

WHAT SHOULD YOU BE THINKING ABOUT PRIOR TO EXAMS?

Exams can be a stressful time so it's best to be prepared so that you feel as confident as possible for each exam you take.

STAGE 1

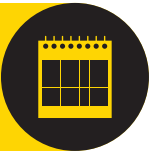
The first stage towards this is to develop strategies to improve exam preparation through:

- planning your revision
- practising/doing revision techniques
- becoming more effective at revising
- ensuring you're ready on the day.

STAGE 2

The second stage is to know how to optimise your performance in the exam by:

- having an exam strategy
- ensuring you answer the question(s)
- gaining the most marks with impressive answers.



PLANNING YOUR REVISION TIME

Making a realistic timetable for your revision is key to exam success. You may want to study as much as possible in the weeks leading up to your exams, but if you try cramming too many study hours into a day, you will struggle to maintain focus.

MAKING AND KEEPING TO YOUR TIMETABLE

There are many different ways to make a timetable, you just have to find the right one for you. For example you can:

- make a simple one on paper
- use post-it notes on a wall
- use a diary
- use a digital calendar like Microsoft Outlook and sync it with your phone or tablet.

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR TIME

Try to plan as far in advance as you can to give yourself enough time to:

- revise!
- do more revision for exams you are less confident about or which require more time
- have some social activities
- have time to relax and stay fresh.



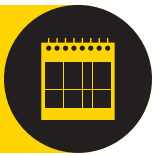
EXAMPLE TIMETABLE

	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
07:00							
08:00			GYM	Mech			GYM
09:00	Physics		GYM	Mech			GYM
10:00	Mech	Group Rev		Spanish	Mech	Physics	
11:00	Mech	Group Rev	Physics	Spanish		Physics	Group Rev
12:00	Lunch	Group Rev	Physics	Lunch	Lunch	Physics	Group Rev
13:00	Physics	Lunch	Lunch	Group Rev		Lunch	Lunch
14:00	Physics	Mech	Mech	Group Rev	Mech Exam	Spanish	Spanish
15:00	Mech	Spanish	Mech	Group Rev	Mech Exam	Spanish	Physics
16:00	Mech	Spanish			Paul Coffee	Group Rev	Physics
17:00	MS@Nero				Spanish	Group Rev	Physics
18:00		Spanish		Mech			
19:00		Spanish	Physics	Mech			
20:00	Gig@Brud				Pub		
21:00			Cinema		Pub		
22:00				Early night!			
23:00							

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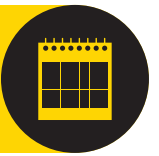
BLANK TIMETABLE

SUN																	
SAT																	
FRI																	
THUR																	
WED																	
TUE																	
MON																	
	07:00	08:00	09:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	13:00	14:00	15:00	16:00	17:00	18:00	19:00	20:00	21:00	22:00	23:00

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Making a realistic timetable for your revision is key to exam success. You may want to study as much as possible in the weeks leading up to your exams, but if you try cramming too many study hours into the day you will struggle to maintain focus.





PLANNING YOUR REVISION TIME: SMART OBJECTIVES

A great way to start planning your time is with smart objectives. When creating a S-M-A-R-T action plan ask yourself whether your tasks are:

SPECIFIC

- Are they clearly identifiable, or are they vague?

MEASURABLE

- What are your success criteria? If your goals are not measurable, how will you know when you've achieved them?

ACTION-ORIENTATED

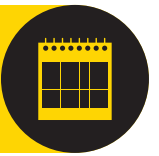
- What are your goals and how will you achieve them?

REALISTIC

- Are they "do-able"? Are they achievable given the limited time and resources you have?

TIME-BOUND

- Have you set a deadline? Can you say what needs to be done, by whom, and by what time?



S-M-A-R-T OBJECTIVES EXAMPLE

Read and make notes on main set text (Pearce and Turner, 1990) for climate change essay:
“Identify and discuss barriers preventing effective global action on climate change”

SPECIFIC

- I will read Chapter 11 ‘Pollution-control policy in mixed economies’ tonight

MEASURABLE

- I will have covered one substantive element of this topic

ACTION-ORIENTATED

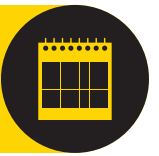
- I will take Cornell-style notes, identify key evidence and data on post-its and produce a mind map ready to review tomorrow

REALISTIC

- One chapter is ok because it’s dense material and I need to get to sleep early to be ready for my work shift tomorrow

TIME-BOUND

- I will start at 6pm and finish by 9pm



REVISE ALONE OR IN GROUPS?

STARTING YOUR REVISION

It can be a daunting task, but plan well and make the most of your revision learning styles so that you'll be ready for your exams. Revision doesn't have to be a solitary activity, so to make your revision less daunting and more fun, you could think about setting aside some time to revise with others.

BENEFITS OF REVISING IN GROUPS

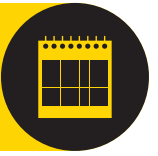
- Share revision techniques and knowledge
- Hear other people's thoughts, opinions and ideas
- Learn in a different way
- Test and quiz each other
- Encourages those with a tendency to procrastinate, to participate
- Makes it more interactive and fun

BENEFITS OF REVISING ALONE

- Flexibility to work to your own schedule and set your own goals
- Focus on your weaknesses and areas for improvement
- No distractions from other people

SHOULD I DO BOTH?

You may find that you enjoy both ways of revising. However, everyone is different and you may find working by yourself/in a group just doesn't work for you - don't worry about it, and revise the way you find best.



REVISING IN GROUPS

WAYS TO REVISE IN GROUPS

You may want to consider some of these ideas to build a structure that works for you:

- divide revision between the group so that each person/pair is revising a different topic
- meet up and revise together, prepare feedback and discuss what you've done
- set aside some time to help those who are struggling with particular topics. It will also help the 'teachers' clarify their answers
- look at past paper questions and talk through how you'd answer them
- practise past papers in exam conditions and go through the answers afterwards.

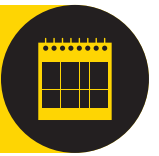
FEEDBACK

If feedback is a part of your group revision, you'll need to make it as productive as possible. Think about these ways of giving feedback:

- make good notes to feedback or give to the group (you may want to refer to the '**Note-making**' pack)
- make flash cards
- draw diagrams, storyboards, timelines...
- make a quiz
- get creative and think of memorable ways to present your feedback - and be positive!

SHARING INFORMATION

Set up a Whatsapp/Facebook group or a shared folder in Dropbox or Google Drive to share notes, ideas, videos, links and tips.

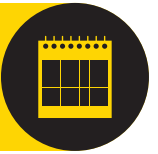


REVISION TECHNIQUES

There are lots of ways to help you revise for your exams. You could try some of these or get creative and think of your own.

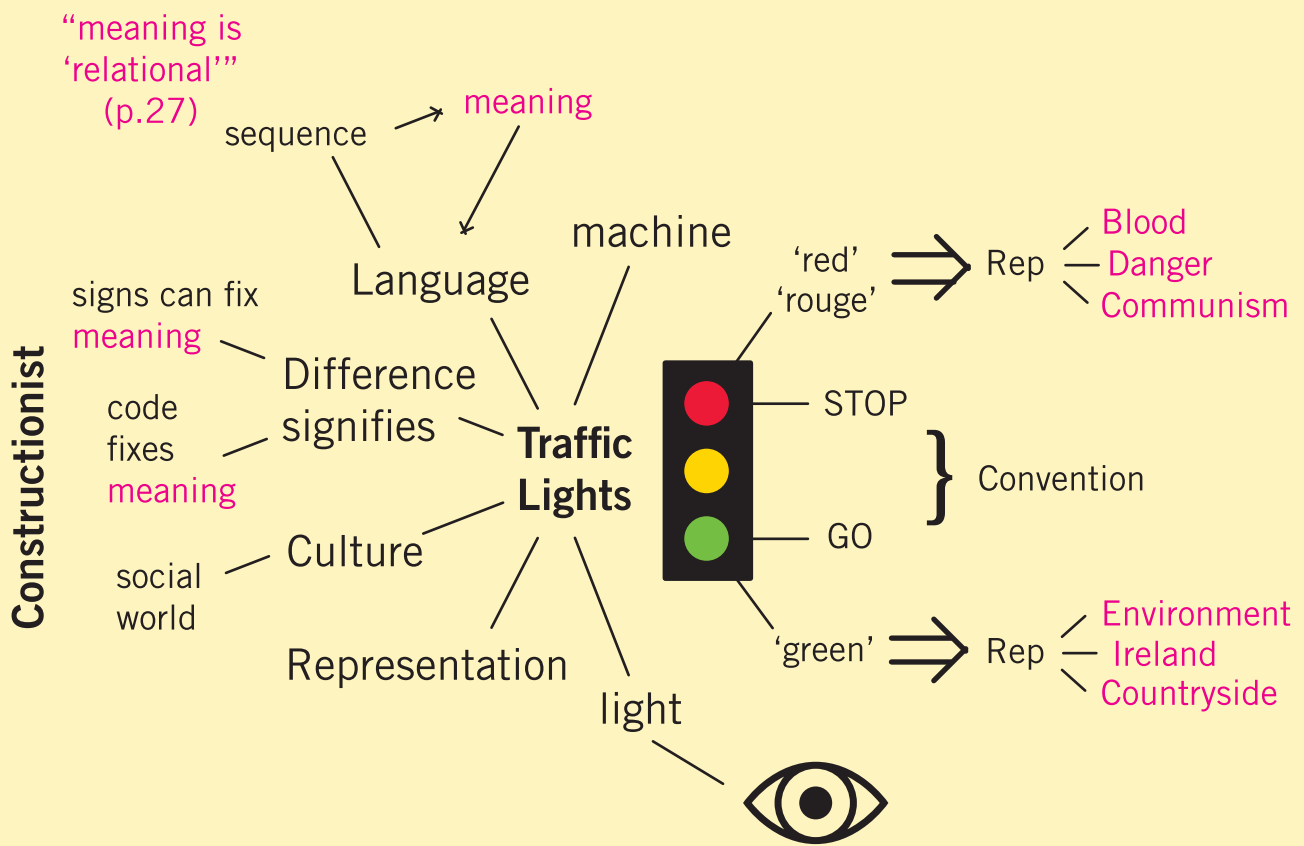
EXAMPLES

- Record notes on your phone or other device
- Tweet challenge: summarise an idea in 140 characters
- Practise past papers
- Cartoons and storyboards
- Create a meme
- Song/poem/limerick/haiku
- Dance
- Create a study group
- Use post-it notes around the house
- Photos
- Diagrams
- Lists
- Sketch/story/collage/sculpture

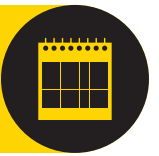


PATTERN OR MIND MAP REVISION NOTES

This is a visual approach, organising keywords and concepts across a page so that you can remember them in the exam. In this example note that the source and quotes are still clearly recorded. The notemaker has added their own connections in **pink** to focus on meaning.



Hall, S. 2013.
Representation.
p.26



FLASH CARDS

Using flash cards can be a great way to aid your memory, and they're simple to create. They can be used for a variety of subjects to test your knowledge. They are particularly useful where you need to memorise large amounts of similar pieces of information, such as vocabulary or formulae. In these examples, the front of the card is shown on the left, and the back of the card on the right.

AREA OF CIRCLE

$$\pi r^2$$

1776

*American
Revolution*

**1 GRAM
1 KILO GRAM**

*1000 mg
1000 g*

FUEGO

Fire

**ACCELERATION
DUE TO GRAVITY**

$$9.81 \text{ m/s}^2$$



EXAM STRATEGIES: EXAM CHECKLIST

PRACTICALITIES

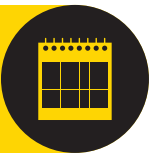
- Which days are the exams on?
- What time do they start?
- When do you have to be there?
- Where are they?
- How are you getting there?
- Do you know where the room is in the building?
- Where are the nearest toilets?

EQUIPMENT

- What resources, books or equipment (if any) can you take into the exam?
- Do you need any special equipment?
- Can you take a bag in? If not is there somewhere to store it?
- Are you required to write in black ink?
- Can you take bottled water to keep yourself hydrated?

FORMAT

- How long does the exam last?
- How many questions do you have to answer?
- What kind of questions are there?
- Do some questions carry more marks than others?
- Do questions contain options within them?
- Are some questions likely to be compulsory?
- Is the exam paper divided into parts?
- How many questions do you have to answer for each part?
- And do some parts carry more value than others?
- Are there any questions you are not allowed to answer, for example, because you have submitted coursework in that area?



EXAM STRATEGIES: PLAN AN EXAM TIMETABLE

HAVE AN EXAM STRATEGY

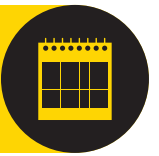
Keep calm under pressure! Plan the way that you will start your exam. Failure to allow enough time to complete all questions is a common mistake. Look at past papers to see how they are structured. Having a routine can be calming when under pressure such as:

- having a timetable in mind
- deciding how you will read the paper and your strategy for choosing the questions.

EXAMPLE

If you have a 2 hour exam at 9am and have to answer two equally weighted questions, you may want to plan your 'exam timetable' something like this:

09:00	09:10	Read through all the questions and decide which ones to answer
09:10	09:25	Plan answers to Q1 + Q2
09:25	10:05	Write answer to Q1
10:05	10:45	Write answer to Q2
10:45	10:55	Check answers to Q1 + Q2
10:55	11:00	Final overall check



EXAM STRATEGIES: DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN!

Sometimes your exam might not go exactly to plan. Don't panic, stay calm and keep these strategies in mind to maximise the marks you can gain:

BLANK MIND

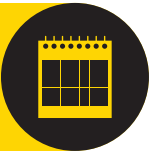
- Put pen down, read what you've written so far. What's next?
- Jot down anything you know about the topic
- Leave a gap and move to the next question
- Come back to the difficult question later

SHORT OF TIME

- Divide remaining time by numbers of answers and recalculate
- Try to get your main points down with some supporting evidence

LOSING THE PLOT!

- Stop writing and re-read the question
- Look at your plan and decide whether there is more to say, or if you have written enough already



EXAM STRATEGIES: MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

TIPS FOR ANSWERING MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

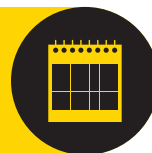
- Read each instruction carefully
 - Are you asked to mark ONE or ALL correct answers?
- Can you use a process of elimination?
- Answer the ones you are certain of
- Don't waste time puzzling over one question
- Mark those you are uncertain of with a '?' and return to it later
- Unless you lose marks for incorrect answers, guess those you are unsure about

DECIPHERING THE ANSWER

- '*All of the above*' or '*none of the above*' - if even ONE alternative does not apply totally then check whether either statement answers the question
- Negatives e.g. '*none*', '*not*', '*never*' - the answer will be a FACT and/or ABSOLUTE
- Superlatives e.g. '*all*', '*none*', '*always*' - The correct answer must be an undisputed fact

QUICK GUIDE TO TRICKY QUESTIONS

- Break the question down
- Underline clues/key words
- Reread the question to ensure you understand what is being asked
- Think of the correct answer, is it there?
- Use elimination techniques:
 - Read all of the alternatives, and don't jump to the first conclusion
 - Eliminate any obviously wrong answers
 - Relate the remaining answers back to the question
 - Pick the one that most closely matches your prior learning
 - When there are similar answers, go for the one that reflects your course terminology



EXAM STRATEGIES: MATHS AND SCIENCE TIPS

CALCULATORS

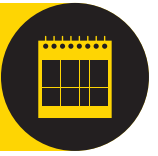
- Take a calculator, because you won't be able to use the one on your phone as mobiles are not allowed
- Check before what type of calculator, if any, is permitted, as some more advanced ones may not be, such as graphical calculators.
- Make sure you know how to use all the functions you'll need on it!

BEFORE YOU START

- Read the instructions at the beginning of the paper carefully - often it's not necessary to answer all questions, so it's important to ensure you don't waste time answering questions unnecessarily
- If you don't need to answer all the questions, it's still a good idea to read them all first to pick out the easiest ones – this avoids wasting time attempting a question that you may eventually give up on
- Write down straight away any formulas you may need to use (if you're not provided with a formula sheet)

ANSWERING THE QUESTION

- Write down all your working out in a clear, logical order. It makes sure you can explain every step in your argument
- If you realise you've made a mistake in your working, don't cross it out straight away! You might not have time to re-do the question, but your answer might still earn you some marks for using the correct method
- If you're running out of time, go through the rest of the questions briefly detailing how you would answer them e.g. what theorems/formulas you would use



WRITING IN THE EXAM: DECIDING WHAT TO ANSWER

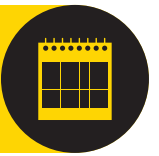
READ THE PAPER THOROUGHLY

- Can you spot your preferred topic? Check the wording of the question - can you address that specific area?
- Is your preferred topic not there? Check that it's not hidden within other questions. Can you apply what you know to other questions?
- Still not sure? Jot down a very quick outline for a few topics, and decide which you can answer the best

ANALYSE THE QUESTION

Receiving exam scripts which do not answer the question is a common complaint from markers. How can you avoid this?

- Re-read the question and circle keywords
- Analyse the wording of the question
- Is it an essay? Short answers? Does it require a diagram?



WRITING IN THE EXAM: WHAT MAKES A GOOD ANSWER?

WHAT ARE EXAMINERS LOOKING FOR?

Answer the question that has been set!

Demonstrate your understanding of the subject and how it relates to the question. Analytical in structure and questioning in approach

A logical, well structured and coherent answer

Written in an objective style

Answer all parts of the question and give appropriate examples/illustrations

WHAT DON'T EXAMINERS WANT TO SEE?

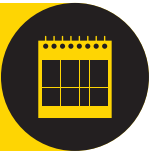
Answers that are much too long and not relevant to the question. They don't want to see a good answer to the wrong question

All that you know about a topic, written descriptively, unselectively and uncritically

Confused and muddled answers

Unsubstantiated opinions, i.e. 'I think' or 'I believe' without adequate explanation, argument, or supporting evidence

Missed out questions and not including relevant examples/illustrations



WRITING IN THE EXAM: PLANNING YOUR ANSWER

EXAM QUESTIONS VERSUS ESSAYS

Exam questions can be easier to tackle than essays:

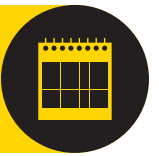
- you can provide less evidence and fewer examples than for coursework
- you can write less for each point
- you can miss out some background detail
- you don't need to give a bibliography or supply detailed references - but you should however, refer to the main theorists/researchers etc. by name and date of major works or key points, providing a citation.

STRUCTURING SHORT ANSWERS

- Keep to the point - address the question directly, do not simply regurgitate everything you know
- Have some structure - be analytical and focused
- Leave wide margins in case you think of something else useful which you want to add later

TIPS ON PLANNING

- For short answers, jot down a short outline or some keywords
- Note down any mnemonics or things that you might forget
- Cross out anything that you don't want to be marked
- A plan does not have to be neat or complete so don't spend too much time on it
- A plan should be flexible and used as an outline. As you start writing, your thinking will evolve
- You can try making a mind map to generate ideas
- If ideas for other questions pop up, note them down immediately



WRITING IN THE EXAM: PLANNING IN PARAGRAPHS

AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO PLAN YOUR ANSWER IN PARAGRAPHS

“People who choose unhealthy lifestyles should have to pay for access to healthcare”. Discuss this in the context of future financing of health services.

Introduction...

Paragraph/point 1

It would be difficult to know who to charge, as it's hard to define unhealthy: reason 1, 2, 3... Evidence from reports from Smith 2009, NHS 2012...

Paragraph/point 2

User charges may put people off seeking preventative treatment = a more expensive healthcare system in the long term. Shown by studies including Rubin...

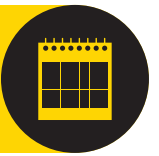
Paragraph/point 3

User charges have worked to some extent in areas such as dentistry/prescriptions. Main positive has been... but also been some disadvantages such as DOH 2012...

Paragraph/point 4

Other approaches to dealing with unhealthy lifestyles have been found to be more cost effective such as health promotion, smoking cessation. Give examples from NHS stats, Brown Report...

Conclusion...

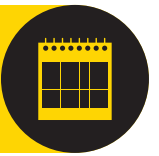


WRITING IN PARAGRAPHS

Paragraphs are styled around a controlling idea, which is often expressed in the first sentence. Supporting sentences then explain, illustrate, evidence, explore, or restate this. The last sentence should either pave the way for the next paragraph, or reinforce the controlling idea.

EXAMPLE

THE CONTROLLING IDEA - The increasing dominance of supermarkets in the UK has significantly contributed towards the decline of traditional grocery stores. Smaller, independent stores may find it difficult to compete with the buying power and aggressive tactics used by supermarkets to attract consumers. **SUPPORTING SENTENCES** - In Withernsea, for example, a new Tesco store offered local residents 40% off vouchers. Proudfoot, a long-established local business, saw their custom and profits fall by almost 50% within a few months of Tesco opening (Office of Fair Trading, 2011). Some reports have suggested that this tactic has been used by Tesco across the country and have had similar impact on other local businesses (The Grocer, 2013). **CONCLUDING SENTENCES** - These tactics have been called “aggressive and anti-competitive” (Phillips, 2013) and it seems that even successful businesses may struggle to compete.



CHECK YOUR ANSWERS

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS

- Make sure that you have numbered your answers
- Make sure that you have attempted all the questions you have been asked to
- Correct any obvious errors - spelling, grammar etc.
- Re-write illegible words
- Have you missed anything out?
- If you need to add extra information, make sure that this is marked up clearly on the paper e.g. add in the text margin, or “see additional paragraph X...”