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EBook

Revising For Success



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Introduction

Most students equate the word 'exam' with stress. Sadly, a majority of students tend to build their confidence until just before the exams, when the frenzy sets in, and they hurriedly start cramming in the last minute. This puts the students under so much pressure that they not only forget most of what they learned, but also end up getting low marks. This situation can easily be remedied with a little planning and some self-discipline. Revising for exams must begin long before the exams are due to start. The important thing to understand is - exam revision is a continuous activity that happens throughout the academic year. Exam revision can be a comfortable learning experience. You do not have to go through that panic in the middle of the night. Are you surprised? Then it is time to explore the various strategies, tips and techniques you can use to make your exam revision something you will enjoy. In addition, for your effort, you will be rewarded with the results you always dreamed of.

This e-book can help you achieve the following:

- Plan for success
- Know how to get started with your revision
- Find out your learning style
- Know about memory improvement techniques
- Boost your confidence with revision tips
- Guide you through what you should avoid in revision
- Review what you learned
- Carry you through a rehearsal for the exam
- Show you how to get rid of performance pressure

The earlier you begin revising, the better you will feel. Why lose out on the good grades you deserve? Now let us see how you can plan for success.

Planning For Success

It is often said that those who fail to plan, plan to fail. This statement has never been truer than in present context - revising for exams. When you start planning, you need to be realistic about the kind of targets you will set for yourself based on the time you have and need. Try to bring a balance between the subjects you find yourself strong in and the ones you are not so confident about. You must use your time wisely without overdoing things.

Make sure that you have all your books, notes, and whatever you need in hand. Begin with a positive attitude. It is quite all right to talk to your parents and colleagues about your revision plans. When you put to work the techniques you are about to read, you will reach your full potential at the time of writing your exams.

When you start planning your revision, do the following:

- Make a list of the topics you need to revise for each subject
- Study these topics and make notes
- Choose the time of day that you find easiest to learn - mornings are usually good for learning new topics while afternoons are better to go over what you already know.
- If music helps you focus, use it
- Revise at least four hours a day
- Set yourself a realistic timetable
- Stick to your plan

Start planning by making a weekly revision timetable. You can make a fresh one every week. The best way to go about it is to split each day into sessions. Add a 5 or 10-minute break between these sessions, remembering to take time out for meals. You will also need to set aside time each day to relax.

When your revision has variety, you will find it more interesting. Therefore, using visuals, words, and mind mapping will help. Your revision should have a logical flow. This means you look at what you need to learn in its entirety and then break it down into smaller portions that are easier to absorb.

Learning relaxation techniques will come in handy when you plan your revision as it will help put you in a positive frame of mind. During this time, you can also get some feedback on how you are doing by discussing with other people.

It goes without saying that you should also take good care of your health to give you the stamina to study. It is time to get started with your revision!



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Getting Started With Your Revision

Effective revision is all about being involved, active, and organized. Most students find it comfortable to have a pen and paper handy so that they can note down important points. Reading yards of text for any length of time can be boring. Rather than focusing on how much time you spend on your studies, think about what you have achieved.

- Being organized also helps you assess what you have to do to achieve your daily or weekly goals.
- Next, decide where you want to study. Check whether your own desk at home or sitting at the local library is better. The idea is to associate yourself with doing productive work. You will need to have everything you need within reach. Create a positive learning atmosphere making sure there is good ventilation and light. It helps to devote a part of the wall to 'stickies' carrying important info.
- Know what you want to achieve - what portions to complete. When you start a session, decide on what lessons you want to complete by the end of that session. Set realistic targets and focus on the tasks at hand.
- Decide how you will study. Have your pen and paper ready to write important facts.
- Schedule your revision for the time of day when you are more alert. Usually, it seems best to finish the day's revision during the first half of the day so that you can relax when you finish.
- Make a plan to evaluate how much material you have covered and what you have learned.

Here are some revision techniques you can put to use:

- Make short summaries from your notes by listing the main points.
- Create a list of keywords that will help you remember information. You can use these words as mnemonics that will bring all related information

to your mind. (A mnemonic helps you remember something. It triggers related information when you think of it).

- Spider diagrams can assist you in remembering several things easily.
- Try revising in a group of friends to build up your confidence. This will help you learn more quickly because of active interaction. It will also keep you in a positive mood. You will get the opportunity to brainstorm within the group and make tough topics easy to understand.
- Write a list of subject-related questions that you think are important and have someone test your knowledge about these. This will let you review what you have to learn.
- Revision cards can help you write down a few specific points that you can refer to as you carry them along.

As you mull over your plan and how you can implement it, let us determine your learning style in the following section.



Determining Your Learning Style

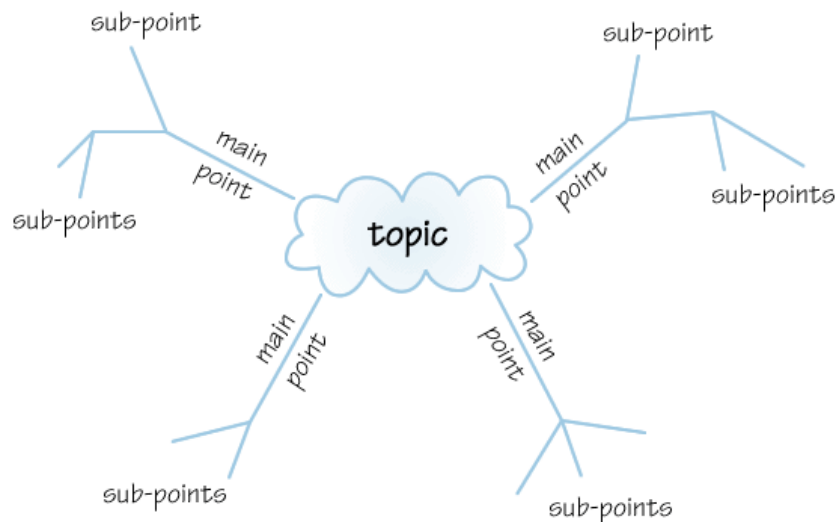
To make the best revision plan for you, it is important to know your learning style so that your plan can fit your style. Basically there are different types of learners. We can broadly classify them into three categories:

- Visual learners
- Auditory learners
- Kinesthetic learners

Visual learners learn by drawing pictures and diagrams. Often they enjoy color coding their work and use a variety of colored paper, pens and so on. They also like to use their personal system of symbols. If you are a visual learner, these learning tips are for you:

- Go over your notes and rewrite them as mind maps
- Get your set of color pencils out and highlight important points
- Draw sketches and diagrams to help you recall specific points quickly.

A mind map looks like this:

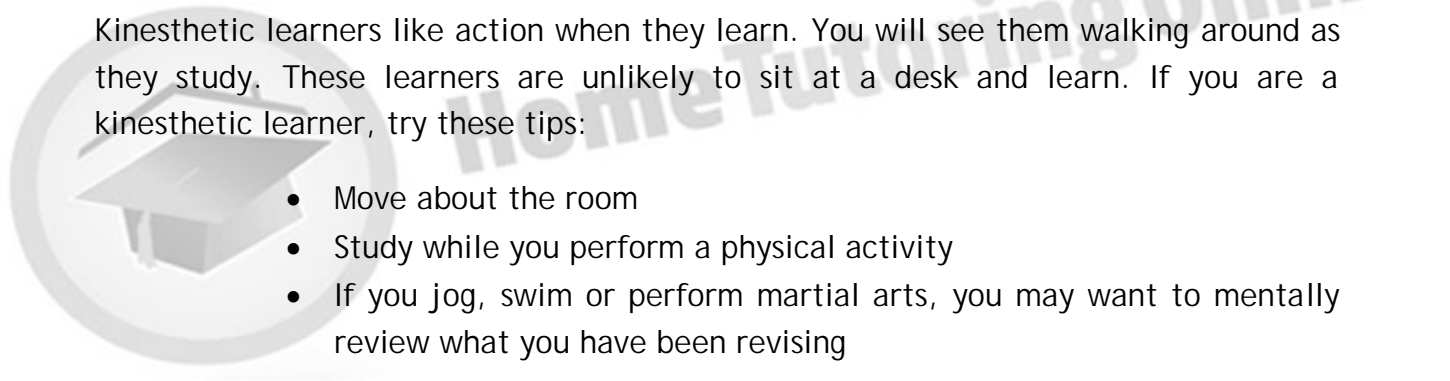


Auditory learners prefer to hear what they are learning. You'll find these learners explaining their notes to an imaginary audience, or even recording their notes on to a recording device. They take the help of sounds to help them remember things. And they listen to the information in their head as they learn.

If you fit into this learning style, here's what you can do:

- You can read your notes out so you can hear them
- You can record, as you learn, repeating key points and listen to the tape later
- Group study will help since you have live interaction
- You can even sing the vital points to yourself - in your favorite tunes so you can remember them easily.

Kinesthetic learners like action when they learn. You will see them walking around as they study. These learners are unlikely to sit at a desk and learn. If you are a kinesthetic learner, try these tips:

- 
- Move about the room
 - Study while you perform a physical activity
 - If you jog, swim or perform martial arts, you may want to mentally review what you have been revising

Remember, it is not compulsory for you to fit into any specific style. You can opt for a 'combination learning style' where you write your notes, and read them silently or loudly. You may also want to rewrite using different words. Whichever learning method you use, one thing is for sure - you will have to REMEMBER all that you learn so that you can get good grades! It is time to get familiar with some memory improvement techniques you can use.

Memory Improvement Techniques

It is usually our memory that comes under the spotlight if we don't do well in exams. You are probably thinking that you are not so great at remembering dates, names or other important points. What you need to know is, by using the right memorizing technique you too can come out tops in your tests and exams. This means you have to focus on how you learn and store things in your mind.

Moreover, there is a difference between short term memory and long term memory. If you learn something tonight and remember it in the morning, you cannot trick yourself into thinking that you will recall everything word for word a month later. What you really need to do is to work on your long term memory without taxing your short term memory too much, so that your recall becomes better and you are not stuck when you sit for your exam. Here is how you can avoid random learning and instead, create a steady pattern:

Grouped memory:

On an average, most of us can only retain about seven items in our short term memory. However, this can be improved by grouping items into units. This works best for numbers, but is also useful to remember lists of information in different subjects.

Repetition:

Research has it that you forget more than 60% of what you learn within seven days if you do not revise it. More than 80% just goes away after six weeks. Rather than making life tough for yourself, make a daily or weekly plan to review and revise all the material you learned through the week. You will find it far easier to revise later, rather than trying to learn everything from scratch.

Learning by association:

It is easy to learn by organizing your memory for meaningful association. Think of what you know already, and link it to these associations. Create memorable examples that will allow you to recall this information in the future. This will help you place new items in context. Each time you learn something, apply it by using a relevant example. You can do this when you have to remember a new formula or a difficult verb or rule.

Use of mnemonics:

This is a fun way to use in your revision. Mnemonics are interesting to use as memory aids. Similar to word games, mnemonics help you recall information based on a specific word or acronym. You can be as creative as you want. Here are some examples:

- The order of operations for math is Parentheses, Exponents, Multiply, Divide, Add, and Subtract = Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally.
- The categories in the classification of life are Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Orders, Family, Genus, Species, Variety = Kings Play Cards On Fairly Good Soft Velvet.
- In English, the 7 coordinating conjunctions are For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So = FANBOYS.
- A commonly used Rhyme Mnemonic for the number of days in each month is:

30 days hath September, April, June, and November.

All the rest have 31

Except February my dear son.

It has 28 and that is fine

But in Leap Year it has 29.

- Children remember alphabets through the ABC song

The great thing about mnemonics is - they improve your memory dramatically.

Now go ahead and create your own mnemonics to remember your course material. Then, read the valuable revision tips that can take your confidence to a much higher level.

Ten Revision Tips That Will Boost Your Confidence

“How to revise” is probably the biggest starting problem most students have. You have now made your revision plan, determined your learning style, and have some great memory improvement techniques to help you. You also know how to get started with your revision. Here are some basic tips that you can put to use right away:

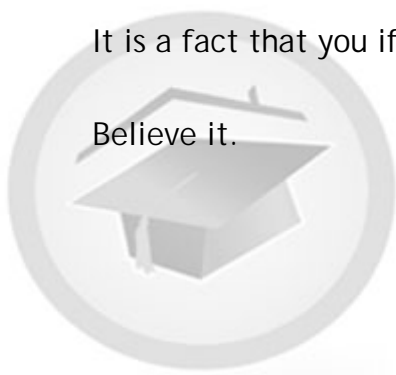
1. When you sit to study, remember that each session should be no more than 30-40 minutes. This is because your concentration begins to waver after an hour or so. The best thing is to take short 5-10 minute breaks after each session.
2. Preferably, revise in a quiet place. This could be your room, your school, the library - just about anywhere, where you are unlikely to be interrupted or distracted.
3. Rather than sticking to topics you enjoy, ensure that you also work on subjects and topics you are weak in.
4. Work on your own revision notes because you are much likelier to remember what you wrote. You may want to use little sticky notes with important points and stick them where you can easily access them.
5. It is a fact that when you read aloud, you tend to remember more rather when you just read silently. So write the key points in your revision notes and read them aloud to yourself.
6. Make use of the techniques you have learned. Use mind maps, sticky notes, and flash cards. Record your notes on tape and listen to them. Get your family to check how much you have learned. Get those highlighter pens out and mark important points. Set your notes to your favorite tune and sing them.
7. Get hold of old exam papers and revision tests and tackle one section at a time. Gradually, try to time yourself while you do an entire paper. This will give you good practice writing the exam.

8. When you need help from your friends, parents or siblings do not hesitate to ask. If you are close to a teacher at school, you could probably keep in touch with them online so that you can clarify any doubts you might have.
9. Avoid getting stressed out. One way to do this is ensure you eat properly and get enough sleep.
10. Have faith in yourself and maintain a positive attitude.

You should approach revision by setting a realistic timetable first. When you take a break, go for a walk rather than watch TV. During each session, ensure that you focus on a single subject rather than spread yourself over different subjects. However, remember to change during the course of the day to keep you interested and alert. Do not forget the tough topics. Get a basic understanding of those so that if you happen to get a question related to them in the exam, you will not be lost.

It is a fact that you if think you can succeed, you can.

Believe it.



Revision Do's And Don'ts

Now that you are quite well-versed with how to revise, here are some quick dos and don'ts.

First, the dos:

- List all the topics to be revised. Break each subject down into relevant sections, sub topics, and other related details. A detailed index or the 'contents' section of your text book helps. You can check off topics you've finished learning.
- Divide your time into three parts. Then, keep one part free for yourself, while making a list of what to study during the other two. Now put this timetable up where you as well as your family can see it. Your parents will feel good about it and encourage you. it will also tell them when you are free and avoid interruptions.
- Keeping the revision checklists in front of you, you will know exactly how much you have to cover before your exams. Plan accordingly so that you are prepared in time.
- Remember your learning style and revise accordingly.

Now the don'ts:

Do NOT stress yourself out by continuing to study throughout the day! If you get tired, you'll find it hard to focus. Your memory goes slack and nothing will go in. You also get distracted easily.

It is time now to review your revision.

Reviewing What You Learned

When you are in frequent touch with a topic, you tend to remember more. So looking over the topics you have to study every now and then will help you retain it in your memory. You will no longer have to cram during exam-time. Summarize what you need to learn and look at it often to reinforce what you have learned.

As you continue to do this, your understanding becomes better. Remember that lessons you memorized can become harder to recall with the passage of time. You will require at least twenty minutes getting into the flow of learning. If you spend more than forty minutes studying, your memory can get tired and refuse to accept any more. Thus, when you finish studying for say, an hour, do the following:

- After ten minutes, revise the topic for ten minutes
- A day later, revise the topic for five minutes
- A week later, revise the topic again for two to five minutes
- A month later, skim through the topic for a few minutes

Before your exams are due, revise the topic depending on how you need to. Reinforcement is the key to ensuring the stability of your long term memory.

Rehearsing For The Exam

In order to prepare for your exam, you will need to practice writing the exam. This means giving information. You could be writing your regular class tests or your final exams. Whichever it is, by the time the final exams arrive, you would already have exposure to many class tests and already have an idea of what to expect based on your performance in these. So go ahead and get hold of old exam papers, study the blueprint, and get started.

Past papers are a boon during revision. When you attempt to answer past questions, you will find out which topics you need to study harder. Apart from this, you'll have an idea about the trend of questions being asked.

A look into the marking schemes can give you an idea of the kind of marks allotted to different topics so that you know which ones to focus on more. Get to know the kind of answers you are expected to write for certain types of questions. This will help your revision tremendously.

You might even want to do a 'dress rehearsal'. Try and tackle a full exam paper so you get used to the style, time taken and the marks/grades you score. It will certainly help your time-management as you answer your paper. Now let us look at what you should watch out for during the exam.

What To Watch Out For During The Exam

There are certain things that are completely in your control when it comes to performing well in your exams. Revising well is the foundation. Beyond that, there are specific things you must pay attention to, which can keep you from losing a good grade because these determine how well you will do in your exam.

- Read the paper correctly

This is a fatal trap most students tend to fall into. Just because you have an answer in your mind does not mean you just reproduce it without understanding what the question is all about. Understand the question and then write the answer rather than getting triggered off by a word.

- Finish your paper

Manage your time well. Answer every question. It would be extremely sad if you didn't allow yourself enough time to attempt all the questions you have so painstakingly learned. Do not spend too much time over a single question. If it proves difficult, move on to the next one which you might know very well.

- Look at the marking scheme carefully

Take a look at how many marks each question carries and allot your time accordingly. Remember, you do not have to write everything you know about a topic when you are required to only write a specific answer.

- Don't repeat yourself

Write a point only once. Unlike revision, your examiner only needs to see your answer once. Repetitions will waste your time and lose you marks.

- Answer the full question

If a question is divided into parts, make sure you read it and answer all the parts.

- Avoid using irrelevant quotations

If you are answering literary subjects, don't use quotations that have no relation to the topic. It can be irritating for the examiner and make you lose marks.

- Include your rough work with your exam script

Even if your answer is incorrect, when the examiner sees your rough work, you may score marks for your formulae and calculations.

Taking care of the above things is entirely in your control as your examiner cannot grade what they cannot see. Therefore, make sure you remember these vital points and implement them.



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Getting Rid Of Performance Pressure

Tomorrow is the day of the exam - and you can sense those butterflies in your stomach! Do not get worked up about how you will perform. Worrying will not help - and neither will staying up all night trying to cram lessons into your head. Instead, get rid of performance pressure by doing the following:

- Ensure you get a good sleep so that you are all fresh for the next days' exam. Your mind will also stay alert and be ready to respond positively.
- Arrive at your exam venue well in advance. There is nothing like arriving late to make you feel tense.
- Make sure you have all the necessary exam-related things. If it is Math, you might need your calculator or geometry instruments. You need pens and pencils to write your exam.
- Put yourself in a positive frame of mind.
- Be focused. Do not give in to the tension or anxiety you feel around you.

Avoid post exam analysis as this can sometimes be disheartening. You cannot change what you wrote and the best thing is to move on to preparing for the next exam and channel your attention and energy towards it.

In Conclusion

To have a healthy mind, you need a healthy body. When both mind and body are healthy, you can focus better on your studies and secure better grades.

Thus, now that you are armed with exactly how to go about your revision, let's look at how you can stick to a healthy diet. The thing with healthy foods is not just that your body is refueled; your mind also benefits. If you end up skipping meals you will pay the price by feeling weak. Skipping meals is even worse as you will soon feel hungry and go out of focus. Therefore, eat regularly and eat healthy. Keep yourself well hydrated and do not skip breakfast on the day of your exam.

Just as eating healthy is important, so is exercising. Rather than staying in your room all the time, get some fresh air by going for a walk. If that is not possible more around where you live, go for a swim or a jog.

Whenever you begin to study, ensure you are in a positive mood. Stay organized and be realistic. Sleep well. Accept that you can only do so much and pace yourself well.

If you think you can do a great job in your exams, you can and you will. Just practice all that you have learned here in terms of techniques and tips to study - you can be well prepared, well in time for your exams. Remember - making the best use of the time available is all in your hands.

Good luck!