

Exam help

Essentials for revision and exams

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Revision can be stressful, daunting or just plain boring, but we all have to do it at some point. Successful revision is not just about revision technique but also about getting the right balance so that you are working at your best without it taking over your life. Revision can be hard and is definitely easier said than done, but don't give up. Different methods work for different people and for different styles of exams, so find what works best for you.

Revision tips

- You are only expected to do your best, so set realistic personal goals to work towards. Give yourself plenty of time and pace yourself.
 - Create a sensible revision timetable to plan what you're going to do and when, but be a bit flexible in case you find you need to give more time to certain areas. Remember to include regular breaks too! You should try to have a break for about ten minutes every hour.
 - Practise recalling what you've been taught. Make notes of your notes. You could draw 'spider diagrams' or 'mind maps' to connect ideas, highlight important words or use different colours for different topics. Summarise the key points at the end of your notes. You could even make up rhymes to help you learn and remember information – mnemonics or acronyms can also be useful.
 - Meet up with a friend to go over your notes together, or talk things through with someone at home – explaining topics to other people can show just how much you already know and feel confident with.
- Practise answering questions and assessing your answers. Using past exam papers can be a really good way of testing yourself on the topics you have just revised, and will get you used to the style of questions you might be asked. You'll probably find that the same sorts of questions come up each year. By practising exam questions you can give yourself an idea of how long each sort of question might take you and then be able to divide up your time sensibly in the actual exam.
 - Minimise distractions by turning off the TV and your mobile. Tweeting about your revision won't make it happen.
 - Drink plenty of water and eat healthily. Your brain will thank you.
 - When you've worked hard and achieved one of your goals, reward yourself!

Last-minute revision

This is not recommended but most of us have found ourselves in this situation before. Remember that a little revision is better than none at all, so don't give up and don't panic! You probably know more than you think you do. If you find yourself in this situation, try to focus on the areas that you feel you understand so that you're confident with key areas.

Don't stay up cramming all night, keeping yourself awake with endless coffee or Red Bull. This may seem like a good idea at the time, but you will not thank yourself when you wake up on the morning of your exam with a banging headache and bleary-eyed from lack of sleep.

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Exam stress

Most of us get stressed about exams but this can affect us in different ways. For some people the adrenalin and pressure can have a positive effect, but others may find themselves filled with anxiety. Find ways to relax. Talk over any worries with friends and family, eat a balanced healthy diet, exercise well and get plenty of sleep. If it all gets too much, release that tension with a good loud roar – you'll feel much better!

On exam day...

- Eat breakfast even if you feel queasy. If you're hungry, you won't be able to concentrate.
- Check you have all the materials you need before you leave the house, including a calculator if the exam needs one.
- Bring a bottle of water.
- Arrive early at the exam room and try to relax – take deep breaths.
- Try to avoid talking about the exam with your classmates. This can be difficult, but trying to second guess what topics you will be tested on is likely to just stress you out.

In the exam...

- Listen to the exam rules.
- Make sure you have not brought your mobile phone into the exam room (even if it is switched off). If you do forget to leave it in your bag, give it to a teacher straight away and collect it at the end.

- Make sure you fill out all the required details clearly on the front of your exam paper before you open it.
- Read the whole paper from cover to cover, looking carefully at any directions you are given. Underline key words in the questions (describe, discuss, compare, contrast, etc).
- Remember that you don't have to answer the questions in order – do the ones you're confident with first, and come back to the ones you're struggling with later.
- Always show your workings.

Essay questions

- Make sure you know how many questions you are required to answer.
- Plan the amount of time you can realistically take for each part of the paper and stick to this.
- Plan your answers before you start writing. This will show the examiner what you intended to say even if you didn't have time to finish.
- Leave space after each of your answers so that if you think of any other ideas during the exam you can add them in at the end.
- Read through your answers and check spelling, punctuation and grammar.

If you don't think an exam went well, try not to dwell on it. Pick yourself up and prepare for the next one. It can be tricky, but try to keep exams in perspective and just do your best on the day.

Good luck!

