



Exam preparation



There are many ways to prepare for exams that can increase your confidence and readiness for anything that may come up in the test.

Give yourself the best chance to do well in exams by using the following techniques.



Some techniques to help you prepare for exams

Preparing for exams

- Aim to start your exam revision program at least two weeks before your first exam.
- Find a place to study that is as free of as many distractions as possible.
- Try not to study in the same place that you relax or sleep.
- Study difficult material when you're most alert and focused. For example, if you are a 'morning person' don't leave difficult study for night-time.
- Take time to maintain a healthy life/study balance.

Organising your time

- Draw up a study timetable, and factor in sleep, meals, breaks, exercise and some social activities. Remember to be flexible and don't throw out the timetable if you miss one session.
- If you notice yourself procrastinating STOP and give yourself permission to take a proper break for a set time.

Build your concentration skills

- Take regular, short concentration breaks when you are working for example, 10 minutes out of every hour you work - is likely to help you concentrate for longer.
- Start off by setting yourself a small, manageable goal and reward yourself when it's achieved.
- Mix topics frequently. Try varying their difficulty and level of interest.



Some techniques to help you prepare for exams (continued)

Active learning

- Try to revise in an active way. For example, make a list of key points, test your memory as you go along, and try to devise questions/answers about the information you are learning.
- Some people use memory aids such as memorising a trigger word that is associated with a chunk of information, by creating a trigger word out of initial letters of key points/names, or by finding a way to visualise information.
- Use cue cards, flow diagrams or memory maps to assist with summarising key points.
- Go through past exam papers and practice answering questions in the allotted time to give you practice of time pressures.

Sleeping better

- Remember! Do not work in or on your bed.
- Wind down one hour before you intend to go to bed and do something relaxing (avoid social media as it can lead to distraction from sleep).
- Try to stick to a regular bed/wake time to maintain good sleep patterns.
- Do not 'catastrophise' about not being able to sleep well. Most people manage to function well despite some days of poor sleep.

Managing stress on the day of the exam

- Ensure that you get enough sleep and have a decent breakfast before the exam.
- Do not try and learn anything new on the day.
- Aim to arrive at the exam about 30 mins early, but avoid talking to students who are highly stressed.
- Use the time before you begin the exam to do a slow breathing exercise and get centered.
- Plan a reward for yourself for when you finish the exam.

Managing stress during the exam

- If you're feeling anxious, put down your pen, and try breathing slowly through your nose for 30 seconds. Try to imagine that you're filling a soccer ball in your stomach.
- Read the exam slowly and thoroughly and plan your time according to the weight of each question.
- Stretch your limbs at frequent intervals during the examination to relieve tension.
- Take a 'micro-break' after finishing a section; put your pen down and sit back for a moment.
- If you start to panic during the exam DON'T leave the room. Rather take a moment to sit with the feelings and breathe slowly and within a few minutes the panic will reduce and you will be able to continue the exam.

Managing stress after your exam

- Avoid replaying questions in your head after the exam is done. Instead, have another activity organised.
- Eat well and schedule in some time to rest after you finish.
- If you meet up with friends, agree that you will only speak about the exam for 5 mins.
- What if I still need help after trying all of the above tips?
 - Approach your Unit Coordinator or speak to your tutor.
 - Take advantage of the University's free workshops and resources.
 - Seek free counselling support with CAPS.

Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

+61 2 8627 8433
caps.admin@sydney.edu.au
sydney.edu.au/counselling

Level 5, Jane Foss Russell Building
Opening hours: 9am to 4.30pm,
Monday to Friday

Crisis contacts

Ambulance/Fire/Police: 000
Lifeline (24 hours): 13 11 14
Mental Health Access Line: 1800 011 511