

Ten Top Exam Revision Tips

Don't do it all at once. We only retain a certain amount of what we learn in a single sitting. You are far better off spreading your revision over a week than cramming the night before (if you have no choice, see [here](#)). Even fifteen minute slots before you go to bed each night, or on the journey to school can make all the difference.

2. Walk the dog (or tortoise, or small sibling, or whatever). Go for short walks whenever you can. The change of scenery will stimulate your imagination and your learning capabilities. Take a sheet of paper with a few quotes to learn for an essay, or some formulae, or a vocabulary list, and you'll be surprised at how much more you take in just being outside.

3. Cram it all in – onto one sheet of paper, that is. Try to summarise a module or a topic on a single sheet of paper that you can stick to your wall. Not only will you be reminded of your notes whenever you walk past them, but fitting the material into a set space forces you to mentally organise the information, a massive step towards learning it. Making your notes is 50% of your revision

4. Get personal. Relate your notes to your bedroom, to your favourite colours, your favourite foods. Make up stories involving the information you have to learn.

5. Get out the colouring pens! Making all of your revision notes in black ballpoint is fatal – buy some cheap felt tips and write different words in different colours. Pictures tell a thousand words, remember, especially if they're in colour.

Shout it for the world to hear. You might feel an idiot at first, but it is definitely worth reading your revision notes aloud. Speaking practice is essential for the revision of foreign languages. Even saying basic words like “yes” and “no” and “please pass the ketchup” in the language you are learning are steps towards fluency.

7. Learn it inside out and backwards. If you are learning a list of chemicals, then try saying the list backwards (without looking at your notes!). Spell words back to front to make sure you really know what they look like – just remember to get them the right way around in the exam.

8. Have a good gossip. Discuss your revision topics with a friend in the same class, especially if you will have to write essays in the exam. See what ideas you

can glean from each other – it is surprising how differently two people can approach the same questions.

9. Test yourself both ways. Don't just learn how to recognise French words: practice translating the English into French. Learn how to work out each segment of a formula triangle.

10. Practise, practise, practise. Find some past exam papers and have a go at the questions. There's nothing like writing an essay on Shakespeare for really getting to know what you don't yet know ...

How to Survive Exam Stress

Children are under more pressure than ever to succeed in exams,” says child psychologist Dr Pat Spungin in an interview with Suite 101. “More teenagers than ever before now go on to higher education, so it’s crucial to do well.”

Dr Spungin says stress is an inevitable part of studying. “The key is reaching the optimal level of stress,” she says. “Children and teenagers need to have enough stress to keep the adrenaline flowing, but not too much so that they become over-anxious.”

For all kids, usually the most important factor in keeping exam stress at bay is preparation. Academics swear by the mantra: Preparation Prevents Poor Performance – but there are plenty of other practical steps parents and kids can take too.

Parent-child communication is essential to help children prepare for their exams. Parents can do this using the following ways.

- Be supportive of the student's aspirations, not just the academic ones.
- Encourage without pressurising. Nagging causes rows.
- Don't compare a child's efforts to those of an older sibling or classmates.
- Adolescents may be suffering other stresses besides exam worries. Make sure they have someone to talk to.
- Listen to complaints about subjects or teachers. Make sure the school is aware of any problems.
- Talk to other parents for useful tips or to diffuse stress.
- Remind older siblings what it's like to do exams and encourage them to offer support. Keep younger brothers and sisters occupied at revision time.

Feed Students' Minds

Healthy, regular meals are also important for children to concentrate on their studies. Here are some healthy eating ideas that parents can use.

- Regular meals keep concentration up. Thirty per cent of daily calorie intake is used by the brain. Explain that eating well aids study.
- Stress can make the immune system more susceptible to infections. Eating a healthy balanced diet helps ward off coughs and colds.

- Give students oily fish, which contain the essential omega-3 fatty acids for a healthy brain and nervous system, or an omega-3 supplement to boost concentration.
- Regular snacks keep blood sugar levels up and reduce mood swings. Bananas, dried fruits and nuts are great as a revision or pre-exam snack.
- Porridge is perfect for breakfast. Try flavoured Ready Brek if plain oats don't appeal, or try eggs on wholemeal toast and a piece of fruit.
- Avoid junk food, it makes the body sluggish. Replace chips with wholemeal pasta and rice and serve lean meats and fresh fish.
- Vitamins and minerals help to maintain proper brain function and eating five portions of fruit and veg a day keeps the brain healthy. Keep a full fruit bowl and put salad in packed lunches.
- Avoid fizzy drinks, especially before bed. Serve milk or camomile tea at night to help students relax and sleep. Tiredness causes loss of concentration.

Help Manage Stress

- Help plan a revision timetable, with relaxation time built in.
- Pencil in time for the whole family to relax, go for a swim or eat together.
- Don't force kids to go out if they feel they don't have enough time, it will just add to their burden. Having a soak in the bath may be more beneficial.
- Keep students active. Kids need fresh air and at least an hour a day of physical activity. Suggest walking the dog or washing the car if there is no time for organised sport.
- Look out for headaches, nausea, sleeplessness, a noticeable change in eating habits and a bad temper, which could mean stress is out of control.

Back to Basics for Pupils

- Students should find a comfortable, well-lit place to work. Get rid of clutter and use files and plastic wallets to organise information.
- It's important to get plenty of sleep, eat properly, avoid junk food and keep active. This will help beat stress and keep concentration at its peak.
- Drink plenty of water to keep the brain hydrated. Take a bottle into the exam.

Be Prepared

- It's never too early, or too late, to start revising. Be realistic and plan what can be achieved in the time allocated.

- Make a revision timetable, ticking off what can be covered. Take short breaks and have small treats as a reward.
- Doing revision in short bursts is better than doing it all in one go. Never do more than an hour without a break.
- Try some past questions against the clock and in conditions similar to an exam. The real thing won't be so daunting.
- Write key points on postcards and stick notes above the mirror and repeat them daily.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. Try friends, teachers, parents or the Internet.
- Don't cram. The night before an exam is time to focus on basic notes, diagrams and memory aids such as mnemonics and to get any necessary equipment packed.

Positive Thinking for Students

- Avoid friends who aren't motivated. Stick with the positive ones who encourage and inspire.
- On exam day remember all the hard work done so far. Imagine opening the results and celebrating the fact they reflect hard work and commitment.

Plan Ahead for Studying

It sounds simple, but one of the most common mistakes made by students is to leave everything until the last minute. If you've worked hard throughout the year, then you will be as prepared as possible – but even then, if you only start studying the day before the exam then your brain will only be able to process so much at once. Start revising early, and then by the time you've got two days to go until the exam, you'll feel like you know most of your material already, instead of starting your panic at that point.

Get Some Sleep

Many students survive on energy drinks, coffee and late nights during exam periods. The truth is, however, that your brain is much more likely to remember something you read or write while it is alert and awake; caffeine products are good for meeting deadlines, but when it comes to exams and revision, you'll need to be well-rested if you're going to remember it all.

Minimise Everything

One of the most effective ways to revise, particularly if you have large blocks of information to remember, is to summarise your notes in smaller and smaller forms. Start by reducing your notes to a few sides of size A4 paper; then condense that until you can fit it onto one side of A4, and from there you should be able to produce several small revision cards based around specific topics. Your brain gets confused by massive blocks of text and information – short notes will provide markers to allow your brain to access the rest of the information you already know.

Talk about Exam Stress

It's important to realise that during exam period, you're not the only one stressing about your exams. Talk to friends, family or staff about any worries you may have – not only will you feel better about it as they sympathise, but they may be able to suggest new ideas for revision techniques, or even spend time helping you with a difficult topic.

Believe in Yourself

It's sometimes easy during exam periods, particularly if you're not overly confident about the material in question, to approach life with a sense of impending doom. While you're not guaranteed to pass every exam you ever take just by thinking positively, if you're in a negative mindset going into an exam then you will become easily frustrated, and it will become harder to remember what you've learned. You always know more than you think!

What's The Worst That Could Happen?

If you find yourself approaching an exam with the idea that you're not going to do very well, then when all else fails, ask yourself the question – "what's the worst that could happen?". Often, individual exams for students don't mean much in themselves, and overall performance is what matters. If you approach each exam with a relaxed attitude, knowing that your life isn't ruined if you fail, you will be far less stressed and far more likely to remember your material.

Exam time is a testing time for the whole family, but don't get bogged down with stress and worry as results are bound to suffer if parents and children have rows or don't put survival strategies in place. It's important for parents to do their homework too, and know how to cope when their kids have lots of revision to do. With a bit of preparation, plenty of hard work and mutual support, results can only improve.

Study Skills for Improving Studies

Everyone has his or her own studying style. When, how and where students study varies from student to student. Some are auditory learners, visual, others a mixture of both. Thus, every student must find a method of studying that works for them. This being said, there are a few studying tips that apply to most, if not all students in some way.

How to Improve Study Skills by Doing the Readings

Most students groan when required reading is mentioned. Interesting or not, adding the readings to one's study routine, takes up "valuable" time. Unfortunately, when it comes to exam preparation, the readings are also a valuable study tool.

Class readings require students to review the material an additional time. Wah la, studying! Also, the readings add additional information, which may not be required but will increase a students understanding of the material they do need to know

Required readings do not have to be as daunting as they appear. Below are a few study tips to make them bearable.

- Don't do all the readings, pick a few for each section, or do the minimum requirements.
- Read the section ahead of the class that covers it. This causes the material to remain in one's mind, and causes them to make at least one or two additional connections each class.
- Readings should be done based on personal preference. Some students will need to read in 20-minute increments or so. Others may find reading on an exercise bike or bus to be more effective
- If it helps read allowed, perhaps to a friend or animal.
- Some students will find that reading with a partner and discussing the material is most effective.
- Read the lecture aims before starting the readings.

Lastly, how one does the reading doesn't really matter. When it comes to studying, as long as the material is read actively, exam preparation will be that much easier. Of course if the reading is just scanned, students may be better off not doing it all because if one is not retaining any of the information, sitting with an open book is a waste of time.

Other, More General Studying Tips

Students are encouraged to try as many "study tips" as they like. When using these studying tips, students should choose the ones that work for them. If one method of studying becomes ineffective, for whatever reason, students should switch to a new form of studying that does.

- Read! Just do so ahead of time. Trying to catch up on all the reading last minute is not only overwhelming but also ineffective.
- Study in small doses, while 20-30 minutes is usually suggested as a maximum, the rule of thumb should be to study until concentration begins to wander.
- Go to class! Readings + Class = material reviewed twice already. If the student takes notes, this means that the material has been reviewed a minimum of three times before studying officially begins before exams.
- Discuss material with classmates and friends. This may seem slightly "nerdy" or even corny, but again it is a simple, less daunting exercise that reviews the material one more time.
- Actively review the notes taken, while dutifully attending class. Write notes on them! Circle, draw, anything to make reading them interesting. If this can be done after each lecture, fantastic, if not, do so before the exam.
- Get enough sleep. Study whenever concentration is highest. Attempting to recreate exam settings is optimal, but while this is not always possible or practical, there is no point studying if the mind can't focus. So whether this is at one in the morning, six in the morning, or during the afternoon, take advantage of it.
- Exercise. Not only is exercise good for the body, it also clears the head, and can be an amazing way to break up study sessions.

Again, students should find a way of studying that works for them. There is few things worse when it comes to exam preparation, than sitting for hours studying the way "Bob" is in the corner, if "Bob's" way is simply not effective for one's own studying needs.

Last Minute Exam Preparation

Once exam time hits, usually in the first few weeks of April, panic sets in on the student population. Coffee shops and libraries around the campus are filled with studying students. The University sends information on test prep, and various study skills tips to students. Thus, a month of frenzy to complete last minute assignments, improve grades and pass exams begins.

This method of studying is often not particularly productive. Even when this last minute study is effective it is usually so at a cost. Stress around exam time is mostly inevitable, but leaving everything until the last minute not only intensifies this stress, but prolongs it. Plus, students miss out on sleep, exercise, a healthy diet, and some much needed time off. Yes, even during exams.