

Preparing for Examinations

Before the examinations

Organise your time - construct a timetable.

Devise a timetable in which you are able to allocate time for your homework, study, rest and relaxation. Within 3-4 weeks leading up to the exam you should allocate about 1 hour of study per day for each subject.

Reduce your social activities.

Although this can be difficult your priorities for the weeks leading up to and including the exam period must be focused on doing y=the best you can with the limited time yo 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!

Study at the right time.

Some students study better at certain times of the day. Monitor the time of day when you feel the most alert and motivate and study then. This will of course differ from person to person.

Find a good spot to study.

The place where you study 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 your home, garden or public libraries.

Keep a regular 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 every day(7-8 hours) and eating regular, nutritious meals (no junk food).

Take regular short breaks.

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

Don't study similar subjects on the same day.

Studying similar subjects on the same day may confuse your memory. Organise your study timetable so that subjects that are different from each other are studied on the same day (eg Maths and English).

Start your preparation early.

No student, no matter how gifted, can expect to cram for exams and expect to do well. The earlier yo start the better prepared and confident you will be.

Get all the notes and handouts.

Make sure yo have all your subject notes and handouts in a logical order. Your teachers have given you everything you will need for the exams so if you find that you have any missing notes or handouts, ask your teacher.

Practise, practise, practise.

Exams are an excellent preparation tool because they will give you an idea of the structure of the exam, how questions are worded and how problems are presented. By completing the exams in the time allotted and under exam conditions you will gain valuable experience and confidence.

A little nervousness is OK.

It is OK 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.

Have a plan.

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.

During the examinations

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 time writing time during the exam.

Start with what you know.

In every exam there will always be questions you think you don't know, but don't 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 require 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, don't do it, don't worry about what everyone is doing its your exam, no-one else's.

Watch the time.

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

Allocate your time according to marks.

If a question is worth 4 marks, it probably requires minutes. Avoid over-answering questions. If a question asks for 2 factors and you provide 3, the last one will 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.

After the examinations

The examination process is an opportunity for you to understand and for you to evaluate your performance in each of your subjects.

Check your marks carefully.

Sometimes teachers may make a mistake when adding up marks.

Ask your teacher about your mistakes in the examinations.

Asking your teacher questions about the mistakes that you made in an exam is a good way to ensure that you don't make the same errors again.

Review and add to your study notes.

After you have received feedback from your teachers, and after you have understood the mistakes that you made in your examinations, make sure that you make a list of the areas you need to review in each subject and add to your study notes .

Reflect on your examination preparation.

Think about the way that you prepared for your examinations. Did you devote enough time to study? Were your study notes detailed enough? Did you have a study timetable? By doing this, you will be better prepared for your next examinations.

Reflect about your examination techniques during your examinations.

Think about the strategies that you used during the examinations. Were they effective? What changes do you need to make?

10 Tips For Effective Study

The ability to study effectively is not something which people are born with and others are born without. In fact studying effectively consists of a number of positive habits which can be consistently practised. Anyone can improve their ability to study.

The following tips will help you develop effective study habits:

1. Find a good place to study.

You will need to set up a good study area, which will be free of distractions such as the television. Try to establish a regular time and place for study. The place of study would have good lighting and be organised with your relevant study materials. Have a good flow of fresh air to avoid feeling tired. The surface of your desk should be clear and organised before you start your study. A clear desk is a clear mind! Don't wait for inspiration. Even if you don't feel like studying, just go through the motions. The very act of writing often arouses our thinking processes and your interest level will soon increase.

2. Get Organised.

Use your 'Study Timetable' to help you block out periods for study time. Transfer the homework you have entered from your diary onto your study planner. Write down periods for study and period for free time and other commitments. Your study segments should be between 30-40 minutes. Take a short break after each segment. Using your study planner will help you become more organised and visualise how much free time and study time you have each week.

3. Understand your tasks and assignments.

Separate study from assignment/assessment work and tasks set for homework. Keep all your assignments to be submitted in a separate folder so that they are in one place. Before you start your tasks or assignments carefully read through the set work and make sure you understand the task at hand so that you can prepare yourself for the assignment or homework. For example, determine which books or equipment you will need for each task. Identify what you need to learn or complete in order to avoid confusion and wasting time. If you are unsure of the task, write questions in your diary so that you can ask your teacher the following day, don't forget to do your most challenging tasks and subjects when you are rested and feel refreshed, as your concentration levels will be higher.

4. Break it down.

Assignments which need to be completed over a set period of time should be dissected into small manageable chunks. This will enable you to complete it in stages, rather than all at once or the night before it is due. Keep track of your progress as you complete each part.

5. Do one thing at a time.

Focus on one task or assignment at a time. Using the block set period of 30-40 minutes for one task/subject only will stop you from jumping from one subject or assignment to another. Compete with yourself by choosing a task you think you can complete in the amount of time set and force yourself to finish it.

6. Use "To Do" lists.

Make a new 'to do list' each day or the night before. Cross off the accomplished task, assignment revision and carry over the unfinished tasks on your new things to do list. Use a coloured text liner to highlight the important or immediate tasks. This will help you prioritise and meet deadlines.

7. Revision and Summary Notes.

Revising what you have learnt should be part of your study timetable. Reading over your notes and checking your understanding of a new topic learnt in class is an important part of study. Set aside each week a period of revision of your notes for each subject. This will help improve your understanding of the subject and will avoid you cramming for a test.

To help you review each of your subjects, create a set of summary notes by following these quick tips:

- A. split each subjects into topics.
- B. use clear headings and divide each topic into main sections.
- C. use your class notes to make summary notes under the main topic headings.
- D. use a highlighter to identify key terms, concepts and formulae.
- E. identify key questions/issues and provide answers for them.
- F. regularly revise and add to your summary notes.
- G. at the end of the term or semester, create a new set of min-summaries from your summary notes for final exam revision.

8. Try to stick to your Study Plan.

As much as possible, try to stick to your study planner and avoid interruptions such as telephone calls, shows and visitors. If you want to watch a TV show, include it in your planner and then plan around it. Try to follow your study planner as mapped out and don't waste time by starting two hours later than planned. Motivate yourself, achieve your set goals and then reward yourself!

9. Be Flexible.

If a particular subject or assignment is taking longer than expected, re-arrange your study planner. Change to another subject or task and re-schedule the times you have allocated to each subject rather than wasting time. The change and sense of achievement will often bolster your confidence to tackle the difficult task later.

10. Take a break an Reward Yourself.

After each study period of 30-40 minutes, take a short 10-15 minute break, have a snack, take a walk and have a good stretch as this will help to keep you alert and focused. Your body can become lethargic if it is subjected to long periods of inactivity. Don't forget to eat plenty of healthy foods at regular times. Eating too much starchy or junk food can make you sleepy or feel irritable. If you have completed set tasks and have stuck to your study planner, reward yourself at the end of each by doing an activity you enjoy e.g. catching up with friends or going to the movies. try to build in free time for social activities in your study planner and reward yourself if you have achieved your goals. If you have not achieved your goals, re-evaluate your free time.

Study Timetable Tips

By setting a study timetable and sticking to it will help you become more organised to reduce the amount of time you waste whilst also maximising your school results.

Making a detailed schedule of your week may seem too restricting, however just the opposite is true. Knowing when you can get things done actually frees you to make changes as you want or need to. Why not try using a study timetable for several weeks and see if it makes a difference for you.

To make your weekly timetable:

Enter all your fixed obligations - classes, meals, work, exercise, sleeping, TV etc.

Schedule your study hours with these suggestions in mind:

- Be realistic
- Think of being a student as a full-time job
- Break big assignments into manageable parts
- Complete study assignments before you are too tired
- Remember that short study sessions can be more effective than marathons
- Study your hardest class first to avoid putting it off
- Review your class notes as soon as possible after class
- Use weekend time to catch up and to plan

Schedule your free time. Prioritise naps, socialising, going out, exercise, etc. Planning recreation is as important as planning other activities.

Try for a balance between study, work and recreation.

Sample weekly study timetable

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Time	Saturday	Sunday
4.00 4.30	Free time	Free time	Homework	Free time	Free time	9.00	Job	Family Time
4.30 5.00	Homework	Homework	Sports	Homework	Homework	10.00	Job	Maths
5.00 5.30	Homework	Homework	Practice	Homework	Homework	11.00	Job	English
5.30 6.00	Dinner	Dinner	Chores	Dinner	Dinner	12.00	Job	Lunch
6.00 6.30	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	1.00	Lunch	Science
6.30 7.00	Maths	English	Homework	Maths	Household	2.00	Sport	History
7.00 7.30	History	Science	Homework	English	Chores	3.00	Sport	Free time
7.30 8.00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	4.00	Assignments	General
8.00 8.30	Homework	Homework	Geography	Homework	Free time	5.00	Assignments	Study
8.30 9.00	General	General	General	General	Free time	6.00	Dinner	Dinner
9.00 9.30	Study	Study	Study	Study	Free time	7.00	General	General
9.30 10.00	Bed	Bed	Bed	Bed	Bed	8.00	Study	Study
						9.00	Free time	Bed
						10.00	Free time	
						11.00	Bed	

Test Taking Tips

Before the Test

1. Be sure to find out ahead of time:
 - what type of test it will be eg. multiple choice, true false, short answer, essay
 - what material the test will cover
 - how the test will be marked and how much it will count towards your final mark
2. Study in a place that is free of distractions. have everything you need eg calculator, pens, paper.
3. Study at a time when you are alert and not hungry or sleepy.
4. Don't leave your study to the last minute! Short daily study sessions are better than one long session the night before the test.
5. Set a goal for each study session. If you are being tested on three chapters, set up four study sessions, one for each chapter and one for a review of the main ideas in all three chapters.
6. Repetition is key! read and reread your class notes and the relevant chapters the the textbook.
7. While you are reviewing your notes, cover them up occasionally and summarise them out loud. Pretend that you are explaining the material to someone else.
8. Create your own study aid:
 - Make an outline from your notes of the main ideas.
 - Make a timeline of important dates or the order of events.
 - Mke cards for studying vocabulary or events and important dates.
 - make up your own quiz/test based on your notes and have someone test you.
9. Do any practice exams pr study sheets provided by your teacher. These will help you focus your study session and give you confidence.
10. Ask for help from your teacher if you do not understand something.

During the Test

1. Read the instructions carefully. Ask the teacher if you are unsure bout anything,
2. Read the entire test through before starting Notice the mark value of each section. This will help you pace yourself.
3. Answer the easiest questions first, then the ones with the highest mark value. You don't want to spend 15 minutes trying to figure out a two mark question!
4. Keep busy! If you get stuck on a question, come back to it later. The answer might come to you while you are working on another part of the test.
5. If you aren't sure how to answer a question fully, try t answer at least part of it.
6. Need to guess on a multiple-choice test? First, eliminate the answers that you know are wrong. Then take a guess. Your first guess is most likely to be correct.
7. On an essay test, take a moment to plan your writing. First, jot down the important points you want to make. Then number these points in the order you will cover them.
8. Keep it neat! If your teacher can't read your writing, you might lose marks.
9. Don't waste time doing things which you will not receive marks, eg rewriting test questions.
10. Leave time at the end to look over your work. Did you answer every question? Did you proof read for errors?

