



Hinckley  
ACADEMY

Looking after your wellbeing:

# Exam Tips & Tricks

Don't let this be you...



Plan ahead!



KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
STUDY  
FOR EXAMS

## Exam Tips + Tricks



### What will I learn?

1. How to prepare for an exam
2. How to manage exam nerves or stress
3. Where to find help

### **Preparation reality check**

Sadly, there are no quick-fix solutions when it comes to preparing for an exam.

You can do an exam after a few hours of revision or 'wing it' without revising at all, but you are then running the risk of getting a grade that you are unhappy with.

Real exam preparation involves days, weeks and even months of revision. Revising regularly helps you to recall the information that you need to remember on exam day because you have moved that information to your long-term memory (meaning that you can remember things more easily). This does not mean that you have to revise for hours at a time – little and often will work just as well.

If you are unsure of how to revise or how to structure your day to make time to revise, talk to a teacher, tutor or another member of staff that you feel comfortable talking to.

**Reality check:** It is no one else's fault if you do not prepare for an exam and you get a grade you are unhappy with. Your education is your responsibility.

### **Exam day checklist**

Around 1-2 days before your exam it is a good idea to set aside any equipment that you will need to take with you on the day. For example, you know that you have a Maths exam coming up and your teacher has told you that you will need to take a scientific calculator with you. To make sure that you do not forget this, when you get home from school the day before your exam you put your scientific calculator in your school bag ready to go.

If you are not sure what equipment you will need for your exams you can find this information out from your teachers. Once you know exactly what you need to bring with you, a good way of making sure that you have everything ready to go is to create a checklist.

If you have a Maths exam coming up, your checklist may look something like this:

- Pencil + spare pencil ✓
- ~~Black ballpoint pen + spare pen~~
- Rubber/eraser ✓
- Compass
- Protractor ✓
- ~~Ruler~~
- Scientific calculator
- Clear pencil case

All you would need to do is tick off or cross out each item (as demonstrated above) once you have put it inside your pencil case and into your bag, and then you can rest assured on exam day that you will have everything you need.

## Managing exam nerves/stress

For some students, knowing that they have to do an exam is the absolute *worst*. Exam nerves and stress can negatively affect your sleep, lead to a loss of appetite or 'comfort' eating, and can even cause physical pains such as stomach aches or headaches. In more severe cases, exam nerves can also cause panic attacks or anxiety attacks. Not everyone is suited to doing exams and that's okay – you can still get a fantastic grade even if you don't like the assessment style. The most important thing is to manage your nerves and try to not let them get the better of you.



The following tips and tricks are ways that you can manage your nerves so that they do not affect your performance on exam day:

- **Get organised**

- Create a revision schedule or to-do list to help make time to revise in the days, weeks and months leading up to your exams
  - If you have made time to revise then nothing that comes up on that exam paper should catch you off guard

**Tip:** Make sure you read questions 2-3 times – exam papers often word questions in a way that makes them sound more difficult to answer than they really are

- Make sure that you have all of your equipment ready for your exams at least a day before so that you are not rushing around on the day

- **Tailor your revision**

- Have a look at some mock papers or past papers and work out what sort of questions and topics carry the most marks
  - It makes a lot more sense to spend your time answering questions with more marks than waste time worrying over questions with 1 or 2 marks
- Once you know what to revise, have a think about how you can improve your confidence when answering these high-mark questions, e.g.

### Questions

- **Example:** You have found that questions where you have to describe something in detail carry a lot of marks, but you are not confident answering these types of questions
  - **Solutions:**
    - Revise model answers and mark schemes to get an idea of what is expected from you and how to construct your answers
    - Practice writing out answers to mock questions and ask your teachers to mark them

### Topics

- If particular topics seem to appear frequently in mock or past exam papers make sure that you revise those topics thoroughly (there's a good chance they'll pop up in your exam too)

- **Don't rely on caffeine or sugar**

- A bit of caffeine or sugar is fine in moderation, but when you start to go overboard on those energy drinks you are setting yourself up for a caffeine/sugar crash
  - On the morning of your exams make sure that you do not eat or drink anything that could cause you to 'crash' during your exams



- **Have breakfast**

- If you don't have much of an appetite due to nerves then having breakfast is probably one of the last things on your mind, but it can really help with managing your energy levels
  - You don't have to have a huge fry-up but having a bowl of cereal, fruit or breakfast biscuits will be better than nothing and keep you going during your exam
  - **Bananas are great brain food just before an exam!**

- **Breathe**

- Sometimes when you are in a high-pressure situation you can end up holding your breath or breathing shallowly (also known as chest breathing) which can then lead to you feeling unwell
  - Make sure that no matter where you are (i.e. on your way to your exam, sitting down in the hall) you take deep breaths



**Tip:** Deep breathing (also known as diaphragmatic breathing) can be learned by watching YouTube videos or trying yoga relaxation exercises

- **Get enough sleep**

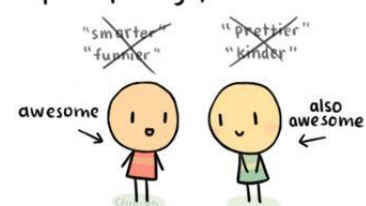
- Being tired because you were too nervous to sleep is not going to do you any favours on exam day – a tired brain is not a productive brain!
  - Try using natural oils such as lavender to help you relax at bedtime – you can put a couple of drops of lavender oil on your pillow or use a lavender-scented bodywash or bath bomb before you go to bed
  - You could also look at buying natural sleeping remedies (available from supermarkets or drugstores)
  - In more severe cases of insomnia, you may need to make an appointment to see a doctor and discuss what options are available to help you



- **Don't compare yourself to others**

- It can be really easy to end up in a panic when you are talking to other students about exams or revision
- Some of your classmates may start talking about how they are doing loads of revision and feel really confident, or maybe they have not revised at all because it's not 'cool' to be working outside of school time...
  - ...but this does not affect you! You should work at your own pace and you don't have to talk

stop comparing yourself to others.



about revision with your friends or classmates if you don't want to. Feeling a little nervous (even after revising) is perfectly normal before an exam.

**Tip:** Try your best to ignore any negativity and have the confidence to keep doing what is working for you, even if your friends aren't doing the same.

If you aim for the moon and miss you will still land amongst the stars! ☺

- **Talk to your family/friends/guardians**

- One of the worst things that students can do when they are worried about something is to keep it all bottled up and not tell anyone else what is on their mind
  - Your family, friends, guardians, teachers and mentors are all there to support you and care about how you are feeling
  - Don't feel ashamed to admit that you are nervous about your results – feeling nervous is expected!

- **Bring your lucky charm with you**

- If you have a lucky charm that is small and portable (e.g. a ring) and you think it will help to put your mind at rest, take it with you on exam day!
  - You could keep your charm in your pocket or wear it, but make sure that it is something that is allowed in the exam hall beforehand
    - If your lucky charm is not something that you can bring with you (e.g. a giant teddy bear) then you could always take a picture of it on your phone and look at the picture for encouragement before you have to turn your phone off



- **Don't set unrealistic goals**

- Setting yourself an unachievable goal is one way to cause yourself unnecessary and avoidable stress
  - Make sure that you set yourself an *achievable* target if there is a grade that you want to work towards in your exams

**Tip:** Try setting your target using the SMART goal setting approach (if you are not familiar with this, try Googling it)

S	SPECIFIC
M	MEASURABLE
A	ATTAINABLE
R	RELEVANT
T	TIME BOUND

- **Make time for fun activities as well as studying**

- If you spend all of your time studying and worrying then that is not going to help you because you are never having a break!
  - Don't forget to make time to unwind when you are busy with revision – taking a break once in a while will do you good both mentally and physically

**Tip:** Decide on how you will reward yourself for doing certain activities, e.g. plan to treat yourself to some new makeup or a new video game for doing a whole month of revision classes

- **POST EXAM: Try to forget about it**

- Once you are out of that exam hall there is little point in worrying about how you answered that last question – it's done now and you are not going to change it by worrying about it

- Try to focus instead on how well you did by remembering answers to questions you didn't think you would remember, or how well you managed your time when answering questions, or congratulate yourself on how calm you stayed during the exam
- **POST EXAM: Maintain perspective**
  - Exam success does not define you as a person
    - You are not less intelligent or less capable if you do not do well in your exams
    - Don't be disheartened if you do not get the grades you wanted – exams can be taken again if you really need to achieve a certain grade

### **You're not alone**

Although it may not seem like it, a lot of other people have experienced what you are going through with exam nerves and stress/worry.

Don't forget that your parents/guardians, teachers and mentors are all there to support you during this stressful time. They know what they are talking about because they had to do their GCSE exams (or something very similar) at one time too!



If you do not feel comfortable talking to people at school or at home about your exams, you may find it useful to look for support groups online. There are support groups available on revision websites or student-based forums where you can chat and share tips with other students to help you feel more at ease:

- Student Room support forums: [www.thestudentroom.co.uk](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk)
- Young Minds: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- Kooth: [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)
- Childline: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- Samaritans: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

Additional information on exam guidance and stress relief techniques are available online – it only takes a quick Google search and you can find resources like the ones below:

- An article by Student Minds on how to manage stress before, during and after your exams: [www.studentminds.org.uk/exam-stress.html](http://www.studentminds.org.uk/exam-stress.html)
- Carry the bookmark we have given you for tips on how to stay well during revision and exams to remind yourself: [staying-well-during-revision-and-exams.pdf \(youngminds.org.uk\)](#)

***Remember: It is better to try and fail than to not try at all. You can do this!***



**GOOD LUCK**  
**FOR YOUR**  
**EXAM**  
**AND**  
**DO THE BEST**

*Students First, It's About Learning, No Barriers*



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