

# SIXTH FORM STUDY SKILLS

## Summer Homework booklet

A guide for your success and practical activities to help you develop  
the skills needed

A Level Philosophy and Ethics  
RIBSTON HALL HIGH SCHOOL

## WELCOME

Thank you for opting to study Philosophy and Ethics A Level at Ribston Hall High School. Philosophy and Ethics is an engaging, academic and thought provoking subject and we are delighted that you want to learn more about it.

Philosophy and Ethics gives you many skills that will be transferable to your other A Level subjects. But it is important that you actively work with your teachers to cultivate these skills – they won't always come easily.

At sixth form, the key responsibility for academic success lies with you. That responsibility increases with each level of study. Students who do well tend to appreciate, early on, that A Levels are different from previous experience. Being in control of your own learning isn't easy. It requires a range of personal skills and attributes to manage independent learning successfully, to use time well, to interpret sensibly what is going on when studying seems more difficult and your motivation wanes, and to adapt your strategies.

To help you start to develop the skills needed to be successful we have produced this booklet. The booklet contains useful tips and activities to give you an idea of the study skills you will be using on a day-to-day basis in Year 12 and 13.

Please complete the activities in the Orange boxes. Any writing that is required should be completed on lined paper or typed up and printed. You will be expected to hand in your summer work in your first lesson.

We look forward to teaching you.

Miss Erro and Mrs Cresswell.



## ORGANISATION

### KEEPING NOTES ORGANISED

Ensure right from the beginning of the course that you have **separate files** for each subject (Philosophy, Ethics and Theology) and that you label **file dividers** for each new topic as it is introduced. This seems obvious, but it is very easy to put off filing notes until later, only to find out that when they are needed for revision they have gone missing. To avoid sheets of paper becoming lost, keep a **packet of hole reinforcers** in your pencil case for use as soon as a hole rips.

If you are given handouts that are not already hole-punched, you need to keep handy either a **hole-punch** (Wilkos does a really useful little green one that can be stored in your folder for £1), or **some plastic wallets**, as handouts get lost or crumpled very easily if they are not filed immediately.

Your teacher will routinely check your folders. If they are not complete you will be expected to rectify this. It is your responsibility to copy up any work you miss due to absence.

Purchase or find the items highlighted in bold.

In your first lesson please bring the correct folder as we will have lots of different things to give you.

- Miss Erro = Philosophy Folder
- Mrs Cresswell = Ethics Folder



## TAKING AND MAKING NOTES

### What is the purpose of making notes?

Note-taking is an important part of studying. It enables you to engage with a text or lesson, formulate your ideas and record your thought process. In particular, note-taking enables you to review a lesson and revise for exams. Unless you possess exceptional recall you would soon forget the content of a book or lesson: it is your notes which enable you to access the information and your response to it at a later stage.

There is no right or wrong way to make notes - only the way that works for you. There are two processes involved.

1. **Taking notes** – you will need to be able to take notes from speech in the form of:
  - a lesson
  - a film or DVD
  - a radio programme or audio recording
2. **Making notes** – you will need to make notes either before a lesson as preparation, during a lesson e.g. from a PowerPoint presentation, or after a lesson as a follow-up. You will be expected to make notes from:
  - a handout
  - a textbook
  - other research or source material, e.g. internet
  - your own lesson notes

### HOW TO TAKE NOTES FROM SPEECH

In the sixth form you will be expected to record information in a lesson as the teacher speaks. For many students this is a difficult process as they have not been trained to do so and find that the teacher speaks too quickly for them to write everything down. Sometimes you will be given interactive handouts containing the framework of the lesson so that you can focus your listening and fill in missing words or examples. Other times you will be given full texts; in this case it is a good idea to highlight the important points and annotate the text so that you can make your own notes later.

### When making notes:

- Write on one side of A4 paper only, giving room to expand your notes.
- Double-space lines and leave a wide margin.
- Always write the date and title at the top of the first page – this sounds obvious but it makes filing much easier later.
- Make sure you jot down key words and phrases.
- Leave out little words like 'the', 'a' and 'an' which don't affect the sense of the sentence.
- Use shorthand. You don't need to go on a course to be able to do this! Try to devise your own system of symbols and abbreviations to make writing faster but be consistent so that you can read them back.
- Always go over the notes you make in a lesson and write them up as soon as possible.

Try to make your own shorthand for words that occur frequently in the subjects you are studying. For example:

Util.	Utilitarianism
NL	Natural Law
Absol.	Absolute
Rel	Relative
ChrE	Christian Ethics
Cat. Imp.	Categorical Imperative

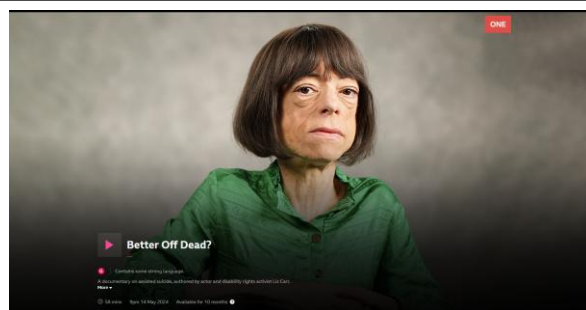
A TV programme, film or DVD – if you are taking notes from a film at home then it is a good idea to watch it all the way through first before writing anything down. This will enable you to think about what you are looking for and to formulate questions to focus your viewing. Draw out a grid on which you can fill in the main points or key words as you watch the film / DVD for a second time, using the pause button as necessary. Do not attempt to write long sentences.

#### An example of a film / DVD grid

MAIN POINT	SUPPORTING DETAILS
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Using the strategies suggested, make notes on the arguments made by Liz Carr in the documentary 'Better off Dead?'. This can be found on Youtube [Better Off Dead? - BBC iPlayer](#). This is a film about euthanasia from the perspective of someone in the disabled community.

When you have finished watching and making notes consider whether this is a reliable source for information. Write a set of bullet points to indicate your thoughts.



Consider....

- What are her concerns about a change in the law in the UK?
- What evidence does she give to back up her arguments?
- What counter arguments could you provide to help evaluate her point of view?

## HOW TO MAKE NOTES FROM WRITTEN SOURCES

You will also have to make notes, often in your own time, from a variety of written sources such as:

1. **A handout** – read through the text and highlight or underline the key words and main ideas. Then write a summary in your own words, adding your own comments or responses. (This is especially important in Philosophy and Ethics).
2. **A textbook** – read through the text, then note down in your folder key words and ideas. It can sometimes be useful to try and summarise each paragraph in one sentence. This helps you focus on what the really important points are.
3. **Your own lesson notes** – to remember the information effectively, it is best to return to your lesson notes the same day. Research has shown that after only 10 minutes your ability to recall knowledge begins to decline sharply and by the end of 24 hours you will only have retained 20% of the information unless you have reviewed it.

It cannot be stressed too strongly how important it is to get into the habit of writing up / reading through your lesson notes on a daily basis so that you can make a record of your study from which you can revise later. Although final exams may seem a long way away, your courses will pass very quickly.

### Some suggestions for writing up notes

You must experiment with different techniques and formats until you find a style of note-making which works for you – this will often mean different approaches for different tasks. Always keep in mind why you are making notes. Some notes, such as those made as preparation for a discussion or a lesson, need less care than those which are to be used for revision. It is worth spending time on revision notes to avoid panic later! The best notes help us structure our own thoughts, so we can recall and use them quickly. Therefore, you shouldn't take note of anything that you don't understand, that you have simply copied or is irrelevant. Your notes must be a reflection of your own thinking – make notes of any evaluation of ideas along the way.

1. **Write legibly** - if you have difficulty revising from your own handwriting, use a word-processor. This method has the advantage of allowing you to insert more information. You can also make your own exercises for revision before your exams.
2. **Make your notes visually appealing** – leave plenty of spaces and use loads of colour! For example, quotations or keywords can be written in a different coloured ink.
3. **Use pictures, symbols and diagrams** to illustrate your notes. These will make them seem more personal and will help recall.
4. **Use headings, sub-headings and bullet points**. This will make it easier to find information and to learn from your notes.
5. **Use abbreviations** – don't write in full sentences.
6. **Use block capitals or underlining for key words**.
7. **Gaps** – your notes must not appear too crowded. To avoid this, leave plenty of gaps between your points. This also gives you the opportunity to add other related things as you come across them in your reading.
8. **Don't copy out chunks from books**. Always put notes into your own words.
9. **Check spellings** – especially of subject-specific vocabulary.



10. **Make revision cards as you go along.** It is a good idea to record key facts on index cards while they are still fresh in your mind. They can be used for revision. If you do this throughout your course it relieves the sense of being overwhelmed as the exams approach because you feel as if you have already made some revision progress.

Highlight and annotate the text below taken from Richard Dawkins' book *The God Delusion* (p.379-380) to indicate the parts you think are the most important.

Then write a summary of your thoughts – do you agree with Dawkins? Are there any problems with his observations/arguments?

## CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING AGAIN

And now, here's another charming picture. At Christmas-time one year my daily newspaper, the *Independent*, was looking for a seasonal image and found a heart-warmingly ecumenical one at a school nativity play. The Three Wise Men were played by, as the caption glowingly said, Shadbreet (a Sikh), Musharaff (a Muslim) and Adele (a Christian), all aged four.

Charming? Heart-warming? No, it is not, it is neither; it is

grotesque. How could any decent person think it right to label four-year-old children with the cosmic and theological opinions of their parents? To see this, imagine an identical photograph, with the caption changed as follows: 'Shadbreet (a Keynesian), Musharaff (a Monetarist) and Adele (a Marxist), all aged four.' Wouldn't this be a candidate for irate letters of protest? It certainly should be. Yet, because of the weirdly privileged status of religion, not a squeak was heard, nor is it ever heard on any similar occasion. Just imagine the outcry if the caption had read, 'Shadbreet (an Atheist), Musharaff (an Agnostic) and Adele (a Secular Humanist), all aged four.' Mightn't the parents actually be investigated to see if they were fit to bring up children? In Britain, where we lack a constitutional separation between church and state, atheist parents usually go with the flow and let schools teach their children whatever religion prevails in the culture. 'The-Brights.net' (an American initiative to rebrand atheists as 'Brights' in the same way as homosexuals successfully rebranded themselves as 'gays') is scrupulous in setting out the rules for children to sign up: 'The decision to be a Bright must be the child's. Any youngster who is told he or she must, or should, be a Bright can NOT be a Bright.' Can you even begin to imagine a church or mosque issuing such a self-denying ordinance? But shouldn't they be compelled to do so?

## CONDENSING INFORMATION

Read the article below from the *RS Review* – a magazine that is available for you to look at in the school Library and an excellent resource for further reading.

Condense this article into 8 short bullet points.

OCR special

OCR AS  
Edexcel AS  
AQA AS Unit D

# Creationism and evolution

Jon Mayled looks at the perennial issue of the relationship between science and religion.

The establishment of the Creation Museum in Kentucky, USA seems an odd development for the twenty-first century. The museum portrays, as scientific truth, the results of a world created according to the two biblical accounts in Genesis 1–2. The museum's marketing literature describes it as follows:

The state-of-the-art 70,000 square foot museum brings the pages of the Bible to life, casting its characters and animals in dynamic form and placing them in familiar settings. Adam and Eve live in the Garden of Eden. Children play and dinosaurs roam near Eden's Rivers. The serpent coils cunningly in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The question this begs, of course, is how religious believers should respond to modern scientific discoveries including the Big Bang and theories of evolution and natural selection.

Many Christians believe that the creation stories in Genesis are myths — they teach about God, why the world was created, and God's relationship with the world and creation, but are not actually scientific accounts of creation. However, there are still many people who believe very literally in the stories of creation found in Genesis and consider that God created the world in 144 hours even though the word translated into English as 'days' really means 'periods of time'. These people are generally called 'Creationists'. Creationists also explain humanity as being the ultimate creation as they were made last even though in the story in Genesis 2 the first human is made before all the other animals and all plants.

Many Creationists still use the work of James Ussher, a seventeenth-century English bishop who calculated the actual time of creation by working through all the dates and times given in the Bible. He worked out that it took place at 9 a.m. on 26 October 4004 BCE, many billions of years after the date given by science.

### Charles Darwin

These issues first became a problem in the late nineteenth century. In 1740 a Swiss naturalist, Charles Bonnet (1720–93), published a scientific paper about aphids (small plant-eating insects). He argued that they carried future generations inside themselves and he called this process 'preformationism'. Nearly 100 years later, in 1830, Charles Darwin (1809–82) left England on a 2-year expedition to chart the South American coast aboard a ship called HMS Beagle. In fact he did not return until September 1835, having travelled around the world.



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In 1859 Darwin published *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, based on his observations during the voyage. His theory was that animals and plants survived through a process of natural selection. Those that were best suited to the demands of their environment survived to reproduce more while those that were weaker did not. Darwin did not limit this theory to plants and animals but also included humans. For some this meant that humans were not being considered as a special creation of God.

Many people challenged Darwin's theory simply by arguing that it was untrue because it disagreed with the Bible. However, the Victorians had already rejected the cosmology of the Genesis stories in favour of the findings of Galileo and Copernicus.

A famous geologist, Philip Gosse (1810–88), wished to disprove these evolutionary theories. In 1857 he published a book called *Omphalos: an Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot*, in which he argued that if God created the world *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) then there would be traces of previous existences that had not actually occurred. *Omphalos* is Greek for navel and Gosse said that although Adam did not require a navel as he had never been born, nevertheless he must have had one to be a complete human being. He then applied this to trees having rings although they had never grown them. Therefore, records of fossils were evidence of life that never actually existed but was instantly formed by God during creation.

The response to the book was outspoken:

Too monstrous for belief  
(*Westminster Review*)

[I have read] no other book which so staggered and puzzled [me] / [I] cannot believe that God had written on the rocks one enormous and superfluous lie for all mankind.

(*Charles Kingsley*)



In fact, Darwin never tried to explain where everything originated — just how life changed and adapted once it was here. The mainstream churches, including the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England, accept evolution.

### Fundamentalism and intelligent design

While many Christians did not see evolution as a challenge to belief, others, mostly Protestants, developed what is now called a 'fundamentalist' approach to Christian belief. In fact, although fundamentalist approaches to scripture claimed to be following the Reformation reformers who were said to be seeking the true meaning of scripture behind the interpretation of the Church, fundamentalism was a completely new movement that used the empirical approach of science. Fundamentalists set about arguing that Jesus's miracles could be explained by science and, in doing so, explained away the nature of miracles themselves.

However, from 1909 to 1915 a number of books called '*Fundamentals of Religion*' were published by Protestant conservative evangelical movements in North America.

seeking to disprove all theories of evolution and natural selection.

A relatively new theory is called 'intelligent design'. This argues that God must have created the universe and all living things as there are particular features of those that can only be explained by an intelligent designer and not by evolution. However, there is no scientific evidence to support this idea.

Supporters of intelligent design use as 'evidence' the irreducible complexity of biological systems, such as the body's blood-clotting mechanism. 'Specified complexity' deals with the complexity of the physical world. The claim is that the complexity of biological systems must have been specified by an intelligent being.

Intelligent design first appeared in the USA in 1987 following a Supreme Court ruling that a law in the State of Louisiana requiring that creation science be taught in schools along with evolution was unconstitutional, because the law was specifically intended to advance a particular religion, Christianity. The first publication employing theories of intelligent design was a 1989 high school biology textbook called *Of Pandas and People*.

In the 2005 *Dover Trial*, a US district judge ruled that intelligent design was not a science and 'cannot uncouple itself from its creationist, and thus religious, antecedents', therefore promotion of it within schools violated the First Amendment of the US Constitution. In the same year Richard Dawkins wrote in the *Guardian*: 'There is no evidence in favour of intelligent design; only alleged gaps in the completeness of the evolutionary account.'

### The Goldilocks effect

The universe does appear to be 'fine-tuned' for our existence. The physical constants and the laws of nature, like Baby Bear's bed and porridge, are 'just right' for us. Some Christians argue that although this does not provide an argument for the existence of God it is in line with a universe planned by God.

On the other hand, many atheists would argue that of course the universe appears

to be just right for humans because we have also evolved to meet its conditions:

Imagine a puddle waking up one morning and thinking, 'This is an interesting world I find myself in, an interesting hole I find myself in, fits me rather neatly, doesn't it? In fact it fits me staggeringly well, must have been made to have me in it!' This is such a powerful idea that as the sun rises in the sky and the air heats up and as, gradually, the puddle gets smaller and smaller, it's still frantically hanging on to the notion that everything's going to be alright, because this world was meant to have him in it, was built to have him in it; so the moment he disappears catches him rather by surprise. I think this may be something we need to be on the watch out for.' (Adams, D. (2003) *The Salmon of Doubt: Hitchhiking the Galaxy One Last Time*, Pan Books)

Ultimately, however, not all scientists are atheists and there are many who are Christians. Most would argue that not accepting the creation stories does not mean that you cannot believe in God. Nevertheless, it is the vocal minority who continue to hold to a version of creationism, of whom we are often more aware.

### Film links

- *Creation* (2009)
- *The Bible – In the Beginning* (1966)
- *Where Adam Stood* (1976)

**Jon Mayled** is a chief examiner and the author of many religious studies textbooks.

### Keywords

Creation  
Evolution  
Creationist

Creationism  
Intelligent design

## HOW TO READ

Effective reading skills will help you when gathering ideas. This will help you to navigate more quickly the content that will be most useful to you. Be clear about why you are reading a particular passage so you can do the following:

- Scan for keywords – try reading the document very quickly several times, to get a general ‘feel’ for the layout and the central points or keywords.
- Skim the document for structure – Look out for headings and subheadings, and images and artwork.
- Be ruthless – only read material that is essential to the task.

## FURTHER READING

Further reading is invaluable. It can help you to gain a greater understanding of a concept, provide you with information that you can wow the examiners with, and help you to understand the context of different arguments and ideas (how and why they developed).

Further reading shouldn’t be a chore – you should do it because you enjoy the subject and want to know more. You will be pointed in the direction of useful sources for further reading at the beginning of each topic, there is also a wide variety of further reading resources on the school P:drive for to access at your leisure.

When looking for further reading you should be aware of what kind of resource you are looking at – it is ok to look at biased sources if you are aware they are biased.

Using a range of sources (internet, books, video clips etc) research the following scholars and write no more than 3 lines about each one.

- Paley
- Hume
- Dawkins
- Aquinas

Remember you should only record the information you think is the most important/useful.