

COPING WITH EXAMS

Organising your time survey

Do you think that you waste a lot of time or do you work as hard as you can?	
Do you think you are doing enough work to get the results that you want?	
Is it possible to do all the work you are given in the time you have? Do you find that you do a lot of work one week and not much at all the next week?	
Which do you do first: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardest things • Most enjoyable things • Easiest things • Most important things (what makes these the most important?) 	
Do you put things off that you don't want to do?	
Do you stick at a task for as long as you need to to get it finished?	
Do you think other people are doing more work than you?	
Do you plan for the week ahead? Do you make lists? Do you set yourself deadlines?	
Do you flit from one thing to another?	
Are you often unsure about what to do next?	

Metacognition

Jackie Beere's 'Tips for learning to think on purpose'

1. Stand back from your thinking. You might have a thought that is habitual but you have never examined before. Ask yourself if you want to think like that.
2. Challenge and change your thinking. That inner critical voice can be a bully and you don't have to listen to it. You can change the tone or the words it's using. You can reframe it. It might feel uncomfortable at first because you're in the habit of thinking in that negative way.
3. Turn mistakes into learning opportunities. Say to yourself: I got it wrong but how can I learn from that? Redefine 'struggling = I'm stupid' to 'struggling = I'm growing my brain'. You're on a journey, you're going to make mistakes and that's all part of the learning journey.
4. Reframe situations. Don't see a nasty comment as you being rubbish, see it as reflecting badly on the person who says it. Change yourself from a victim to someone who can take action.
5. Share your feelings with family and friends you can trust. Be around people who make you feel good.

Try using websites to help fill in gaps in your understanding of subjects:

www.bbc.co.uk/schools

www.s.cool.co.uk

www.projectgcse.co.uk

Use mind mapping® to visualise how different areas of a topic are related.

Use rhymes to remember keywords, eg, Richard of York Gave Battle In Vain to remember the colours of a spectrum of light.

Tape yourself talking through your notes and then play them back to yourself. This will be especially useful for auditory learners.

Use acronyms to remember the order of keywords or a process, such as: Claire's Silly Gerbil for the only three giant covalent structures in the periodic table = Carbon, Silicon and Germanium.

Make a list of keywords for each topic. Go back over the list and test yourself on what they mean.

Use lots of colour. Make your notes look as interesting as possible.

Use physical revision. Pretend you are acting out your revision or teaching it to someone else. This technique gives a different part of your brain a workout.

Tidy your room and make sure you have low noise levels when you attempt to study.

Use a highlighter pen to pick out keywords. Make sure you don't highlight too much or you'll lose the effect.

Draw revision events as pictures. You could use cartoons to describe different processes.

Keep the temperature in your room between 18–21°C. This will help keep your concentration levels up.

Boosting my revision techniques

Make big posters on key topics and put them around your bedroom or house if you can.

Get early nights when you are revising and make sure that you give yourself rewards. You may want to give yourself an afternoon off every now and then.

Exercise is a good way to give your brain a break from the revision and should help to refocus you on your work.

Get hold of some past papers. This will help you to practise your exam technique. Your teacher should have some past paper examples for you.

Make a timetable and try to stick to it. Give a copy to your parents/carer so that they can act as a monitor, especially if you think you'll find it hard to stick to.

Sit near a window. Fluorescent lighting can give you a headache and strain your eyes.

Revise in different ways. For example, write out your notes again without looking at the originals, or say your notes out loud.

Revise in a group. Every so often, you might find it useful to get some friends round to test each other and revise together to break up the boredom.

My tip is ...

Use lemon and peppermint scents to help improve your concentration. Remember to be careful of candles in your room.

Eat healthy food. Fresh fruit, vegetables, lots of water and high carbohydrate foods can all help to keep up your concentration levels.

My tip is ...

Mindfulness Skills

Spending a lot of time in your head causes stress. There are always new things to worry about, conversations to rehearse, and activities to plan. Research tells us that when you live in the moment--that is, getting out of your head and being consciously aware of your surroundings--you will usually feel happier and experience less stress. With enough practice, you will learn to better control your thoughts and feelings. Below are some techniques to help you achieve this goal.

Mindful Activity

The goal of a *mindful activity* is to bring your thoughts into the present moment. To practice, first choose any activity where you notice your mind consistently wanders. This could be your commute home, while completing chores around the house, or just about anything else. Next time you do your chosen activity, attend to each of your senses. Below we use the example of going for a walk. It will be best to choose an activity you do regularly so you are sure to practice every day.

Vision	As you leave your home you immediately notice the bright blue sky, trees, and empty streets. As you pay closer attention you notice flowers along the sidewalk with a slight breeze causing them to tilt to their side every few moments.
Hearing	Each time the breeze passes, you can hear the leaves rustling in the wind. Occasionally, you hear the hum of a car passing on a nearby street. Birds are chirping somewhere up above.
Touch	You notice the warmth of the sun and the coolness of the breeze. With each step you feel your foot landing and then pushing off from the pavement.
Taste	You stop to pick up a coffee for your walk. You hold the drink in your mouth for a moment to savor the taste.
Smell	When the breeze floats by, you catch the smell of the flowers and the trees. As you continue your walk, you notice the smell of freshly cut grass by a neighboring home.

Mindfulness Skills

Mindful Meditation

When you go about your life, it's normal for thoughts, feelings, and experiences to come and go quickly, oftentimes outside of your awareness. You might say or do something because of how you feel, without noticing the processes that influenced you. During mindfulness meditation you will create awareness of these processes by mentally taking a step back from yourself and identifying your thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations.

- 1 Find a place free of too much noise or distraction to practice.
- 2 Sit down on a cushion, the floor, or in a chair. You want to sit up straight to allow easy breathing, but not so straight that you're uncomfortable.
- 3 Turn your focus toward your breathing. Notice the feeling of the breath entering your body and making its way to your lungs. Pay attention to how your body feels, and what it's like as your breath exits your lungs. Continue to focus on the feeling of breathing.
- 4 As you practice, your mind will wander. Try not to judge your thoughts-- simply accept that they are happening. Notice, as an outside observer: "I'm having a thought." The same goes for feelings. If you detect sadness, worry, happiness, or excitement, notice how they feel in your body. Acknowledge what you are feeling, even if it's an uncomfortable sensation. Simply notice: "I am feeling this way."
- 5 When the thought or feeling passes, return your focus to your breathing and your body.
- 6 Try to practice for at least 10 to 15 minutes. If you are more experienced, aim for 30 minutes.

Relaxation Techniques

When a person is confronted with anxiety, their body undergoes several changes and enters a special state called the *fight-or-flight response*. The body prepares to either fight or flee the perceived danger.

During the fight-or-flight response it's common to experience a "blank" mind, increased heart rate, sweating, tense muscles, and more. Unfortunately, these bodily responses do little good when it comes to protecting us from modern sources of anxiety.

Using a variety of skills, you can end the fight-or-flight response before the symptoms become too extreme. These skills *will* require practice to work effectively, so don't wait until the last minute to try them out!

Deep Breathing

It's natural to take long, deep breaths, when relaxed. However, during the fight-or-flight response, breathing becomes rapid and shallow. Deep breathing reverses that, and sends messages to the brain to begin calming the body. Practice will make your body respond more efficiently to deep breathing in the future.

Breathe in slowly. Count in your head and make sure the inward breath lasts at least 5 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of the air filling your lungs.

Hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds (again, keep count). You don't want to feel uncomfortable, but it should last quite a bit longer than an ordinary breath.

Breathe out very slowly for 5 to 10 seconds (count!). Pretend like you're breathing through a straw to slow yourself down. Try using a real straw to practice.

Repeat the breathing process until you feel calm.

Imagery

Think about some of your favorite and least favorite places. If you think about the place hard enough—if you really try to think about what it's like—you may begin to have feelings you associate with that location. Our brain has the ability to create emotional reactions based entirely off of our thoughts. The imagery technique uses this to its advantage.

Make sure you're somewhere quiet without too much noise or distraction. You'll need a few minutes to just spend quietly, in your mind.

Think of a place that's calming for you. Some examples are the beach, hiking on a mountain, relaxing at home with a friend, or playing with a pet.

Relaxation Techniques

Paint a picture of the calming place in your mind. Don't just think of the place briefly—imagine every little detail. Go through each of your senses and imagine what you would experience in your relaxing place. Here's an example using a beach:

- a. Sight: The sun is high in the sky and you're surrounded by white sand. There's no one else around. The water is a greenish-blue and waves are calmly rolling in from the ocean.
- b. Sound: You can hear the deep pounding and splashing of the waves. There are seagulls somewhere in the background.
- c. Touch: The sun is warm on your back, but a breeze cools you down just enough. You can feel sand moving between your toes.
- d. Taste: You have a glass of lemonade that's sweet, tart, and refreshing.
- e. Smell: You can smell the fresh ocean air, full of salt and calming aromas.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

During the fight-or-flight response, the tension in our muscles increases. This can lead to a feeling of stiffness, or even back and neck pain. Progressive muscle relaxation teaches us to become more aware of this tension so we can better identify and address stress.

Find a private and quiet location. You should sit or lie down somewhere comfortable.

The idea of this technique is to intentionally tense each muscle, and then to release the tension. Let's practice with your feet.

- a. Tense the muscles in your toes by curling them into your foot. Notice how it feels when your foot is tense. Hold the tension for 5 seconds.
- b. Release the tension from your toes. Let them relax. Notice how your toes feel differently after you release the tension.
- c. Tense the muscles all throughout your calf. Hold it for 5 seconds. Notice how the feeling of tension in your leg feels.
- d. Release the tension from your calf, and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs.

Follow this pattern of tensing and releasing tension all throughout your body. After you finish with your feet and legs, move up through your torso, arms, hands, neck, and head.

5 Top Techniques to Find Calm

Try these helpful stress management activities to combat your exam stress:

Breathe



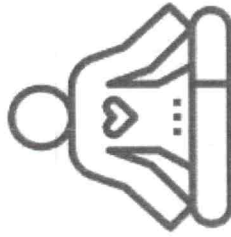
*Inhale, hold.
Exhale, hold.
Repeat!*

Walk it out



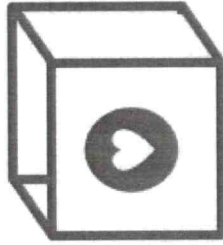
*Walk to soothe
your mind and
body*

**Practice
mindfulness**



*Still your mind
with meditation*

**Have a
"calm kit"**



*Keep a box of
uplifting items*

Share



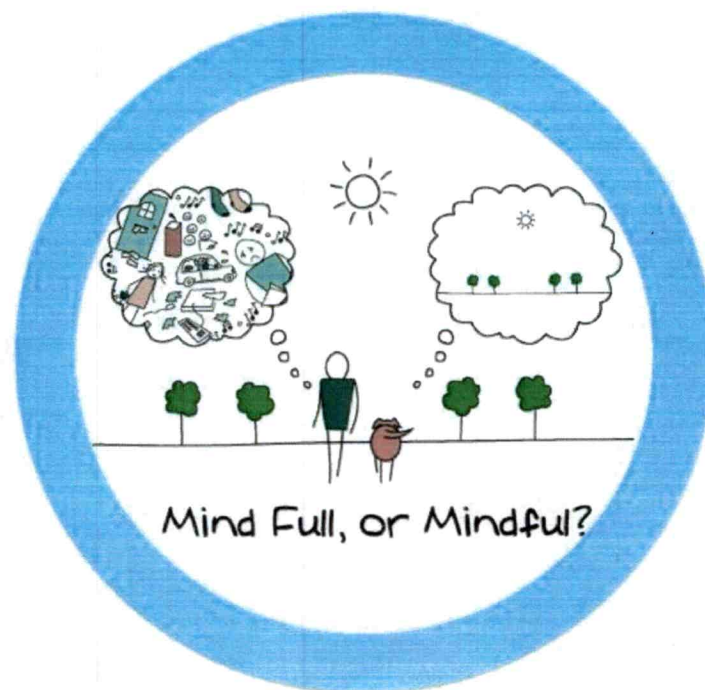
*Open up and
off-load your
worries*

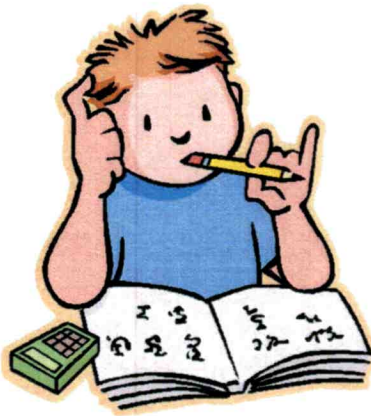
ExamStudyExpert.com/student-exam-stress



Getting Ready for Study

1. Have a minimum of 8 hours of sleep every night;
2. Have a healthy breakfast;
3. Study at the same time each day;
4. Switch off any distractions;
5. Complete five minutes of warm up exercise;
6. Complete one minute of calm breathing;
7. Study in 15 minutes chunks (15 minutes study/5 minute break);
8. Eat small amounts of dark chocolate/berries/peppermint to stay alert;
9. Use music to block out distractions;
10. Reflect on what you have learned at the end of the revision session.





**Remember that your revision is best done
regularly and in small doses.**

**The earlier you start, the more prepared you will
be, and the less stressed you will feel!**

Good luck for your revision!

