

# Exam Success Top-Tips and Techniques

by

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**CAUTION:** Reading and acting on the tips in this guide may increase your ability to achieve higher marks in your forthcoming exams.

This may result in you becoming very successful, being bought lavish presents by your adoring parents, feeling incredibly good about yourself, becoming more attractive to members of the opposite sex, going on to a top choice of university, etc, etc. You have been warned.

However, you **DO** have to know your stuff, have worked hard over the last two years, done great coursework and put in the hours when it comes to revision.

There are no short-cuts. Exams are designed to be hard. If they were easy, there would be no value in getting good grades. Otherwise, village idiots would become brain-surgeons. Well, something like that.

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## Before the exams

### Model answers

- Essays: prepare 'perfect essays and stories around themes and subjects that you expect to be asked about
- Re-read past exam papers and look at where you lost points or where you were given advice for improvement. Write this as list of **Do's** and **Don't's** (things I got wrong, silly mistakes, etc)

### Revision tips

- Practice papers: Do these against the clock – learn how long it takes to do different kinds of question. Follow the exam technique in the 'In the Exam' section
- Complete 'model answers' without a time pressure – 100% accurate, using text books and notes. Revise from these as well course books
- Practise 'taking a picture' of diagrams in your head (and storing to your brain's hard disk!) by staring at the diagram for 3 minutes, studying each line, number etc. Then cover it over and see if you can draw it exactly, by putting the stored image on a screen in your mind's eye. Zoom-in for more detail and compare the two diagrams when you have finished. Do this daily until you can replicate accurately each time

### General

- Practise writing fast and neat, and using bigger spacing (see **On the Day** tips)

- One month before - develop an exam revision timetable so that you cover all subjects every three days
- Revise in chunks of an hour. Reward yourself for sticking to an hour with twenty minutes of music, TV or food! Try to make this the same time of day
- Switch off and move away anything that distracts you – computer, TV etc
- Put a sign on the door – “**Exam Winner Revising – Keep Out. Bring Food Later**”
- Revise and practice in silence so you replicate exam conditions and you get used to that environment

## On the day

- Read through these notes
- Get to bed early; do not stay up late revising. A good night’s sleep will do you more good
- Get up in plenty of time. Do not make any changes to your normal routine
- Dress smartly. It will help you feel good
- Take an hour to read through your notes for exams that day, and only that day
- Don’t think about anything else – it can all wait. Just focus on delivering a calm and full exam presence. *Carpe diem*
- Eat a breakfast that includes some fruit and water. Take vitamin C and B or a good multi-vitamin
- Say positive things to yourself. Keep away from negative situations, arguments, texts etc
- Double check you have everything you need in plenty of time

## In the exam

### Have a ‘settling in’ ritual

- Arrive in good time, get a table with good sunlight if you can
- Relax, smile, deep breath, look around you and enjoy the event
- Tell yourself...”This is going to be fine, I can do this and get an A\*.”
- Set out your things on your desk, in the same way each time – make a ritual:
  - Pens and pencils to one side
  - Note paper
  - Water bottle
  - Strong mints
  - Calculator
  - Clock in front of you

- Lucky gonk <sup>1</sup>
- Etc...

### **When you are ready, turn over your papers...**

#### Timing:

- Scan the paper and count the number of questions and look at the marks for each question
- Write down the number of minutes you have for the exam, then take off 30 minutes (15 mins for reading through at the start, and 15 mins to check your work at the end). Divide the time left by the number of questions. This is how long you should spend on each question
- Then, try to complete each question in the amount of time. Amazingly this technique works and you will find yourself completing each question in the right of amount of time. If you 'overrun' on one question, stop and move on to the next and try and make-up time so you can go back to it

#### Your first 15 minutes.

- Read each question, slowly and carefully at least twice
- Use your note paper to jot any ideas initial ideas or thoughts for each question
- Grade each question as
  - A: KNOW IT! CAN DO IT!
  - B: PROBABLY
  - C: BIT TRICKY (or something like that!)
- Answer the A questions first, then B, then C

#### Last 15 minutes. Even if you have not finished all the questions –

- STOP
- Go back and read each of your answers slowly and carefully
- Correct punctuation, spelling and poor handwriting
- Make sure all working outs are legible and enough
- Lines are straight
- Notes pages number: 1 of 3, 2 of 3, etc and your name is printed on each sheet

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<sup>1</sup> (just joking about the lucky gonk!)

## Remember

- Clear, neat handwriting. There is no point in answering a question correctly if the examiner marks it wrong or down because they cannot read your answer
- Double space essays to allow for corrections and additional words, etc
- Leave a little more space than normal between words, for the same reason
- Do a 60 second 'brain-dump' or ideas, facts, figures on a piece of scrap paper before answering for real
- Do workings out in rough on scrap and copy across neatly where you can
- On a longer essay, sketch out our plot and character ideas and things to include BEFORE you start writing. This will only take a couple of minutes, but greatly increase the quality of your finished work
- Sit upright, but relaxed
- Take regular sips of water
- Suck a mint!
- Keep an eye on the clock

## When the exam is finished

Relax. Take a short break before focusing on the next exam or tomorrow's exams.

# **Exam Winner Revising**

**KEEP OUT**

***Bring Food Later  
Thank You***