

# Preparing for exams



Examinations are put together and marked in such a way that if you have applied yourself intelligently to your course, you can perform reasonably well in the exam – *provided you have prepared properly.*

## Preparation

- **Timetable your study**
- **Reorganise and recall**
- **Revision – SQ3R (see below )**
- **Practise**

## Timetabling Study Periods

This is a vital part of examination preparation as it is a good way to get “down to business”.

**BE POSITIVE** – think about when is the best time for you to study. It needs to be a set period when there are no distractions or interruptions.

**REMEMBER** – 30 minutes good study is far more beneficial than 2 hours spent pretending.

Choose a time of the day when you feel alert and stick to it. So that it becomes a fixed routine. It is much harder to take in facts and data when you are tired – in fact it can be impossible. So it is really wasting precious time.

Your studying needs to be active learning process – often without a good study plan/timetable the learning is passive and therefore not as beneficial or worthwhile as it might be. Remember Active Learning is the most effective.

## Re-organise

It is impossible to study from disorganised, disjointed material, therefore once you have established your study timetable begin the task of systematically structuring your notes – this any involve re-writing them so that they are easier to read and more accessible. This seems like a monumental task – **BUT IT IS WORTH IT!** – it really is time well spent.

While you are re-writing and re-structuring your material you are **ACTIVELY LEARNING** in that you are recalling and in many cases reviewing past information/data/statistics etc.

## Revision

### SQ3R: Read-Recall-Review

The key role in successful examination results is of course played by revision. Literally this means “to see again”. Few people can manage to grasp information simply from one exposure to it. Often we need to “see it again” many times and from a variety of angles before we can really absorb its full meaning and implications.

Students tend to ask “when should we be revising”, the answer is always NOW.

You can never begin your revision too early. For the best results revision must be a regular part of your study routine, right from day one of your course.

As you are presented with new facts and ideas you should be looking back at previous information in order to test and refresh your memory and “see them again” in the light of your more recent experience.

### Three Important Reasons for Revising NOW

1. You would never be able to revise everything you have learned on your course, if you leave it to the last minute.
2. Early revision will make it easier to learn later material as you will already have a firm understanding of what precedes it – the more you have learned the easier it is to learn more.
3. If you have just reorganised your materials information and data will be fresh in your mind.

## Practise

In order to revise in a positive way it is essential to KNOW what is expected of you. This will also help you to feel that you are in control – the examination is not likely to catch you out or trick you.

1. Try to obtain a copy of the syllabus:  
What topics are prescribed?
2. Look at past examination papers:  
Are some questions compulsory?

How long are you allowed for each question?  
Do some questions reappear each year?

What sort of questions are asked:  
Multiple choice?  
Essay?  
Practical?  
Oral?

3. How long is the exam?  
How much time can I spend writing each answer?  
How much time can I spend planning each answer?

## **EXAMINATION DAY**

### **DO NOT PANIC!!!**

You have worked as hard as you can so you have nothing to fear.

No one wants you to fail.

Remember the exam is not designed to catch you out, ruin your future or psychologically destroy you. It is simply a means of assessing whether you have worked well throughout your course and are therefore able to meet specific criteria to a reasonable standard.

Take your time reading the examination paper – **do not rush** into answering a question merely because you recognise the topic.

Make sure you read the questions carefully – you will answer incorrectly if you are not fully aware of what is expected of you.

Look at the following words and ensure that understand EXACTLY what is expected of you:

Analyse	Illustrate
Assess	Interpret
Comment	Justify
Compare	List
Contrast	Outline
Criticise	Prove
Comment	Reconcile
Define	Relate
Describe	Review

Discuss      State  
Evaluate     Summarise  
Explain      Trace  
Enumerate

**Note these words carefully!**

If you “describe” when you are asked to “define” you will fail to answer the question. So if you are in any doubt about the meaning of the above words go immediately to a good dictionary. Examination day is not a time for guessing. You will get little credit for writing around a subject – **YOU NEED TO BE SPECIFIC.**

Other useful fact sheets available at the study skills website (log on to the portal and follow the study skills links under the My Learning tab):

SQ3R (in the Reading Skills Section)

*Managing Exam Anxiety*

*Coping with Exams*