



BIRMINGHAM CITY  
University

# REVISION HACKS

Revision tips to help  
you survive your exams



When exams get closer, we should increase the amount of time that we spend revising and make a plan for revision.

However, it is important to identify how you best study and revise early on. This will help you throughout your studies.

So let this guide give you a helping hand with some tips about revision and exams.

### Happy revising!

## WHAT TYPE OF REVISER ARE YOU? TAKE THE QUIZ!

Everyone's brain works differently and it can be good to use a variety of different techniques when revising. Are flash cards your thing? Or do you prefer diagrams or mind maps? Take this quiz to find out.



### If you mostly answered As

You remember things better when you see something visual that explains the topics you're studying.

#### Try these revision tips:

- Draw your own diagrams, cartoons or illustrations to remember big or difficult topics.
- Watch a video or documentary.
- You can't draw everything – add smaller doodles to your notes.
- Find infographics, posters and other visual resources online to help you.



### If you mostly answered Bs

You learn best by listening to someone talk about a subject and then discussing it through.

#### These tips are also worth a try:

- Teach someone. This involves discussion, understanding and interpretation, and is ideal for remembering your topic.
- Use audiobooks.
- Record yourself and play it back to yourself on the bus. Or recite what you know about a topic when you're doing the washing up.



### If you mostly answered Cs

Old fashioned written notes work best for you, but try these tricks to save time and avoid boredom.

#### Why not have a go with these ideas?

- Post-it notes. Everywhere!
- Flash cards. For the epic note taker, these smaller cards help you focus on what's important.
- Make a 'cheat sheet'. Include essential facts and answers to things that are worrying you.

# YOUR SECRET WEAPON AGAINST REVISION

Mind maps work for any type of studying, be it essays, revising, presentations, or coursework projects. Here are our five reasons why we love mind maps!

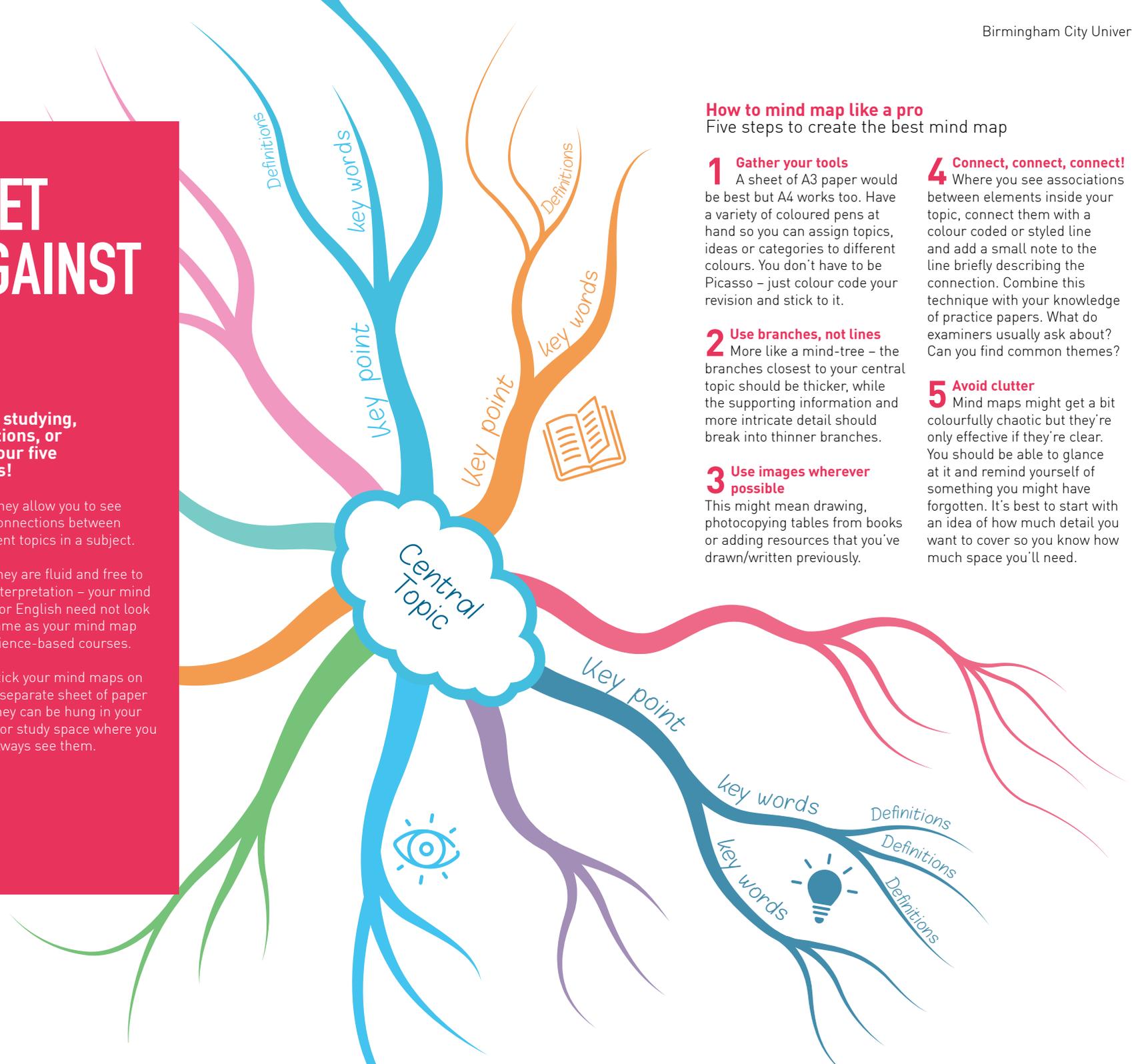
**1** You know how you get tired of looking at revision books? It might be because you find them boring but it's also because you're only consuming one type of information. Mind maps, on the other hand, harness the full range of skills – word, image, number, logic, rhythm, colour and spatial awareness – all at once. This activates more parts of your brain and improves your memory.

**2** Mind maps allow you to present large amounts of information on one page by creating associations between image, word and colour.

**3** They allow you to see connections between different topics in a subject.

**4** They are fluid and free to interpretation – your mind map for English need not look the same as your mind map for science-based courses.

**5** Stick your mind maps on a separate sheet of paper and they can be hung in your room or study space where you can always see them.



## How to mind map like a pro

Five steps to create the best mind map

**1 Gather your tools**  
A sheet of A3 paper would be best but A4 works too. Have a variety of coloured pens at hand so you can assign topics, ideas or categories to different colours. You don't have to be Picasso – just colour code your revision and stick to it.

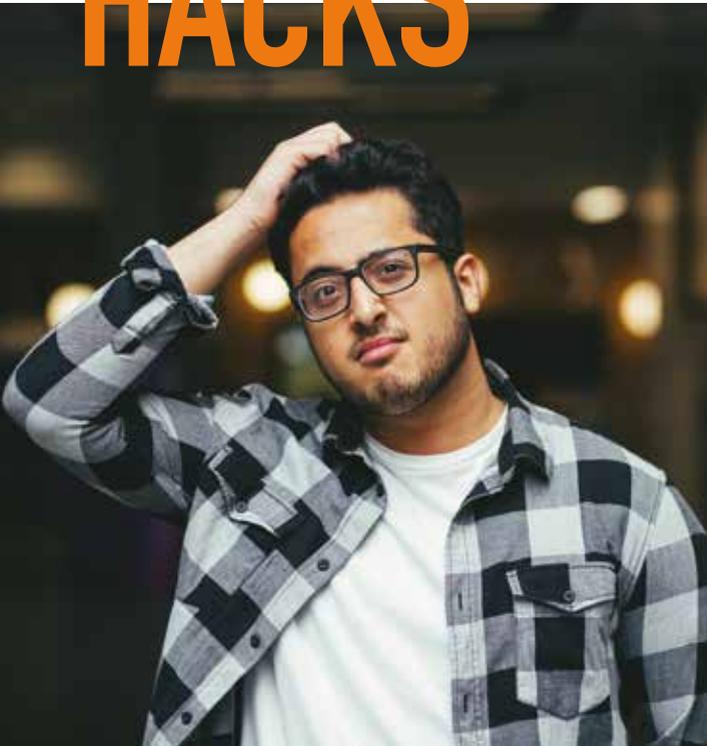
**2 Use branches, not lines**  
More like a mind-tree – the branches closest to your central topic should be thicker, while the supporting information and more intricate detail should break into thinner branches.

**3 Use images wherever possible**  
This might mean drawing, photocopying tables from books or adding resources that you've drawn/written previously.

**4 Connect, connect, connect!**  
Where you see associations between elements inside your topic, connect them with a colour coded or styled line and add a small note to the line briefly describing the connection. Combine this technique with your knowledge of practice papers. What do examiners usually ask about? Can you find common themes?

**5 Avoid clutter**  
Mind maps might get a bit colourfully chaotic but they're only effective if they're clear. You should be able to glance at it and remind yourself of something you might have forgotten. It's best to start with an idea of how much detail you want to cover so you know how much space you'll need.

# REVISION HACKS



**“CLEAR YOUR MIND BEFORE REVISING. TAKE A WALK OR LISTEN TO YOUR FAVOURITE MUSIC SO YOUR MIND DOESN'T WANDER OFF ONTO SOMETHING ELSE WHILE REVISING.”**

TINA KODRA  
Psychology student



**PROBLEM**

I have four exams and a resit. I don't know what to focus on first!

**HACK**

Start with the subject that gives you the most trouble. Even if the exam you're dreading the most is the last one you sit, you will need to spend more time on it. You'll feel more confident if you dedicate more time to it.

**“REMEMBER TO TREAT YOURSELF – A DAY OFF OR A SHOPPING TRIP.”**

SOTON MANUEL  
Sociology student



**PROBLEM:**

I just haven't got a clue how to get started.

**HACK:**

Show what you know. Pick a topic and write down everything you know about it. This will show you what you need to learn and which areas you need to focus on.



**“MAKE A PLAN TO REVISE A BIT EVERY DAY.”**

ANDREEA DALIA BLAGA  
Digital Media  
Technology student

**PROBLEM:**

I find it really hard to start because I get distracted.

**HACK:**

When you're revising, everything else seems more fun and it's hard not to sneak a little look at social media after you've written a paragraph of notes. To stop your phone distracting you, try:

- Putting it on airplane mode
- Placing it in another room or with a family member
- Lock it by entering the wrong password – this will make it unusable for a period of time.

**PROBLEM:**

I'm completely unmotivated.

**HACK:**

Reward yourself...  
...with sweets or a healthier snack. Use small food that comes in large quantities and space them out across the pages of your work books and notes. Once you've completed a page you can treat yourself.



**PROBLEM**

I'm finding it hard to manage my time.

**HACK**

How does anyone have time to do everything with exams coming up?! The answer? Lots of planning. Start with filling out the revision timetable in this booklet, but for your study sessions the Pomodoro technique is king. It involves setting a timer for 25 minutes and working on an activity until the timer rings, then taking a five-minute break. Repeat this three times and then take a 30 minute break.

**Quick hacks**

- 1 Type in a sans-serif font like Arial. They are fast fonts to read which is why they are used for nearly everything!
- 2 Spray an unfamiliar scent. This can make you more alert if you're tired.
- 3 Listen to music but not something you like, it's distracting! Try something instrumental.

# MY REVISION TIMETABLE

Set concrete goals, reward yourself when you complete the goal and think about what you will achieve by studying for the exam. ▶▶

SOTON MANUEL  
Sociology student

Make your revision timetable as realistic as possible. Don't bother filling the whole day with revision if you know you won't stick to it, instead start off with revising for one or two hours a day and then increase the time as you get more into it. ▶▶

TINA KODRA  
Psychology student

Download your blank weekly template at

[bcu.ac.uk/revision-table](https://bcu.ac.uk/revision-table) 

## How to plan your timetable

Having trouble starting your revision? Get motivated with a timetable. If you don't know how to make a good one, we've got your back. Just follow these five steps:

**1. Colour code your sessions** to match your syllabus. Having trouble with biology? Mark it red.



**2. Use the Pomodoro method** (which this timetable is built around). Split your revision into 25 minute slots with a five minute break.



**3. Be sure to build in a break** when you come back from work or college - beware of burnout!



**4. Avoid distractions** by turning off your phone or putting it on airplane mode with the internet turned off.



**5. Traffic light your syllabus** Find out what topic needs the most attention and which ones you know well - do this by marking your syllabus. This will allow you to timetable more sessions for the subjects you're struggling with and highlight specific topics in those subjects.

### Follow this rule:

 If this came up in the exam, I'd have no idea what to write about.

 I know what this topic is about but couldn't answer an in-depth question.

 I've got a good understanding of this and I've performed well with this topic on practice papers. I just need to have a regular review.

## MONDAY

8.30 10.30AM		5 MIN BREAK		5 MIN BREAK		5 MIN BREAK		30 MIN BREAK
		5 MIN BREAK		5 MIN BREAK		5 MIN BREAK		30 MIN BREAK
2-4 PM		5 MIN BREAK		5 MIN BREAK		5 MIN BREAK		30 MIN BREAK
4.30 6.30 PM		5 MIN BREAK		5 MIN BREAK		5 MIN BREAK		30 MIN BREAK
<b>DINNER</b>								
<b>EVENING</b>	<i>Fit your timetable around your days off. Sometimes you might have work or college so slot in morning and evening sections accordingly.</i>							

## KEY DATES

START  Exams begin

MID  BTEC exams are over!

END  GCSE and A Level exams are over!

MID  (Onwards) BTEC results

 A Level results

 GCSE results

# ANSWERING EXAM QUESTIONS

**YOU'VE LEARNED, YOU'VE REVISED, BUT NOW YOU'RE SAT IN THE EXAM HALL WONDERING HOW ON EARTH YOU'RE MEANT TO GO ABOUT ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS IN FRONT OF YOU...**

Getting all that knowledge out of your head and down onto paper is more than tricky. So here's the good, the bad and the ugly of answering exam questions to make it a whole lot easier.

If you're doing a coursework-only subject or qualification, your uni degree may well include exams, so these tips will be useful to help prepare you for all kinds of assessments.



## THE GOOD

### Prep prep prep!

Get to know your exam. How many questions are there? How many marks are at stake? How long should your answers be? Ask your teachers, practise with old exam papers and get in the know!

### The question!

The question is your friend, it's there to help. Make sure you understand it. Identify key words and what it's asking you to do. Discuss? Evaluate? Compare? Outline?

### PEE!

Always remember to PEE all over your exam. Point. Evidence. Explain. A nice easy structure that's easy to remember and carry out. Make your point, back it up with some evidence and then explain it. Structure can make or break a good exam answer and this technique, as recommended by our student Soton, is a winner.

## THE BAD

### Panic!

You've got this. You've done your prep, you know your structure, so don't dive straight in. You have time so use it. Flick through the paper, read all the questions and spend a few minutes planning your answer.

### Waffle!

Absolutely make sure you avoid waffle! You need to be clear and concise. Our student Andreea suggests writing down everything about the topic and then selecting the relevant bits to include in your answer.

### Post-mortems!

It's over. The exam paper has been collected in. You can't change anything. Make sure you get it out of your head and focus on your next exam. Then when they're over, go and enjoy summer!

## THE UGLY

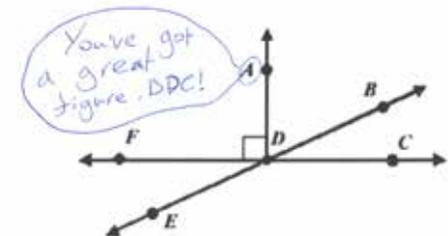
If all our top tips go out the window, remember you won't be having as bad of a time as these:

7. Briefly explain what hard water is

Ice

(2)

2. Name an angle complimentary to BDC:



6) Overpopulation has been an issue in several countries. What do you think is the best solution for overpopulation?

THE HUNGER GAMES!

(3 Marks)

“

If you hadn't considered university before or your results weren't what you expected, go through Clearing. You have nothing to lose but potentially everything to gain.

Charmaine Boulter

# WHAT IS CLEARING?

**A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF STUDENTS GAIN THEIR UNIVERSITY PLACE THROUGH UCAS CLEARING. STUDENTS MAY CHANGE THEIR MIND ABOUT WHERE TO GO OR WHAT TO STUDY, THEIR RESULTS WERE DIFFERENT TO WHAT THEY EXPECTED OR THEY HADN'T CONSIDERED UNIVERSITY UNTIL RESULTS DAY. WHATEVER THE REASON, CLEARING MIGHT BE AN OPTION FOR YOU.**

## **1** I'm worried about my exam results

If you're worried you might not get into your first choice, why not plan a backup option just in case? Rhiannon didn't get the results she wanted, but with a bit of research she found out what Clearing courses were available.

**“Going through Clearing doesn't make you stupid or a failure, it just means that things didn't go to plan and you're weighing up the rest of your options.”**

Rhiannon Fidler

## **2** I can't decide if I want to go to uni

Go to uni / don't go to uni / go to uni / don't go to uni. If you change your mind more than the weather, you've still got time to make your decision! That's just what happened to Building Surveying student Scott.

**“At first, I didn't want to go to university but a lot of my friends were and I got caught up in the whole buzz of it.”**

Scott Vallyley

**CLEARING HELPS STUDENTS WHO DON'T HAVE ANY OFFERS TO FIND COURSES WHERE PLACES ARE STILL AVAILABLE. IT ALSO APPLIES TO THOSE WHO APPLY LATE.**

## **3** I chose the wrong subject

You may change your mind about what subject you want to study and you may be unsure as to whether you made the right choice.

When Hilary decided jewellery design was more her thing than the chemistry course she applied for, Clearing was the perfect option.

**“I was happy to be free to try again and apply to a course through Clearing.”**

Hilary Ogden

## **4** I chose the wrong city

Deciding where you want to live can be a difficult decision, particularly if exploring a unknown city. If you have changed your mind about where you'd like to study, Clearing is an ideal chance to re-think your new home town.

**“As soon as I'd found out I could go to a uni closer to home and better than my insurance choice, it was a no brainer for me to see if BCU had the course I wanted. Birmingham is somewhere I wanted to study - the nightlife is one of the best in the country and it's central to other cities.”**

Suneet Patel (from Bolton)

## KEY DATES

START  
5 JUL

Clearing opens  
**Already got your results? Beat the queue!**

MID  
18 AUG

A Level Results Day  
**Call us as soon as you have your grades.**

## WHAT TO DO NEXT

### **1. Start your research**

It's never too early! Have a look at what courses and universities are available.

### **2. Follow social media accounts**

Change this to: Find the universities you're interested in on your favourite social media platform for the latest news and student stories. You'll find our accounts on the back of this booklet.

### **3. Sign up for updates**

Many universities send out regular emails, which are a great way to get to know more about the places you want to study, and be the first to hear about courses available in Clearing.

# CAMPUS VISIT DAYS



## OPEN DAYS

Open Days are a big part of picking a university. They are your chance to get a flavour of what being a student is like at different unis. You are welcome to attend these at any age - you may wish to visit when making your mind up about what to study at level three at sixth form or college. Or you may want to attend once you have done your research about where you might like to study. And you can attend as many as you like!

Some people like to come by themselves. Some like to have other people's opinions too. Parents and friends are welcome to come with you and have a look around too.

You get the opportunity to go to subject talks, meet academics from the course you are interested in, chat to current students about uni life and have tours around the campus and accommodation.



**THERE ARE MANY WAYS YOU CAN PREPARE YOURSELF FOR UNIVERSITY. HERE ARE JUST SOME EVENTS THAT YOU CAN ATTEND TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE COURSES YOU MAY WISH TO STUDY AT BCU.**



## EXPLORE DAYS

These events are based at one of our campuses and give you the opportunity to experience several different workshops over the course of one day. They allow you to broaden your understanding of the different courses available in one area. Really helpful if you are still making your mind up about which course to choose from a particular area.



## SUBJECT MASTERCLASSES

These give you direct access to academic expertise at our campus. They allow you to develop a deeper understanding of current issues within your chosen subject area. They are often a mini lecture or practical session lasting an hour or two, and can be a way of gaining experience in your subject area. And can be a great thing to discuss in your personal statement.

## APPLICANT TASTER DAYS

These days are for students that receive an offer on the course they have applied to. Although you don't have to attend these to get onto the course, the day gives you the chance to have a real insight into what it'll be like being a student on your chosen course. And you'll get to meet some of your future classmates too!

So it helps to make your mind up about whether you definitely made the right choice and prepares you for your transition to university.



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