

## STUDYING FOR AN EXAM?

If you have been working steadily all year, then studying and refreshing your memory should not be a big deal. So where do you start? Let's look at your preferred style of learning.



There are three basic types of learning styles. Most of us use a combination of the three, but chances are one style will suit us more than the other two. See if you can work out which of the three options below is you.

### Visual Style

When studying, study alone in a quiet place and try to transcribe your material on paper. Where possible make drawings, graphs or tables of complex abstract ideas and work alone. Visual learners often have trouble working while having a conversation even if the conversation directly relates to the subject matter.



### Auditory Style

Auditory people work best when they can hear the material. Read aloud, go over your notes and talk to yourself about the important points. Before reading, set a purpose and verbalize it, after you've finished be sure to summarize out loud what you just read. If you can, talk to your friends about the material. Because Auditory learners sometimes have trouble keeping columns aligned, try doing math computations by hand on columnar or graph paper.



### Haptic Style

Make studying more physical. Work at a standing desk, pace around the room, do reading while on an exercise bike. Try to use colour when you can. Highlight your readings, put posters and bright colours around your desk. If you feel 'clogged up', do something different for a few minutes. Play music in the background. When reading, try skimming over the chapter to get a solid basic meaning before you really dig in. Try to visualize projects from start to finish before you begin them. Visualization is a useful tool for Haptic people, it helps keep a positive, productive outlook on the task at hand. Information sourced from <http://www.academictips.org/acad/tipsforeffectivestudying.html>



## PREPARING FOR THE EXAM

### Revision

Just reading through your books and notes is not very helpful unless you have a photographic memory.



The more your brain is involved in the revision, the more you will remember. So don't just read.

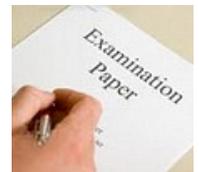
- Make up poems and catch phrases.
- Summarise the notes. (See overleaf.)
- Set them to music or rhythms.
- Extract key points and write them down yourself somewhere – even if you're just copying them out, this is better than just reading, since more of your brain is involved.
- Make up quizzes and do them.
- Write limericks.
- Do problems. Make up your own if you run out, but above all be active!

### Plan your approach

Plan your revision but don't revise one subject all day. Your brain needs a change. Revise one subject in the morning, a different subject in the afternoon and another in the evening.

### Try previous exam papers

Get as many previous exam papers as you can and attempt them. In fact, of all the studying techniques, this is the one most likely to help you pass. Work against the clock so you are experiencing real exam conditions.



### Study Groups using previous exam papers

Team up with a few classmates, *but work on the questions alone*. When finished, discuss your answers and help each other where needed.

### The last 24 hours

- Don't get tired. Make sure you get a good eight hours sleep the night before.
- Revise your notes, look at summaries and key points only.
- Eat protein that slowly releases energy (eggs, cheese, meat, pasta). Don't stoke up on foods and drinks containing sugar, as these only last about 1 hour, after which your body will run out of energy and your brain will become weary.
- Go for a brisk 15 minute walk just before the exam. It will stimulate the creativity centre of your brain for at least two hours.

## TAKING NOTES

Here is a note taking method that helps your brain recall information efficiently.



- Divide a sheet of note paper into blocks and write one key point in each. You can add a few bullet points in each block if you wish. See the example below.
- Outline each block of information with a highlighter, using a different colour for each adjoining block.

### There are three things at work here:

1. Writing the key points down helps you to remember them.
2. The bullet points in the same block also help you remember.
3. The colour is essential. It helps your brain recall the block of information. Typically you will see the colour in your mind first, and then the words.

### How to revise notes

#### Don't just read.

- Write key points down
- Draw charts
- Make up quiz
- Answer quiz

#### Make a plan

- Change subjects
- Am, pm, evening
- Change of topic helps brain remember.

#### Previous exam papers

- Do as many papers as possible
- Try study group and compare answers
- Practice working against the clock.

#### The last 24 hours

- Good nights sleep
- Revise key points only
- Go for a walk before the exam
- Arrive a bit early
- Eat protein

## SPECIAL TIP

If a teacher or tutor says that a new topic is being introduced to the years study, you can almost bet the topic will be in the exam. Make a point of learning the topic thoroughly and get the maximum points possible.

The notes on this page have been adapted from "Exam tips and hints" from the York University in the UK. <http://www-users.york.ac.uk/~dajp1/Exam Hints/Exams.html>

## SITTING EXAMS



1. Arrive a little early and make sure you have a full water bottle with you. Staying hydrated could result in an improvement in your marks. But don't drink too much.
2. Spend 5 minutes reading the paper right through. In this time, work out which questions you will answer and in what order.
3. Divide the number of questions into the exam time to get a time per question.
4. Read the easier questions carefully to see if there are any really hard bits hidden in them that could trap you and take up more time than planned.
5. Do the easier questions first. You might do them quicker than the average time and so gain time for the difficult questions.
6. Check the marks for each question. Assume that the examiner wants one key point for each mark. So a 10 mark question may mean the examiner wants 10 key points.
7. Stuck? Move on. If you get stuck on an answer, move to the next question then come back to the previous question later. Sometimes this will get you back on track.
8. Test for reasonableness. Is your answer likely? E.g. If you are working out a load for a truck and it comes to 600 tonnes, clearly it's wrong. Trucks can only carry about 60 tonnes max.
9. If you are running out of time and have 15 minutes left for two hard questions, spend 7.5 minutes on each. Make use of bullet points for the key facts. You just might gain a few marks.
10. Never leave an exam early. Remember 'ACUTE' and check your answers.



- **Assumptions:** Have you explained any you have made?
- **Calculations:** Check them all again
- **Units:** Have you written down the units you are using in any formula's?
- **Truth:** Have you answered the actual question and nothing but the question?
- **Explanations:** Have you included these? You might gain an extra point if you do.