

THE A LEVEL DILEMMA

Recheck, retake or rethink?



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The exams are done, the pens are down, and the results are in. You've survived the endless revision sessions, late-night cramming, and the exhausting exam days. Then comes results day – the moment of truth. But what if those grades staring back at you aren't what you expected? Maybe they're just shy of a university offer, or perhaps they simply don't reflect the effort you put in. Now you're left with a tough decision: should you go for a recheck, retake the exams, or just accept the results and move on?

First, let's talk about rechecks. This option is appealing if you believe there's been a genuine mistake in marking. Perhaps you walked out of the exam room feeling confident, sure you nailed that answer or aced that calculation, but your grade doesn't reflect that. In cases like this, requesting a recheck (or 'remark') can be a wise move.

However, it's important to remember that this process isn't just a free shot at getting a better grade. Your paper will be re-evaluated by a different examiner, but there's a chance your grade could stay the same, or even drop. So, unless you're confident that something was overlooked or misjudged, a recheck can be a gamble. It's worth discussing with your teachers first; they often have a good sense of whether a recheck is likely to help.

If your grades are significantly lower than you had hoped, and a recheck seems unlikely to make a difference, retakes might cross your mind. Retaking exams is no small decision. It means investing more time, effort, and money to go through the process again. But if you're determined to get into a specific university or course, or if you know you were capable of doing better but something threw you off,

such as an illness, stress, or just a bad day, retakes can offer a second chance.

However, retakes aren't a guaranteed fix. You'll need to approach them with a solid plan: identify where things went wrong, adjust your revision strategy, and stay disciplined. It's also worth considering whether you're prepared to face the same pressure again, as retakes can be just as stressful, if not more so, the second time around.

It's also important to consider the costs involved in both rechecks and retakes. Surprisingly, rechecks can cost just as much as retaking the entire exam, depending on whether you're sitting for Cambridge or Pearson (Edexcel) exams. While retakes require more time and could delay your academic journey, rechecks are quicker but still come with a financial hit.

If you simply want your papers back to see how they were marked, Cambridge charges a hefty fee for this (to the point where it's the same costs of doing a retake), whereas Edexcel provides the checked papers free of charge, though without any detailed feedback. So, before deciding,

it's worth weighing not just the emotional and academic costs but the financial ones too.

On the other hand, there's always the option of accepting your results and moving forward. This might sound like giving up, but it's far from it. Sometimes, not getting the grades you aimed for opens unexpected paths. Maybe you can apply for a different university than expected, take a gap year to gain experience, or even explore a completely new career direction.

Many people discover that their original plan wasn't the

only route to success. So, if you feel that the stress of retakes isn't worth it, or if you're excited about other opportunities, there's no shame in taking a different path.

Ultimately, the right choice depends on your circumstances, goals, and mindset. If you believe there's a genuine marking error, a recheck could be the quick fix you need. If you're determined to improve and ready to commit, retakes offer a fresh start. But if you're open to unexpected opportunities, moving forward with your current results might lead to a future you never even considered. Whatever you choose, remember that A Levels are just one chapter in your story, not the whole book.

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