

EXAM PREPARATION



- From your very first day at university you will be reminded that you have to write exams in order to receive a degree at the end of your studies. Lecturers will remind you throughout the semester, and may hint at what could be in the final exams. Attend all lectures and carefully read through all communications (e.g. study letters) from your lecturers to ensure that you do not miss out on something important. By doing this and by using the study techniques on this website and following a consistent timetable, you will be more than ready to tackle the exams. Below is a list of what you can do in the last few weeks before your exam that will help you to pass.

It is important to revise all your subjects. This means going through all your notes, summaries, assignments and visual aids for reading material on each subject. The following points are important:

- **USE YOUR TIME WISELY.**
- **DETERMINE YOUR BEST TIME TO LEARN.**
- **STUDY CREATIVELY.**
- **UNDERSTAND THE CONTENT.**
- **USE APPROPRIATE STRATEGIES FOR ROTE LEARNING WHERE NECESSARY.**
- **TEST YOURSELF.**
- **WORK OUT PROBLEMS.**



● USE YOUR TIME WISELY

The first thing you need to do before you begin revising is to organise all your work. Everything should be dated and in the correct order so that you can start revising from the first day of studies to your last class. Keep the work for different subjects separate. Estimate how long each subject will take you to revise, and use your exam timetable to check how much time you have left for each subject before you write the corresponding exam. Then create a special exam study timetable in which you allocate time for each of your subjects. Try to have a varied timetable (a mix of subjects per day) so you don't get stuck focusing on only one subject.



TIP -

It is a good idea to spread out your learning. For example, spend two hours on a subject, then take a break and after that change to a different subject. Use your kitchen timer to break up the two hours into manageable sections (**as described in the section 'Dealing with procrastination'**). When you come back to a previous subject try to recall what you have studied so far, before continuing.

● DETERMINE YOUR BEST TIME TO LEARN

When drawing up an exam study timetable you should take into consideration when you feel that you learn best. Also consider the subject that you are studying. If it's a subject you find particularly difficult you should study it during your 'best time'. Don't forget to build in breaks between subjects. Use a slightly longer interval than usual (15-20 minutes) for breaks between subjects.

● STUDY CREATIVELY

It is important that you don't mindlessly go through all your notes without really taking in any of the information. Constantly ask yourself relevant questions on the material before you. What have I just learned? What sort of question can they ask about this in the exam? It may help you to join or start an exam study group or to study with a friend. However, try not to get distracted by chatting about non-exam related subjects.

● UNDERSTAND THE CONTENT

Ensure that you thoroughly understand the content of the subject you are studying. You will not be able to answer certain exam questions if you do not have a clear understanding of the concepts.

- Ask someone to explain it to you. Don't be shy to approach a classmate or your lecturer if there is something you are unsure of.
- Try to explain the concept/content to a friend and see if you can concisely explain exactly what it is about.
- You will understand it better if you can make connections between different aspects of the subject.

● TEST YOURSELF

Make sure to constantly test yourself on the work you are studying. Try to remember what you have studied by saying the information aloud to yourself. Do this before you move on to the next section in order to help cement the information in your long-term memory.

● WORK OUT PROBLEMS

In some subjects, such as Mathematics, Statistics, Chemistry, Physics, Engineering and Accounting, it is not enough to go through the material by reading, summarising and trying to recall information. In these subjects you have to practise solving problems. You will have problems from your assignments, test papers and from your textbook that you can work out again. If there are worked-out problems in the material you are studying, don't just read through them and assume that you understand how to solve the problem. Read through the solution once to see if you understand each step, then cover the solution with a piece of paper and try to solve the problem yourself. You will be surprised how often you get stuck, even though you have just read through the solution. Make sure that you are constantly testing yourself by solving problems for each topic in a particular subject. Practising solving problems is crucial to prepare yourself thoroughly for the exams in such subjects.

● USE YOUR TIME WISELY

Rote learning is the accurate memorisation of facts and figures. You can use the following methods:

FLASH CARDS:

Make flash cards of what you find difficult to remember. A flash card usually has a word or concept on the front, and a definition, formula or more relevant information on the back. Test yourself using your flash cards whenever you have a moment, for example while you are having breakfast. Look at the word on the front and try to recall the information on the back. Turn the card around to check if you are correct. Use bold colours and capital letters for the important words.

POST-IT NOTES:

Use Post-it notes or small pieces of paper to write important definitions, formulas or other facts and figures that you need to remember. Stick or tape them to your physical environment, for example above the kettle or on a mirror.

MNEMONICS:

It can be fun to design mnemonics for detailed information that you need to remember. Types of mnemonics include songs, names, expressions or words, rhymes and images. Try to create a mnemonic that contains the essential points by using a personalised memorable phrase. Here are two examples of such mnemonic phrases:

- You can use the expression **Oh, Oh, Oh! To Touch And Feel Very Good Velvet – Such Heaven!** to remember the 12 cranial nerves (olfactory, optic, oculomotor, trochlear, trigeminal, abducens, facial, vestibulocochlear, glossopharyngeal, vagus, spinal, hypoglossal).
- Another example is **My Very Energetic Mother Jumps Secretly Under Noodles** to remember the names of the 8 planets in correct order from the Sun (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune – remember that Pluto is left out as it is no longer considered a planet.)