

Exams are designed to test students as individuals under controlled conditions, so that they can demonstrate their capabilities.

A few exam and revision hints and tips

Planning your revision

Start by creating a revision timetable. Stick your timetable somewhere noticeable.

Are you a morning person or a ‘night owl’? When do you work best? Do you want to start work at 9am or at 1pm?

Some students prefer to do the bulk of their revision during the day, leaving them time to relax in the evening. Some students prefer to start later and work into the night.

Be realistic – don’t try to study for too long. Study for an hour or so and then have a break. Generally, trying to study for too long is counter-productive.

Below is a simple revision schedule that you could copy and modify. You could vary subjects, so that you revise a different topic in the afternoon and perhaps another in the evening.

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|-------------------|--|--|--|--------|--|--|--|-------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Revision schedule | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Day | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Topic: | | | | Topic: | | | | Topic | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Mark sessions off to show progress.

Be flexible and schedule breaks/appointments. Everyone has things they need to do – shopping/ appointments/urgent phone calls and so on.

How do you prefer to work & learn?

Work out what type of learner you are and adjust your revision accordingly. This will make your revision more effective.

Visual learners learn through seeing, and may find drawing pictures, diagrams and mind maps helpful for revision.

Auditory learners learn best through listening, and may find it useful to engage in discussion with other students, or reading notes aloud.

Kinaesthetic learners learn best by doing, and should use concrete examples and case studies as an aid to revision.

Try a combination of these revision activities and see which you prefer.

Notes

You should try to organise your notes so that they are clear, logically ordered and easy to find your way around.

Reduce your lecture notes to concise summaries and then reduce your summaries down to bullet points or key words. You could write your key words or bullet points on cards if that will help you.

Create a list (or a mind map) of bullet points or keywords that when expanded could form the basis of an essay. Quiz yourself to see how many of your bullet points you can remember.

Learn actively.

Try making up rhymes, songs and mnemonics (see below). Summarise your notes. Set them to music. Read your notes out loud and record them. Play them back. Extract key points and write them down.

See what activity suits you best: making recordings, notes, lists, diagrams and bullet points keep you brain active. Reading can be a rather passive way of revising. The more you do with information, the more you will remember.

Mnemonics

A mnemonic is a memory device which prompts you to remember material that is more difficult to remember.

A famous mnemonic based on the initial letters of words is: '*Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain*' for the order of the colours of the rainbow.

Or, there's a useful mnemonic for remembering the order of the planets within our solar system, in terms of their distances from the sun: '*My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nine Pickles.*' - Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto.

Try using mnemonics, where appropriate, to see if they help you remember complex information.

Don't be exhausted by the time the exam comes round

Get some sleep the night before the exam.

Last minute revision is not effective, it's impossible to keep it up throughout a whole fortnight of exams.

The exam

Control the controllables! Do you know the answer to these questions?

Where is the exam being held? What time is your exam? Do you know long the exam is?

Before the exam starts do you know how many questions you have to answer?

Do you know what can you take in to the exams? Normally you won't be able to take your smart phone into an exam. Have you got pens and pencils?

You can usually take water in to the exam, but other drinks may not be allowed. Check what is allowed.

Do not start writing straight away!

Read the instructions. Read the whole exam paper and work out which questions you are going to answer.

Read the whole question and *plan* your answer.

What do the instructions say - *discuss? evaluate? compare? outline?*

You do not have to attempt the questions in the order they are printed on the exam paper, you might prefer to do the easiest one first. Getting one question safely out of the way at the start of an exam can boost your confidence and can help reduce exam stress.

Timing

Timing is important - If you have three questions to answer in three hours, don't spend an hour and a half on the first question.

Divide up your time equally, allowing time to read and understand the question, plan your answer, and also for checking what you've written when you've finished for relevance, structure, cohesion, etc.

If you're running short of time, just write bullet points.

What will the examiner like?

The fact that you have attempted to answer the question.

Evidence that you have applied what you have learned.

You have answered all the questions.

A well-structured, logical and coherent piece of writing.

Linking sentences.

Legible handwriting.