

Very few students enjoy the build-up to an exam period. This guide is intended to allay any fears you might have about exams by offering some helpful advice on how to be fully prepared for them. This guide should be used before you begin revising for your exams. However, if you have already started your revision, you might like to take on board at least some of the guidance provided here. (The following information is only guidance; it is up to you how you revise, but you might like to adopt some of these methods.)

## Exam anxiety

Most students experience nervousness or anxiety before an exam; it is entirely natural, and so don't worry if the thought of sitting an exam gives you the shivers. However, it is important that you're not too anxious because this can prevent you from performing at your best. One way to avoid being over-anxious is to remember what exams are *not*: they are not an obstacle obstructing your path to success.

An exam provides you with an opportunity to demonstrate to your tutor(s) the depth of your knowledge and understanding of a particular topic.

The key to success in an exam is to be thoroughly prepared.

## Revising

Preparing for an exam period should be broken down into stages. Being fully prepared means engaging in each of the stages set out below:

1. **Gaining an overview**  
It is vital to have a clear idea in your mind of how many exams you are sitting, and when and where they take place. This might sound simple, and it may be tempting to skip this stage, but you cannot divide up your time in a meaningful way if you don't have a complete picture of the demands that will be placed on you during the exam period.
2. **Devising a timetable**  
Once you have gained an overview of the exam period, you need to establish how much time is *realistically* available to you to revise. The easiest way to do this is to create a timetable and plot your exams on

it, as well as any other commitments you have (such as paid work). Having done this, think about the subjects you find more difficult, as well as the subjects you enjoy more than others. Try to allocate more time to the difficult ones and perhaps break up these revision sessions with work on the more enjoyable topics. Try to be realistic when allocating time. For example, is it likely that you will be able to revise for five hours in the evening if you have been out at work all day?

3. **Making the most of your time**  
Target specific aspects of a topic for revision, particularly if your knowledge or understanding of it is incomplete. In order to do this effectively, you will need to reflect on your knowledge of each subject and identify weak spots. Set yourself daily, achievable goals, and reward yourself when you meet them.
4. **Familiarising yourself with the exam environment**  
During your preparation, try to have a look at some past exam papers, if only to see what they look like. If you have any practice questions, try answering them in a mock exam under exam conditions.

## Tips

Some snippets of guidance on achieving success in exams:

- i. **Positive approach:** exams are opportunities not obstacles.
- ii. **Preparation:** prepare thoroughly in an organised and directed way.
- iii. **Make the most of your time:** use your time wisely by targeting weak spots in your knowledge.
- iv. **Take regular breaks:** use distractions as rewards.
- v. **Set realistic and achievable goals.**
- vi. **Familiarise yourself with the environment of an exam:** practise by answering mock questions under exam conditions.

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<http://study.cardiffmet.ac.uk/Pages/home.aspx>.