board's large data set early; questions assume you're familiar with it.

Mechanics and modelling

Draw a force diagram every time. Be ready to criticise or refine the model you used (“the particle is assumed to be...”).

For both subjects

Synoptic questions draw on Year 12 content. Use your calculator well (practise its statistics and table functions in Maths). For long questions, write down what you're given and what you need to find before you start.

SELF-CHECK

Is Year 13 on track?

Parents and students: answer these together. Tick each one that's honestly true right now.

- ☐ We know the mock dates and the current predicted grades.
- ☐ There's a fixed weekly study rhythm, and it's mostly followed.
- ☐ Revision is mostly recall and questions, not re-reading or highlighting.
- ☐ At least one timed past-paper section is done each week.
- ☐ Lost marks are logged, and their cause is known.
- ☐ Year 12 gaps have been identified and are being closed.
- ☐ The student asks teachers specific questions, not just "I don't get it".
- ☐ Conversations about school at home are mostly calm.

7–8 ticks

Strong foundations. Keep the rhythm going and stay consistent.

4–6 ticks

A few gaps. Pick the two that matter most and fix them this month.

0–3 ticks

Time to act. The earlier in the year you start, the more time there is to turn it around.

BETTER LIFE TUITION

Want a second pair of eyes on *this year?*

We work with families of A-Level Chemistry and Maths students to find out what's really costing marks, and to build the confidence and independence that carry into every subject. Book a 20-minute call and we'll talk through where your child is and what would help most.

Book a call · betterlifetuition.com