

JC LIFE

JC1 Survival Checklist

What to do in your first month before study habits solidify
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Why this matters: *The habits you form in the first 4 weeks of JC1 determine how the next 2 years go. Most students who struggle at A-Levels made avoidable mistakes in Month 1. This checklist fixes that.*

Reality Check — What Just Changed

You are not in secondary school anymore. Here is what that actually means:

O-Level Reality	JC / A-Level Reality
Memorise content → reproduce it	Apply concepts to completely unseen scenarios
One right answer per question	Structured argument — nuance scores marks
Teachers remind you of deadlines	You manage your own schedule entirely
10–12 subjects spread thin	3–4 subjects at extreme depth
Mid-year exams to pace yourself	No mid-year exams — only Promos and A-Levels
Getting A1 means you're done	Getting A1 in JC means you have started
Homework is the bulk of learning	Homework is just the beginning — review matters more

The JC1 Shock Curve: *It is completely normal to fail your first few block tests — even students who scored straight A1s at O-Levels. The curve is real. What matters is how fast you adapt.*

The Numbers Every JC1 Student Should Know

Stat	What it means for you
~4 wks	Time before the first block test arrives — there is no warm-up period
70 pts	New maximum University Admission Score — every subject grade hits harder than before
14%	GP's share of your total UAS — most students massively underinvest in it early

Stat	What it means for you
~8 mths	Time from JC1 start to Promotional Exams — shorter than it feels
0	Mid-year exams — MOE removed them, so Promos is your only checkpoint in JC1
>70%	Of JC students who struggle at Promos started weak habits in Month 1

THE CHECKLIST — Your First 4 Weeks

CRITICAL

IMPORTANT

STANDARD

← Urgency legend

Week 1 — Orient & Set Up Systems

✓	Task	When
<input type="checkbox"/>	Get and print every H2 syllabus document <i>Download from SEAB website. Read the learning outcomes — these are exactly what A-Level questions test.</i>	Day 1–2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify your 3 H2 subjects + H1 subject + GP combination <i>If still deciding, settle this by Day 3. Every week of uncertainty is a week of lost foundation.</i>	Day 1–3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Buy a dedicated notebook for EACH subject — never mix subjects <i>One notebook per subject means one place to revise. Mixed notes are impossible to review.</i>	Day 1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set up a weekly timetable — block 2 hours daily per H2 subject <i>H2 subjects require ~10 hours per week each to keep pace. Build this in from Day 1.</i>	Day 3–5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Find out your school's exam schedule for the rest of JC1 <i>Block tests, Promos dates — add them all to one calendar view. Backtrack your revision windows.</i>	Day 2–4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Join your subject class WhatsApp / Telegram group chats <i>Note-sharing and doubt-clearing happens here. Being outside these loops costs you.</i>	Week 1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Locate past year A-Level papers for each of your subjects <i>From SEAB or your school's archives. You will use these from Month 2 onwards.</i>	Week 1

Week 2 — Build Academic Foundations

✓	Task	When
<input type="checkbox"/>	Start a 'Mistake Log' for every subject <i>A dedicated page/book where every wrong answer is written down with the correct method. Review weekly.</i>	Week 2

✓	Task	When
<input type="checkbox"/>	Attempt at least one topic summary per subject per week <i>Do not just re-read notes. Summarise in your own words. If you cannot explain it, you do not know it.</i>	Week 2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Read through GP syllabus and understand its two components <i>Essay (50%) + Comprehension (50%). GP is 14% of your entire UAS. Start reading widely — The Economist, CNA.</i>	Week 2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set a target grade for each subject by A-Levels <i>Not vague ('do well') — specific: 'A for H2 Math, A for H2 Chem'. Write it somewhere visible.</i>	Week 2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Speak to at least one senior JC2 student about your subject combination <i>Get their honest feedback on workload, pacing, and which topics are hardest. 20 minutes can save months.</i>	Week 2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify which subject is weakest and commit 20% extra time to it <i>The O-Level to JC gap hits different subjects differently. Find yours early.</i>	Week 2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Explore CCA options and commit to one <i>CCA is compulsory and matters for university admissions. Choose something you will actually attend. Sign up this week.</i>	Week 2

Week 3 — Test Your Understanding

✓	Task	When
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do your first timed practice question for each H2 subject <i>Not homework — self-initiated timed practice. Check your answer. Mark what you got wrong. Enter it in your Mistake Log.</i>	Week 3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Write your first GP essay draft — any topic <i>Time yourself: 45 minutes. Do not edit as you go. Then review the structure: Thesis → Argument → Evidence → Analysis.</i>	Week 3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do a 'knowledge audit' per subject — what do you actually know vs. just recognise? <i>Close your notes. Write down everything you know about Topic 1. The gaps are your revision targets.</i>	Week 3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Find a study group of 2–3 students for your hardest subject <i>Teaching others is one of the fastest ways to solidify understanding. Aim for one weekly session.</i>	Week 3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Research tuition options for your weakest H2 subject if needed <i>JC pace is unforgiving. If you are already struggling 3 weeks in, getting help early is far more effective than catching up later.</i>	Week 3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create a 'GP Content Bank' — start collecting real-world examples by theme <i>Themes: Technology, Environment, Politics, Education, Gender. Aim for 3 solid examples per theme.</i>	Week 3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Review Week 1 and 2 notes — anything you cannot recall goes on your Mistake Log <i>Spaced repetition starts here. What you do not review within 2 weeks is largely forgotten.</i>	Week 3

Week 4 — Lock In Your System

✓	Task	When
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do a full 'Month 1 Review' — what worked, what didn't <i>Honest self-audit: Which subjects are you behind in? Where did the timetable fail? Adjust before Month 2.</i>	Week 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set your Promos revision start date (aim for 10–12 weeks before) <i>Work backwards from Promos. Mark the date you will start full revision mode. This date must be non-negotiable.</i>	Week 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete at least one full past-year question set per subject <i>Not a full paper — one question per topic covered so far. Identify which question types trip you up most.</i>	Week 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Review your Mistake Log — identify patterns <i>Do you make the same error repeatedly? Identify the 2–3 conceptual gaps behind your mistakes.</i>	Week 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Write a second GP essay — compare it to your Week 3 attempt <i>Was the argument clearer? Did you use more specific evidence? GP improves only with consistent practice.</i>	Week 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Attend at least one teacher consultation session <i>Most JC teachers offer free consultation slots. Use one this month. It signals commitment and gets you direct feedback.</i>	Week 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirm your CCA commitment and first event/session <i>CCA involvement must be consistent from now. Gaps close to A-Levels will hurt your university portfolio.</i>	Week 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tell someone your JC goals — a parent, friend, or study buddy <i>Vocalising goals increases follow-through. Even one accountability conversation matters.</i>	Week 4

Subject-Specific Month 1 Priorities

H2 Mathematics (9758)

✓	Task	When
<input type="checkbox"/>	Understand the 3 paper structure: Paper 1 (Pure), Paper 2 (Stats) <i>Different skills for each. Do not treat H2 Math as one subject.</i>	Week 1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Master basic differentiation and integration rules before anything else <i>Everything in Pure Maths builds on these. If shaky, fix it in Week 1–2.</i>	Week 1–2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Never skip steps in working — method marks are everything <i>A correct answer with no working can score 0. Write every single step.</i>	Week 1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Start a formula card — one index card per topic <i>Condense each topic's key formulas onto one card. Review before sleep.</i>	Week 2–3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Attempt at least 5 exam-style questions per topic after learning it <i>H2 Math is about application, not memorisation. Practice under time pressure.</i>	Weekly

H2 Chemistry (9476)

✓	Task	When
<input type="checkbox"/>	Understand the 3 paper structure: MCQ, structured, free-response <i>Different answering strategies for each. Know what each paper tests.</i>	Week 1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn state symbols and ionic equation conventions immediately <i>These are easy marks lost constantly. Nail the rules in Week 1.</i>	Week 1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Start building your Organic Chemistry reaction map from day one <i>Organic synthesis requires you to see connections between reactions. Build the map as you learn each reaction.</i>	Week 2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Practical exam: understand what 'observations' means to an examiner <i>Not 'precipitate formed' — 'white precipitate formed which dissolved in excess'. Precision is everything.</i>	Week 2–3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do not try to memorise — try to understand the 'why' of each reaction <i>Understanding beats memorisation in H2 Chem because questions are always novel.</i>	Ongoing

H2 Economics (9757)

✓	Task	When
<input type="checkbox"/>	Accept that you are starting from zero — everyone is <i>No one did Economics at O-Level. This is an advantage if you build good habits early.</i>	Week 1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn the 4 core diagram types immediately: demand/supply, PPC, AD-AS, cost curves	Week 1–2

✓	Task	When
	<i>Every Economics answer involves at least one diagram. Draw them daily until automatic.</i>	
□	Understand the essay structure: thesis → explanation → diagram → example → evaluation <i>This structure scores marks in every essay question. Internalise it now.</i>	Week 2
□	Start a 'current affairs' habit — read one economics news story per day <i>Case study questions require real-world application. Build your example bank from Week 1.</i>	Week 1
□	Know the difference between microeconomics and macroeconomics topics <i>Students mix these up under exam pressure. Categorise every topic as you learn it.</i>	Week 2

General Paper (H1 — 8807)

✓	Task	When
□	Understand GP is 14% of your total UAS under the new 70-point system <i>Most students treat GP as a side subject. They regret it at results day.</i>	Week 1
□	Start reading one long-form article per day — The Economist, CNA, The Guardian <i>GP rewards breadth of knowledge. Build this habit in Week 1 before life gets too busy.</i>	Week 1
□	Learn the AEI structure for GP essays: Assertion → Elaboration → Illustration <i>This is the building block of every GP paragraph. Master it before attempting full essays.</i>	Week 2
□	Build your Content Bank: 5 themes, 3 examples each minimum by end of Month 1 <i>Themes: Technology, Environment, Society, Politics, Globalisation. Specific examples beat vague ones.</i>	Week 2–4
□	Practise comprehension summary skills: identify key points, paraphrase without copying <i>Summary questions are 8–10 marks. Students lose these through careless lifting of text.</i>	Week 3

The 7 Month-1 Mistakes That Haunt JC2

#	The Mistake	What Happens Later
1	Treating JC1 as a 'settling in' period	<i>Fall behind by Month 2, spend JC2 catching up instead of refining</i>
2	Ignoring GP until JC2	<i>14% of UAS, zero practice — GP essays in Prelims are panic-written and it shows</i>
3	Studying by re-reading notes passively	<i>Recognition ≠ recall. Fails to perform under exam conditions</i>

#	The Mistake	What Happens Later
4	Not starting a Mistake Log	<i>Same errors repeated across block tests, Promos, and A-Levels</i>
5	Skipping teacher consultations	<i>Misconceptions go uncorrected and compound over 2 years</i>
6	Choosing CCA based on friends, not commitment	<i>Attendance drops in JC2, affects university CCA portfolio and personal development</i>
7	Not seeking help until after failing Promos	<i>1 term of catching up is far harder than 1 month of early tuition or peer help</i>

Not sure where you stand in your subjects?

Take Studyhours' free JC diagnostic — find your exact weak topics in 10 minutes and get a personalised study plan.

studyhours.com/jc-diagnostic