



***Enhanced Learning  
Educational Services***  
*“the study skills specialist”*

# PREPARING FOR EXAM BLOCKS



Exam blocks can sometimes be overwhelming and many students do not know where to start. This guide will help you navigate exam blocks successfully.

- You should read each point and **highlight the key phrases** in that point.
- Discuss with a friend or parent as you read through the handout.
- You may like to work through this over a number of sessions.

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# 1. WHY DO WE HAVE EXAMS?

Sometimes many students don't understand why schools have exams – they think it is all about a mark on the report. But exams serve a number of purposes and if you understand this it may make you more accepting of having to study and prepare.

The main reason that examinations are necessary is to allow the school to determine what you have understood and learnt in each of your subjects. Examination results also allow your parents to gauge how well you are doing at school and what sort of progress you are making – and seeing that they are the ones paying for your education they are probably entitled to this knowledge.

Once you accept that examinations actually have a valid purpose and are not simply a ploy to torture you, you can start to think about how you can make the most of the experience from your own perspective.

## Change the way you think about exams.

Rather than think about examinations as a time when you reveal what you DON'T know, consider examinations as a chance to show what you DO know.

It is an opportunity for you to learn about your own skills – what things you are good at and what things you do well. It is also a chance for you to work out what areas you need to work on to improve in your subjects.

*Tick which of the following reasons you were already aware of:*

- Exams give you an opportunity to demonstrate your skills and knowledge.
- Exams help you discover what it is you know and what you don't know.
- Exams help you isolate areas that need improvement.
- Exams allow teachers to assess how well you have learnt and understood the subject.
- Exams allow schools to determine your overall mark or grade for the subject.
- Exams help indicate your progress to your parents.
- Exams help you determine your strengths and weaknesses for future subject selection.



*a. What is your attitude towards exams? How do you feel when you think about exams? Do you think you could see exams as an opportunity to grow and learn?*

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## 2. FACT FINDING

The first step of exam preparation is to find out everything you can about the examinations. Ideally it is preferable that you do this around 6 weeks prior to an exam block BUT often your teachers will not be able to give you too much detail until closer to the exam when the exams are finalised.

You can at least ask if you are being tested on the whole year’s work or part of the year. Make sure any questions you ask are asked POLITELY and at an appropriate time in the lesson - not when your teacher is mid-way through an explanation of a new topic. Questions to ask include:

- What topics are being tested?
- Are we being tested on the whole year’s work or part of the year?
- What is the structure of the exam i.e. what types of questions and how much are they worth?
- What sort of studying should I be doing for this exam?

If you have a number of exams it is a good idea to collect the information in an examination preparation grid:

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Date/Time</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Format</i>	<i>Timing</i>
Eg Spanish	Common objects	Tuesday	1.5 Hrs	20 multiple choice	20 mins mult.choice
	Greetings	May 16th	(90 mins)	2 sections each worth 30 marks	30 mins section 1
	People places & things	2pm-3.30pm		80 marks total	30 mins section 2 10 mins checking

Here’s an excerpt from a student’s timetable preparing for their final exams in Year 12. A wildcard day is where you wait and see what you need more work on.

M23 8-8:30 – Review yesterday 8:30-10 – English 12-2 – Struggling 3-5 – English 7-8:30 – Struggling 8:30-9 – Review today	T24 8-8:30 – Review yesterday 8:30-10 – Wildcard 12-2 – Wildcard 3-5 – Wildcard 7-8:30 – Wildcard 8:30-9 – Review today	W25 8-8:30 – Review yesterday 8:30-10 – Biology 12-2 – Maths 3-5 – Biology 7-8:30 – Maths 8:30-9 – Review today	T26 8-8:30 – Review yesterday 8:30-10 – Religion 12-2 – PDHPE 3-5 – Religion 7-8:30 – PDHPE 8:30-9 – Review today	F27 8-8:30 – Review yesterday 8:30-10 – English 12-2 – Struggling 3-5 – English 7-8:30 – Struggling 8:30-9 – Review today	S28 8-8:30 – Review yesterday 8:30-10 – Wildcard 12-2 – Wildcard 3-5 – Wildcard 7-8:30 – Wildcard 8:30-9 – Review today	S29 8-8:30 – Review yesterday 8:30-10 – Biology 12-2 – Maths 3-5 – Biology 7-8:30 – Maths 8:30-9 – Review today
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*b. Do you ask your teachers questions about the exams? If so when do you do it? Is there anything you need to change in your approach?*

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