

STRESS FREE APPROACH TO EXAMS

Parents and students always find the months of May, June & July stressful and a quick poll in the office recently had many of us reaching out for the blood pressure monitor as we have seven students in our midst with exams looming!

Here we provide information to help the student plan ahead.

One of the most important factors in exam success is knowing when to start your revision. Many people put it off until the last minute and then panic. They won't do very well!

It is much better to start too early than too late. You have the option of taking days off here and there if you start early but if you start late then you will find it very difficult to make up the time.

We are going to adopt the teenager minimalist word approach to the rest of this article and provide bullet points for the key areas and milestones, this can also be used as a "**checklist**"

- Start your revision early.
- Plan your revision and monitor your progress.
- Revise regularly for a few hours at a time.
- Be disciplined.
- Create a good atmosphere in which to work.
- Revise each subject topic by topic.
- Make use of as many sources of information as possible.
- Listen out for hints and tips.
- Revise each subject completely.
- Avoid last minute revision.

Learning as you go along

Keep clear and tidy notes

- Use colour to make key points stand out.
- Learn and understand as you go along.

- Sort problems out immediately.
- Go back over your notes every few weeks and months.
- Learn a little at a time and often.

Memory techniques

- Learn small amounts at frequent intervals.
- Understanding something makes it easier to remember.
- Make your notes visually exciting, e.g. use colour.
- Visualise what you are memorising.
- Make use of rhymes, songs, word associations' etc.
- Test yourself regularly.

Hours and minutes before the exams

Get a good night's sleep

- Stop work at least 2 hours before going to bed.
- Relax and unwind before going to bed.
- Have pen and paper by your bed for noting down last minute problems.
- If necessary get up an hour early to sort out problems.

Exam day

- Relax for at least an hour before the exam.
- Don't revise new topics.
- Revise for the subject of the afternoons exam.

Morning Exams

- Don't get up too early.
- Glance over your revision notes.
- Have a good breakfast!.

Afternoon exam only

- Relax for at least an hour before the exam.
- Don't revise new topics.

- Revise for the subject of the afternoons exam.

Morning & Afternoon Exams on same day

- Don't plan new revision for the time between exams.
- Try to relax and unwind.
- Read through revision notes and past papers.

The final minutes

- Get to the exam hall in plenty of time.
- The exam isn't that important - you can always re-sit.
- Stay away from discussions.
- Avoid last minute revision.
- Breathe deeply and stay calm.
- Don't be put off by other people's confidence.

The exam itself

- Check your watch shows the same time as the clock.
- If you are unhappy with your seating get it changed.
- If you feel nervous breathe deeply.
- If you feel unwell tell an invigilator.
- Check that you have the correct paper.
- Make sure you understand the instructions.
- Check there are the correct number of questions.

How to pick your questions

- Read through paper and mark possible questions.
- Answer your best question first.
- An impossible exam paper will begin to look easier as you become more familiar with it.
- The longer the question, the easier the answer.
- Spend time checking rather than answering an extra question.

How to pace yourself

- Work out the time available for each question.
- Allow time for checking at the end.
- Be aware of how the marks will be awarded.
- Attempt the easiest question first.
- If you get stuck try another question and return later.
- Be aware of how often you should be scoring a mark - If you run out of time then list the points you were going to make.
- Marks are easier to gain at the start of questions than at the end.
- Don't waffle.

Secrets of essay questions

- Read the question carefully and note key words.
- Make rough notes.
- Put rough notes into order and compose essay.
- A good essay has a beginning, a middle and an end.
- Never be radical in your answers.
- Use examples and quotations.
- Don't waffle.
- If you run out of time then list the points you were going to make.
- Hand in your essay plan.

Secrets of multiple choice questions

- Understand the instructions.
- Understand the different question styles.
- Understand the marking procedure.
- Use a soft pencil on the answer sheet.
- Make sure question and answer numbers correspond to each other.
- Cover the answers up until you have worked out your answer.

- Do the easy questions first.
- If you get stuck, return to the question later.
- Do your rough working neatly on scrap paper.
- Divide questions into 'blocks' and allocate time per block.
- Divide answers into 'possibles' and 'impossibles' for guessing.
- Watch out for trick answers.

Secrets of short answer questions

- Treat like an essay question.
- Be concise and to the point.
- A lengthy answer is a waste of time.
- Don't waffle.

Secrets of picture essay questions

- Learn a perfect opening by heart.
- Don't worry about the quality of the story.
- Use speech.
- Keep everything as simple as possible.
- If you are unsure of something then change it.
- Don't write more than you have to.
- Don't copy the final version out neatly.

How to pick up extra marks

- Keep rough working neat and tidy.
- Hand in all rough working with each answer.
- Write answers in the style of the question.
- Don't be radical.
- Check every page of the exam paper for questions.
- Never get bogged down on a question - return to it later.
- Know how the marks will be allocated.

- Ask for more paper before you need it.
- Never cross anything out such that it can't be read.
- Hand in everything.
- List the points you were going to make if you run out of time.
- It is easier to gain marks at the beginning of a question than at the end.
- Listen for hints and tips on internal exams.
- Use quotations, diagrams and examples.
- Be friendly towards the examiner and get him to like you.

What to do if you dry up

- Stay calm.
- Breathe deeply
- Relax and don't panic.
- Take your mind elsewhere for a while.
- Read through all that you've already done.
- Think back over all your revision.
- Try and trigger your memory via the 'back door'.

After the exam

- Don't get involved in a post-mortem.
- Don't discuss your answers with anyone.
- Don't listen to other people's discussions or opinions.
- Beware of 'know-alls'.
- If it is a hard exam then everyone will have found it hard.
- Try and appear confident.
- Get rid of any aggression.
- Clear away your books and notes.
- Relax and unwind before starting work again.

In general Exam psychology

- Focus your mind on your strong points.
- Think of all the hard work you've done.
- Remind yourself that your chance of failure is very small.
- Do your best.
- Don't worry about your friends doing better than you.
- If you must worry then be realistic in your worries.
- Remember that you already have the attitude of someone who will do well.
- Practice relaxing and calming yourself down.
- Never enter into a post-mortem.
- Never revise at the last minute.
- Remember other people are worrying about the exams too.
- Don't let others upset or worry you.
- Keep a positive attitude at all times.
- Answer the easy questions first.

Rules for all exams Exam technique checklist

- Never do last minute revision.
- Relax before setting off for the exam.
- Make sure you know the time and place of your exam.
- Arrive at the exam hall in plenty of time.
- Don't be put off by other peoples confidence.
- Glance over your revision notes before going in.
- Keep away from discussions.
- Stay calm by breathing deeply and thinking nice thoughts.
- Check your watch shows the same time as the hall clock.
- Have spare pens, pencils, batteries and some sweets in case of hunger.
- Check you have the correct question paper.
- Read all the instructions carefully.

- Check there are the correct number of questions.
- Look for questions on the back page.
- Make sure you have been given any tables etc. which you are allowed.
- Be aware of how long you have for the exam.
- Allocate a time per question and stick to it and allow time for checking.
- Read the complete paper before you start writing.
- Be aware of the exam format and the mark allocation.
- Attempt the easiest questions first.
- Be neat and tidy at all times.
- Treat the examiner as a friend and make him like you.
- If you get panicky then stop and relax.
- Return to problem areas later on.
- Make use of your subconscious mind to think problems over.
- Anything you cross out should remain legible.
- Ask for more paper before you need it.
- Use diagrams and quotations.
- Use colour to make your diagrams more interesting.
- If you have any problems then call an invigilator.
- Write what you think the examiner wants to hear.
- Never be radical, play everything safe.
- Hand in all your rough working.
- Answer the correct number of questions.
- Never enter into post-mortems.

You're going to do well so don't worry about a thing.

