

# Exam advice

Tips for pupils

## No one said exams are easy!

Exam time can often be stressful but with the right preparation and attitude you will get through it! We have pulled together some hints, tips and advice which we hope you will find useful.



### Tips

Useful information and guidance can also be found on our website

[www.sheffieldpark-academy.org](http://www.sheffieldpark-academy.org)

## Remember



## Take Care of Yourself

Stressing over exams can often lead us into negative behaviour, like cramming in as much revision as possible. Students can end up filling every waking hour (and a few when they should be sleeping) with past papers and course revision. None of that is healthy and can actually be counter-productive.

Performing well in your exams requires revision and preparation. But it also needs you to be in top form physically and mentally. That entails looking after your own wellbeing by sleeping well, eating healthily and exercising. Passing an exam is as much about how you slept, ate and exercised as how many hours revision you managed.



Be prepared  
not scared

Have the practical issues organised in advance, not at the last minute.

What is my timetable for the exam period - have I a printed copy?

What do I need for each exam? Pens, rulers, calculators, exam number?



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# TIPS FOR PUPILS

## Sleep

This piece of advice is listed first because it is one of the most important and most frequently overlooked strategies. Our brains are at their best when they are rested. If you sit an exam while exhausted, you will have a much harder time recalling the information you need to earn a high score.

## Create a revision timetable

Building a revision timetable can add structure and help to organise your time. It will also help you identify which subjects you need to prioritise. Be organised. Don't leave things until the last minute. Another tip is to take what may feel like an overwhelming task and break it down into manageable chunks.

## Take regular study breaks

Do you feel stressed, tired and that no new information is entering your head? There is no point forcing yourself to study for hours upon hours as this will not result in a positive outcome. Taking regular study breaks and exercising is proven to engage your brain in studying and improve your exam performance in the long-run.

## Practice, Practice, Practice

Practising past papers will help you get familiar with the exam format, question style, time pressure and overall improve your ability to retrieve information quicker.

## Exercise

Get out of the house for some exercise, a walk or to meet a friend. It will help to clear your mind so you don't feel trapped in a cycle of revision. Exercise is probably one of the best ways of dealing with exam stress. Anything from walking the dog to going on a bike ride helps reduce physical tension that can lead to aches and pains, and releases natural feel-good brain chemicals.

## Eat well

Keep well nourished with a healthy, balanced diet. Healthy diet = healthy body = healthy mind. Keeping your blood sugar levels steady so that you don't have energy dips during the day and can sleep well at night is a vital way of dealing with exam stress. Avoid lots of processed, sugary food like cereal, biscuits, sweets and chocolate. Lean protein like chicken, salmon or egg, plenty of veg and carbs that release their energy slowly like wholegrain bread, rice and pasta will keep energy levels steady. Pulses like chickpeas and lentils are great for vegetarians (and others), since they contain both protein and slow-release carbs.

## Don't just read – do!

Reading through revision notes may seem like a good way to familiarise yourself with the material, but reading alone is unlikely to be enough to help you internalise the information sufficiently for you to recall it in the exam. You could try rewriting your revision notes in a different format, such as a mind map, flash cards or a labelled diagram.

## Share

Share your revision plans and timetable with others in your household. It will help them to understand your priorities and offer you support.

## Talk

Share your thoughts and feelings with others. If you're feeling anxious or nervous chat through these thoughts with family or friends.

Talk to your teachers if you feel you need help with a specific subject or element.

## Relax

If you are really anxious, find a calm, quiet space and try breathing deeply in and out for a few minutes, focusing your mind on something pleasant like a beautiful place with happy memories – anything that helps you wind down.



# ON THE DAY

1. Wake up early so that you do not need to rush through having breakfast and getting ready.
2. Set off to school in plenty of time – Exams are stressful enough without the added worry of running late. Lateness tends to magnify everything; if people are a bit stressed or nervous, when running late they become more so. Follow the old saying “if you are not early, you’re late” and you’ll be on the right path to starting your exams calmly and confidently.
3. Have a balanced breakfast.
4. Before leaving home, check that you have everything that you will need – ID, pens, calculator etc.
5. If there are people around who are panicking, avoid them. Think about who makes you feel calm and confident and actively seek them out. Avoid spending the time before your exam surrounded by people (friends or otherwise) who are particularly negative or who stress you out.
6. Go to the toilet before the exam starts. Exams can be quite long and there is no time to waste.
7. Remember to write your name on the exam paper. You would not believe how many people have forgotten to do it!
8. Read all of the questions carefully before starting and quickly plan how much time to allocate to each.
9. Start answering the questions that you feel most confident about. There is no need to answer the questions in order.
10. If your brain freezes, don’t panic. Have a moment to gather your thoughts and re-read the question.
11. Don’t spend more time than you planned on a particular section/question or you might run out of time to answer other questions and gain those extra marks!
12. Don’t be afraid to ask the examiner if you are not clear on a question.
13. Use every minute of the exam and if you have time left, review your answers before handing back the paper.
14. Stay calm, you have done lots of hard work in school and during your revision time, you have nothing to fear!



## During the exam

### REMIND YOURSELF OF ALL YOUR HARD WORK AND PREPARATION.

This can be a great way to boost your confidence going into the exam. Taking a moment to reflect on all the hours of hard work you have put in will reassure you. This technique is often used by athletes in the build-up to pressurised competitions to help them perform. Also using this time to reflect on your previous successes should help boost your confidence.

### PAUSE FOR A MINUTE AND TAKE SOME DEEP BREATHS.

When people are under pressure, they often underestimate how much time they have. This leads to them rushing and making sloppy mistakes that cost marks.

Focusing on taking a few deep breaths can act as a prompt to slow you down. Physiologically, this helps to lower your heart-rate and reduce tension. By slowing down or pausing for a moment, you allow yourself time to fully assess the situation, come up with a plan and decide the best course of action.

### IF YOU GET STUCK

If you get stuck on a question move on before you get stressed. Note down how much time you have spent on the question, leave a gap in your answer book and return to it later. This will help ease your stress about the question and ensure you don’t use up valuable time.

If you really don’t know how to answer a question or what to say, you can try to do a brainstorm or mind map. You will soon start remember more details. You could also:

- Write down what you are writing about (your topic) using your own words.
- Explain what you mean.
- Give an example (or more than one).
- Discuss the implications.
- Summarise what you have written and say what you think about it.

You may be surprised to discover just how much you do know about the topic once you get started.

### CHECK YOUR ANSWERS

If you have time left at the end of the exam use the time to check your work. Check that you have:

- Written the number of the questions you answered on the front cover of your exam book in the table in the bottom right-hand corner in in the ‘candidate question’ column. Leave the other columns blank.
- Filled the information on the front cover correctly.
- Written your name and student number on any extra paper you used.
- Answered all of the questions. Try not to leave an answer blank. If you have time write something even if it is a guess. (Unless marks will be deducted for incorrect answers – check the instructions.)
- Drawn a line through everything you don’t want the examiner to mark, i.e. your rough work.

You also need to check your answers. Start with those that will give you the highest marks to see if you can improve on them. Then if you still have time, check the rest of the questions.

**Always, always, always  
read the question!**

# Super Learning Days

Information on SLDs coming soon....

## People to talk to

If you are finding it difficult to deal with the pressure of exams there are people in school that you can speak to. Please do not feel like you are alone – we are in this together!

- Your form teacher
- Mr Ratcliffe - Wellbeing Practitioner
- Ms Fernande - Head of Y11
- Mr Sykes - Associate Senior Leader

## And finally.....

A Level results will be available from 8am on Thursday 13th August 2020 and GCSE results from 10am on Thursday 20th August 2020.

If you can not make it into the academy on that day, but wish for someone else to collect results on your behalf, you must send signed, written confirmation.



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