

Exam Preparation

The way you respond to an exam situation is highly dependent on how prepared you are. Preparation is crucial to eliminating any negative stress and will help you to perform to your maximum capacity. Certainly, any previous experience you have had with exams in addition to your personality will affect your approach; however being well prepared and going over what you have learned throughout the year is what will determine how successful you are. No student, no matter how gifted can expect to 'cram' for exams and expect to do well. The earlier you start, the better prepared you will be.

Before you start revising, you will need to find out how many exams you will have, when and where they are scheduled, how you will be assessed and what materials you are able to take into the examination room, eg. dictionary, calculator, clear plastic water bottle etc.

CONSTRUCT A TIMETABLE



Devise a timetable in which you are able to allocate time for your study, rest and relaxation. Within 3-4 weeks leading up to the exam you should allocate approximately one hour of study per day for each subject. If the examinations of some subjects are worth a greater percentage of your total assessment, you should allocate a bit more time to them. It is important that you do not study similar subjects on the same day, as you may confuse your memory.

Allocate time per day to study for each of your subjects.

WHAT TO REVISE



Within each subject, you will need to decide what topics you will focus your revision on. This decision will be determined by the exam format.

For example, if the exam will be based on three of the topics you have covered throughout the year study at least five.

HOW TO REVISE EFFECTIVELY



Find a study space

Your study space should be uncluttered, well-lit and quiet. Some students also find it motivating to occasionally, change their place of study to include different parts of the home, garden or public libraries.

Keep a routine

Like an athlete, training for a special event, your body and mind will be at its maximum efficiency if you keep a regular routine. That means sleeping at about the same time and the same amount each day and eating regular nutritious meals.

Take regular short breaks

Generally, we all have short 90 minute cycles of alertness, so a short break every 45-60 minutes will maximise the effectiveness of your study.

Make notes

Make sure you have all your subject notes and handouts in a logical order. Your teachers have given you everything you will need to know for the exams, so if you find that you have any missing notes or handouts, ask your teacher. Summarise your notes under key headings and read over them several times. Now put your notes away and write as much as you remember about each topic. Once you have finished, refer back to your notes and see if you have left anything out. Keep doing this until you feel confident that you are familiar with all of the information related to that topic.

WORK THROUGH PAST EXAM PAPERS



Working through past exam papers is a great way to prepare for exams! Not only are you learning the content of the subject, but you are getting an idea of the way the exam will be structured, how questions are worded and how problems are presented. Look for patterns between papers from different years. Answer each question without using your notes.

If you find that you need to use them, you will need to go over the information again. Remember, you will not have your notes with you during an exam! By completing the exams in the time allotted and under exam conditions, you will gain valuable experience and confidence.

REDUCE SOCIAL ACTIVITIES



Reduce your Social Activities/Work Commitments. Although this can be difficult, your priorities for the weeks leading up to and including the exam period must be focused on doing the best you can with the limited time you have. The great news is, this will only be for a few weeks and it is a small price to pay for the great exam results that await you!

Exam Techniques

THE NIGHT BEFORE



The night before your exam, make sure you get a good night's sleep! There is no point staying up late into the night trying to cram new information in.

A quick overview of the subject before you go to bed should suffice. Check you have prepared all your materials – ruler, pens, etc. Now go to bed!

THE DAY OF THE EXAM



The day of your exam has finally arrived! Here are a few techniques to help you get through it with the least amount of stress.

Eat well before your exam

Breads and cereals are good options as they release energy slowly and will keep up your energy throughout the exam.

Check materials

Make sure you have all the necessary materials – ID card, pencils, pens, ruler, calculator, dictionary, etc. Make sure that the items you are taking with you are permitted to be used in the exam.

Getting there

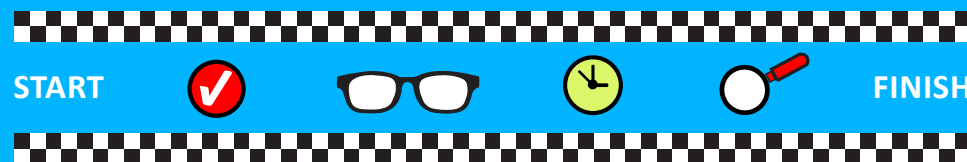
Leave enough time to get to the exam venue. Unforeseen delays do happen and it is better to be early for an exam than late! You may also need time to find your allocated seat.

ARE YOU OK?



It is okay to be nervous before an exam. A moderate level of nervousness can actually enhance your performance, however too much may cause anxiety and mental blanks. If you are very anxious, find yourself a quiet spot and focus on doing the best you can before the exam.

DURING YOUR EXAM



Use reading time

Use the reading time to overcome any jitters and focus your thoughts. Remember to carefully read the longer questions so that you don't waste valuable writing time during the exam. Make sure you are familiar with the exam format and you have a plan about which section or question you are going to start with first.

Start with what you know

In every exam there will always be questions you think you do not know. Do not let this faze you. Start with the questions you do know and build your confidence. Answering these questions may actually trigger the answers to more difficult questions. Questions that initially may look unfamiliar will probably turn out to be questions you can answer.

Read the question

Every time you read a question make sure you ask yourself, 'What does this question ask me to do?' Look for key words like: Explain, Describe, Define, Identify. Keep focused, at the end of every section, ask yourself, 'Am I still answering the question or have I gone off the track?'

Don't look at everyone else

Many students look around during exams, see others writing away and feel stressed about their own performance. Do not do it, don't worry about what everyone else is doing, it is your exam, no one else's.

Watch the time

Try to stick to the suggested time allocation for each section of the exam.

Allocate your time accordingly

If a question is worth four marks, it probably requires 4 main points. Avoid over-answering questions. If a question asks for two factors and you provide three, the last one may not be assessed, even though it may be correct.

Attempt every question

Unless stated, you would not normally lose marks for incorrect answers, so attempt every question, even the 'impossible' ones. You may just pick up a mark here and there.

Review your paper

Once you have finished, it may be tempting to run out of the exam room cheering. Stop! There is just one more thing you need to do! It is important for you to review your exam paper checking that you have answered all the required questions, have not misread any questions and have marked the answer sheet correctly (eg. For multiple choice questions). Change any answers to questions that you find you have answered incorrectly. Lastly check your spelling, grammar and punctuation.