

Revision Suggestions for Using Your Workbooks

How to get the most out of every book — plus AI practice and group study that actually work

AQA (8700) · for first assessment summer 2026 · passgcseenglish.co.uk

Using your workbooks

AI practice

Group study



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SECTION

How to Use a Workbook Properly

Every workbook in this series is built the same way: notes, then a worked example, then practice, then a check. That order is not decoration. It is the difference between recognising something and being able to do it under timed conditions.

Four habits get you most of the value.

1 Write in it. Do not read it.

These are workbooks, not revision guides. The ruled space is sized to the task — if a question is worth 20 marks, the space tells you roughly how much is expected. Reading a worked example and thinking “yes, I see how that works” is the single most common way to waste a book. You have not learned it until you have produced it.

2 Attempt before you check.

Every answer section is at the back, deliberately. Attempt the whole exercise, then check. If you check as you go, you are copying, and you will not find out what you actually knew until the exam tells you.

3 One unit at a time, spaced out.

A unit is designed to be a single sitting — twenty to forty minutes. Four units in one evening feels productive and is largely wasted; the material does not get time to settle. Two units a week for six weeks beats twelve units in a weekend, every time.

4 Go back to the ones you got wrong.

Mark your own work honestly, then put a date in the margin and come back to those specific questions two weeks later. The questions you got right are not where the marks are.

If you only do one thing

After finishing a unit, write three or four sentences of your own using what it taught — not an exercise from the book, just your own writing. That is the step that moves a skill from the page into the exam.

SECTION

Using AI to Practise – Without Letting It Do the Work

AI is genuinely useful for GCSE English revision, and genuinely dangerous. The line is simple: **it should coach you, never write for you**. An answer it produced teaches you nothing, and examiners are increasingly good at spotting writing that is fluent, generic and empty.

■ What it is good at

- ✓ Generating unlimited practice questions in the style you need.
- ✓ Explaining why an answer is weak, once you have written it yourself.
- ✓ Quizzing you on vocabulary, techniques or terminology.
- ✓ Playing examiner — giving you a level and telling you what would lift it.
- ✓ Producing a text to analyse, so you are not re-reading the same extract.

■ What it must never do

- ✓ Write your answer, or any part of it you then copy.
- ✓ Give you “the ten best quotes” to memorise and drop in.
- ✓ Rewrite your paragraph so you can hand in its version.

■ Prompts that actually work

Vague prompts get vague help. These four are worth keeping.

To get feedback: “Here is my answer to a GCSE English Language Paper 1 Question 2. Do not rewrite it. Tell me which level it is working at, name the one change that would lift it a level, and explain why — then let me try again.”

To generate practice: “Write a 350-word 19th-century-style fiction extract about a character arriving somewhere unfamiliar. Then write one Question 2 asking about a single specific effect. Do not answer it.”

To be quizzed: “Test me on these ten words one at a time. Give me a sentence with the word missing and three options. Do not tell me the answer until I have chosen.”

To check your reasoning: “I said this metaphor creates tension because of X. Argue against me. What would a strong counter-reading be?”

■ Two things to watch

It gets mark schemes wrong

AI will confidently invent level descriptors and mark allocations. Check anything it says about how marks are awarded against your board's specification, or against the workbook in front of you.

It flatters you

Ask “is this good?” and it will usually say yes. Ask “what level is this, and why is it not higher?” and you get something you can actually use.

SECTION

Running Your Own Group Study Session

Marking someone else's writing teaches you more than writing your own, because you have to decide what is good and say why. That is exactly the judgement the exam is testing. Two or three people is enough — more than four and it stops working.

■ A 45-minute format that works

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS
0–5 min	Agree the question and the criteria. Everyone writes the criteria at the top of their own page.
5–25 min	Everyone writes the same answer, in silence, to time. No phones, no talking.
25–35 min	Swap papers. Mark someone else's using the rules below. Write comments, not corrections.
35–45 min	Read out the best single sentence from the paper you marked, and say why it works.

■ The peer marking rules

- ✓ **Comment, do not correct.** Underline what works and write why. Do not rewrite their sentence.
- ✓ **Be specific.** “Good vocabulary” is useless. “Listless is exact here — it tells me they are not just tired but uninterested” is useful.
- ✓ **Name one thing to change.** One. Not a list. The single change that would lift it most.
- ✓ **Give it a level, and justify it.** Being wrong about the level matters far less than having to explain your reasoning.

■ Ending on the best sentence

Reading out the strongest sentence from someone else's paper is the most valuable ten minutes of the session. It forces you to articulate what good writing does, and everyone hears three or four examples of it working. It also means nobody leaves feeling flattened, which matters if you want to do it again next week.

If you are on your own

Mark your own work from a fortnight ago rather than something you wrote today. You will read it almost like a stranger's, and you will see things you were blind to at the time.

SECTION

Putting It Together

A workable pattern, if you want one, for the months before the exam.

EACH WEEK	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
Two units	From whichever workbook targets your weakest area. Written in, checked against the answers.
One own piece	Three or four sentences, or a paragraph, using what those units taught. Not an exercise.
One AI session	Twenty minutes. Practice questions or feedback on something you already wrote.
One group session	Forty-five minutes, if you can find one other person. Fortnightly is fine.
Revisit	Ten minutes on the questions you got wrong a fortnight ago.

That is around two hours a week. It is more useful than five hours of rereading, and it is sustainable for months, which rereading is not.

■ The one thing worth remembering

English is not something you are either good at or not. It is a set of specific, learnable skills — choosing the right word, explaining an effect, structuring an argument, punctuating with control. Each one can be practised, and each one has a workbook behind it. Students who treat English as technique rather than talent outperform students who wait to feel inspired.

WHAT NEXT

Pick the workbook that matches your weakest area

Not the one that looks most appealing — the one that targets the thing costing you marks. If you are unsure which that is, ask your English teacher a single question: which assessment objective am I weakest on? The answer points straight at a book.

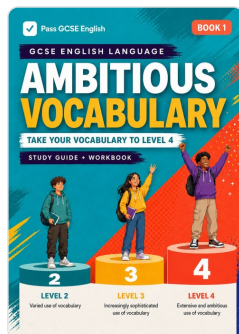
The full range is on the last page

Eleven workbooks, one skill each, with a QR code that takes you straight to the website.

THE COMPLETE RANGE

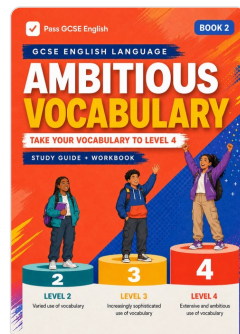
Eleven workbooks, one skill each

Every book targets one specific place students lose marks — not a general topic area. All are A4, write-in, with a full answers section, and all are written for AQA English Language 8700.



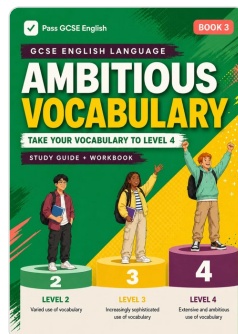
Ambitious Vocabulary — Book 1

104pp · Inner states, character, argument, place



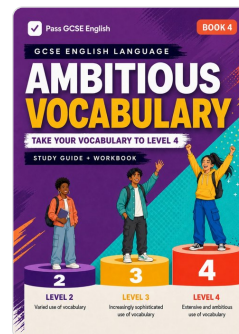
Ambitious Vocabulary — Book 2

104pp · Power, conflict, time and change



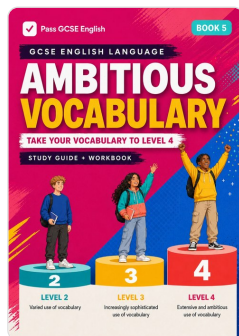
Ambitious Vocabulary — Book 3

104pp · Society, evidence, judgement and doubt



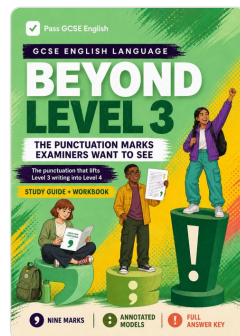
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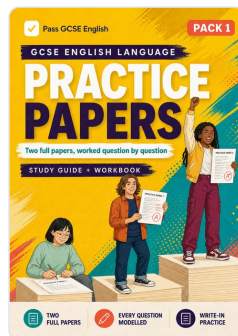
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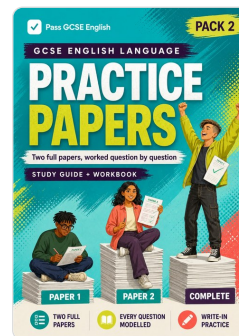
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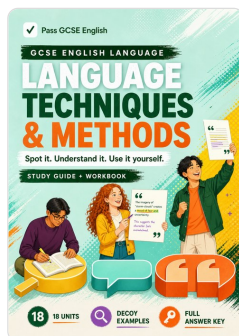
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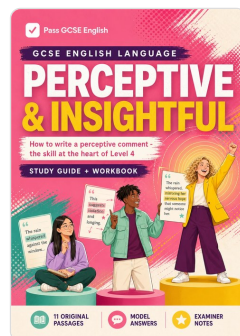
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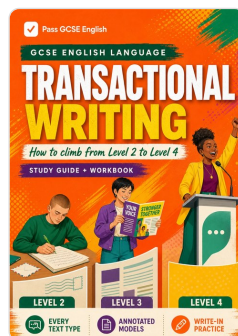
Language Techniques & Methods

164pp · Spot it, explain the effect, use it on purpose



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144pp · The comment that separates Level 3 from Level 4



Transactional Writing

124pp · Paper 2 Question 5 — half the paper, rebuilt

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