Exam revision and techniques

Aim of this factsheet
To support revision methods and techniques when you are taking the exam.

See the Exam Preparation factsheet to help you to plan your revision timetable and decide upon your topics, see the Exam Preparation factsheet, you need to decide how you are going to revise.

Review different revision strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Hints and tips</th>
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<tr>
<td>Make notes</td>
<td>Using Post-it notes, colour coding, mind-mapping, pictures etc. Stick them onto walls and make them memorable for you.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make posters</td>
<td>Pin them up and do not move them. Include key points using shapes or pictures etc. Close your eyes and recall the poster.</td>
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<td>Key words</td>
<td>Onto postcards – use two or three words to remember information. Use few sentences to summarise complex information.</td>
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<td>Tables or grids</td>
<td>Useful for comparing, contrasting and summarising.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teach Someone</td>
<td>Talk about the subject in a group, record it or talk to a mirror. This makes it obvious if you know something or not. Tell someone or something 'What I have learnt today'. If you cannot explain the information you do not know it!</td>
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<td>Reinforce your memory</td>
<td>Review key points regularly. You can do this on a bus/when driving/while washing up. Use question and answer cards or recordings of notes. Use your ‘wasted’ time constructively.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do practice papers/questions</td>
<td>Use past papers to plan question answers, write and complete your own questions. Remember to work to your paper timings.</td>
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<td>Work in groups</td>
<td>Have a revision study group – could be via social media or actually meeting. Be clear what the group wants to achieve. This works well if you are disciplined. Talking about a subject is a good way of learning it.</td>
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<td>Take a walk</td>
<td>Choose a regular journey and place information onto the buildings you pass on your route. In the exam, you can take a mental walk and recall your revision material!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mnemonics</td>
<td>These are sayings that relate to facts you have to learn such as Every Good Boy Deserves Fruit to learn the notes on the lines of a stave, EGBDF.</td>
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Be active rather than passive when revising. That means not just reading or copying notes. Try the strategies above to discover what works for you.

**Tackling the exam paper**

**a) Follow instructions**

Read the exam instructions carefully. Make sure you answer the correct number of questions especially if the paper is divided into different sections.

**b) Answer the question set**

It is not sufficient to provide the examiner with all your knowledge on the chosen topic. You need to show that you can adapt your learning to different circumstances. One way to prepare for this is to practice outline answers to questions from past papers. Once you have learnt the topic material, sketch out plans for answering questions and practice writing answers, at speed, in the time you will have available in the exam. Write questions of your own. Think about the different ways you could be questioned on the topics you have revised. Make sure you understand term such as assess, evaluate or demonstrate etc. The Terms and Definitions factsheet can help you with this.

If you are doing a maths calculation write down the workings clearly and in order as you may get marks for using correct formulas and procedures even if your final calculation is incorrect.

If you have a paper with multiple-choice questions and you are unsure about a question cross out the ones you know are incorrect to reduce your margin of error then make an educated guess from the ones left.

**c) Do not exceed the allotted time for a question**

Each exam will have a different structure and weighting see the Exam Preparation factsheet. Too often, students spend too long on questions that provide too few marks. Get to know your paper. Also, remember to reduce the total amount of time by 5 minutes at the beginning to give you time to read through all the questions so that you can make an informed choice about which you are going to answer. It is also a good idea to give yourself 10 minutes at the end of the exam to go through your answers to check that you have answered the question.

**d) Referencing**

Although you will not need formal Harvard, APA or OSCOLA style referencing in an examination, your tutor will expect you to be able to show knowledge of theories, models and experts in your subject area.

**e) Vocabulary**

Make sure that you are using subject vocabulary correctly and can define all the terms used. Check your spellings too.
**References and further reading**


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**For an appointment or further advice:**

**Click:** [http://libguides.staffs.ac.uk/AcademicSkills](http://libguides.staffs.ac.uk/AcademicSkills)  
**Call:** 01785 353500  
**Email:** academicskills@staffs.ac.uk  
**Visit:** Skills Space, Thompson Library, Stoke / Blackheath Lane, Stafford / Shrewsbury Hospital

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