

A Check-up Time

Suggested Timing:

At least 6 weeks before the examination period

Let's examine the current state of your study skills.

For each of the following questions tick either:

- all of the time
- most of the time
- some of the time
- a bit of the time
- none of the time

Why are we doing this???

Preparation for examinations starts in the classroom and is affected by everything you do at school and at home. It is important to have a realistic idea of what you are currently doing in order to work out what you should change to improve your examination preparation.

IN THE CLASSROOM	ALL	MOST	SOME	A BIT	NONE
1. I am on time for classes.					
2. I have the right textbooks / equipment for my lessons.					
3. I use my class time properly and efficiently and make the most of the time in the lesson.					
4. I really try to listen in most of my classes and think about what is being said rather than daydream.					
5. I concentrate on what I am writing down from the board instead of just copying it down without thinking.					
6. I try and participate in the lesson and be involved in discussions and activities.					
7. I don't talk while the teacher is explaining things.					
8. I don't sit next to people I know will stop me from doing work.					

ASKING FOR HELP	ALL	MOST	SOME	A BIT	NONE
9. If I don't understand, I definitely don't just say 'oh well, can't be bothered doing anything about it'.					
10. If I don't understand, I ask the teacher for help in class or at lunchtime etc.					

(This evaluation then continues to question 43 where students then determine their score and look at what this means.)

(This page is an excerpt from Section C: Actually Studying). The stages of studying are shown in the following flow chart. Work out where you are in the process:

INCREASING YOUR FAMILIARITY WITH THE MATERIAL

In this stage you gather together all information and notes on the topic. You spend some time skimming and reviewing this information in order to get an idea of what the topic is all about, the type of content it covers and see how well you remember it from when you learnt it in class. Were there parts you found difficult then? Did you like this topic? Do you know how it relates to other topics? Making your study notes is part of the process of becoming more familiar with the content to be tested. The more often you come back and revisit the information over a period of time, the more it will start to become familiar to you.

LEARN THE CONTENT

This is where you start to ensure you understand the material and then begin to commit it to memory. *YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MEMORISE IT FOR THE EXAM IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND IT.* So keep a list as you study of questions or things you need to ask your teacher about and see them the next day. The process of creating your study notes begins the process of learning and memorising the material. Once you have finished the study notes, you need to start memorising the key information. Some examples of ways of doing this were shown on the previous pages and there are more on the next page.

Many students say they don't know how to study. It's pretty straightforward:

Simply keep going back and forth between learning and practising, learning and practising, over and over and over.

PRACTISE THE SKILLS

It is not enough to understand the subject and to learn the content. You have to be confident applying it in different contexts. The only way you can do this is through practise. Practise can involve:

- chapter review questions
- redoing past tests
- doing extra questions from sheets or textbooks
- making up questions and swapping with a friend
- asking for extra revision
- buying extra revision question books.

Most importantly, you should ask your teacher for past examination papers. Do as many as you can and always do them under exam conditions. See the section coming up on practising.

Note:

- If you find yourself struggling to complete exams in the allocated time under test conditions, there are two main things you can do to help yourself improve.
- Firstly, spend more time learning the content. You need to know it back to front inside out and upside down. Well, not literally, but you need to know it so well that you do not need to even hesitate to recall it in the examination.
- Secondly, do more practise under set time conditions. Analyse the strategies you are using in the examination (see section D) to ensure you are using your time effectively. There is no way around it - the more practise you do, the better you will get!

D All about the Exam

Suggested Timing:

Prior to the
examination period

Things to Do

Week before the examination:

- Plan out how much time you should spend on each section of the examination.
- By looking at past papers, get a feel for the types of instructions that will be on your paper.
- Do some exercise so you can burn off the pent-up stress that can come before exams.
- Look after your body - lots of water to juice up your brain, healthy food, decent sleep.
- To calm nerves, make mental pictures of yourself sitting down and doing well in the exam.
- Purchase any equipment you may need, extra calculator batteries, pens, rulers etc.
- Ensure you know what equipment is allowed in the examination.
- Focus on reviewing the key points, perhaps a condensed version of your summaries.
- Practise as many past papers as you can get your hands on.
- Check the timetable to ensure you have a clear picture of when each exam is.

Night before the examination:

- Pack your bag with everything you will need for the next day.
- Plan what time you need to leave to ensure you have plenty of time for unexpected delays.
- Don't go to bed too late - you need to make sure your brain is fresh and alert.
- Don't ring friends and discuss your preparation or the examination.
- Just before you go to sleep, look through your notes briefly.
- Check the timetable to doubly confirm the date, time and location of the exam.

Morning of the examination:

- Review your notes briefly and calmly when you wake up.
- Eat a healthy breakfast - eg cereal, toast, juice, fruit.
- Think about all the work you HAVE done, not what you haven't done.

Dealing with examination nerves:

How would you rate yourself for the following questions? Put a cross on the scale to indicate where you lie:

	<i>Definitely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Not at all</i>
I feel anxious when I know exams are approaching.	-----		
The thought of a test is enough to start butterflies in my stomach.	-----		
I get really nervous when I am waiting to go into the exam.	-----		
My hands start to sweat when I go into an examination.	-----		
In the examination, I feel stressed and suffer from exam nerves.	-----		

So what can you do to try and eliminate examination nerves?

The best technique for dealing with examination nerves is visualisation. What you need to do is desensitise yourself to the examination situation by imagining yourself walking into the examination room and successfully completing the exam.

Picture yourself waking up the morning of the examination. You read through your notes in a relaxed way before getting out of bed. You picture yourself getting dressed for school, eating your breakfast and travelling to school. Make the picture as vivid and as real as possible. Imagine the colours, the smells and the sounds. See yourself arriving at school and finding somewhere quiet to review your notes again. Imagine yourself feeling calm and relaxed, confident that you can demonstrate what you have learnt in the examination. Picture yourself opening the examination paper and feeling pleased with the questions. You start writing steadily and answer question after question. Hear the supervisor ask you to put your pen down and you see yourself feeling good about your attempt at the paper. You walk confidently out of the exam room.

If you are not used to visualisation techniques this can feel quite strange. It is best to try and do it with your eyes closed, perhaps each morning before you get out of bed or each evening as you are going to sleep. The more often you repeat this exercise, the less stressed you will feel about the prospect of the exam. As you imagine yourself feeling confident and comfortable about the exam and feeling pleased with your performance, your brain will take these images and feed them to your subconscious. This will translate into a physical response and you will suffer less from the physical symptoms of stress. Don't worry if you still feel some nerves, a bit of adrenaline can be motivating and is quite natural.

(This section continues for 4 more pages).