



Exam Tips

Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS)



Preparing for exams

- Aim to start your exam revision program about two weeks before your first exam.
- Find an appropriate place to study that is as free of distractions as possible (including TVs and Tablets!).
- Try not to study in the same place that you sleep.
- Study at the time when you're most alert i.e. are you an early worm or a night owl?
- While your social life might slow down over the exam period, try to take some time to maintain a healthy life/study balance. Relaxing actually improves motivation which boosts productivity.

Organising your time

- Try drawing up a study timetable, but remember to include the basics such as meals and sleep. More importantly, remember to be flexible and don't throw the timetable away if you miss one session.
- If you notice yourself procrastinating - STOP and give yourself permission to take a proper break for a set time. Check out the [**CAPS Procrastination e-book**](#) for more advice.

Maintaining sleep

- Aim to stop studying at least an hour before going to bed to give your body a chance to unwind.
- Stick to a regular bedtime rather than pushing on into all hours of the morning.
- Avoid substances such as coffee and alcohol 4-6 hours before bed as these will prevent you from getting the deep sleep needed to consolidate memory.
- If you're unable to fall asleep after 20 minutes: Get up! Leave the room and sit down quietly for 10 minutes. Then return to the room and try again. This way we avoid associating bed with a place we have trouble sleeping.
- If you wake up in the night, don't check the time on your phone as this may cause anxiety.
- Aim to have at least 20-30 minutes of exercise per day. Even just a walk around the block helps.

Concentration skills

- Take regular, short 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. Keep repeating this process and gradually increase what your goal which will build your concentration skills.
- Mix topics frequently. Try varying their difficulty and level of interest.

Managing stress on the day

- Look after yourself on the day by ensuring you get enough sleep and have a decent breakfast.
- Arrive at the exam about 30 minute early, but try not to engage with others who are highly stressed.
- Use the time before you begin the exam to do simple breathing exercises and get centered.
- Plan a reward planned for yourself after your exam.

During the exam

- If you start to panic during the exam DON'T leave the room. Just take a moment to sit with the feelings and within a few minutes they will disappear naturally.
- Stretch your limbs at frequent intervals during the examination to relieve tension.
- Take regular 'micro-breaks': Whenever you pause at the end of writing a paragraph or stop to think for a moment, put your pen down and sit back, even if just for a moment.
- If you're feeling anxious, put down your pen, and try breathing slowly in and out for 30 seconds through your nose. Try to imagine that you're filling a soccer ball in your stomach.

After the exam

- Try to avoid replaying questions in your head after the exam is done. Instead, plan to have another activity organised .
- As you've just used up a lot of fuel in the exam, be sure to have a good meal and schedule in some time to rest after you finish.
- If you meet up with friends, make a deal that you will only speak about the exam for 5 minutes.

Still struggling?

If you feel that you need further help then you can try some of the following:

- Approach your Unit Coordinator
- Speak with your tutor
- Make an appointment with CAPS



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