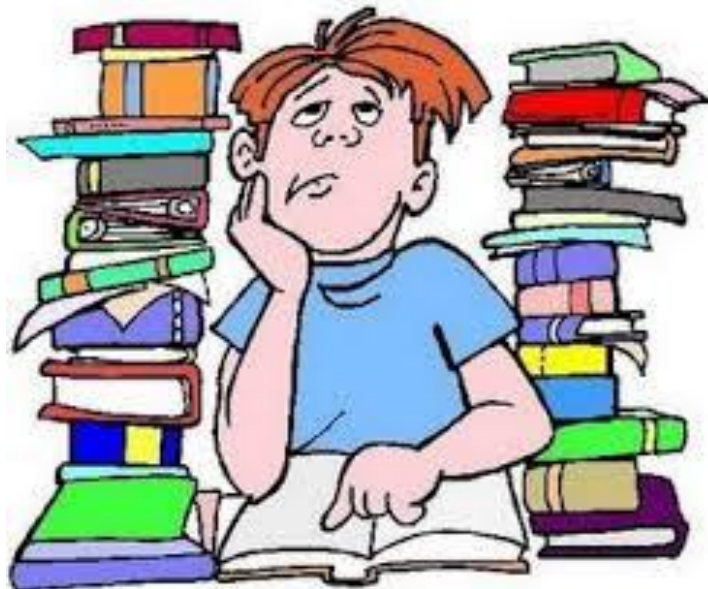


# EXAMS - DON'T PANIC!

## ROUGH GUIDE TO STUDYING FOR EXAMS



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***It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer."* ~ Albert Einstein**

**Make Revision list**

**Prioritise areas of difficulty**

**Read notes/summaries**

**Underline key words**

**Learn key words**

**Practice past questions from exam papers.**

**35-40 minutes per subject, 5-10 minute breaks**

**Ask yourself what is basic objective for each session?**

Instead of saying 'I will study geography from 4:45pm to 5:10pm', you would set an objective such as '**Geography Week 1: Rocks. 3 study sessions. By the end of this week I will be able to** list the 3 types of rocks, give 2 examples of each type, explain how each type is formed, give example of where they are formed, and examples of uses each type can be put to'.

**Make notes and test yourself** - Rather than just reading and rereading the material, they should be making notes and testing yourself, either using the questions at the end of each chapter in the text-book, or using the headings on [www.skool.ie](http://www.skool.ie) (which is a great resource for both Junior and Leaving cert students), or using the subject syllabi, or the past exam papers and marking schemes (available at [examinations.ie](http://examinations.ie)).

**Make lists of the areas in each subject you find the most difficult**, and try to tackle the subjects you find easy on the evening of a hard school day and the bits you find hard on the evening of an easy school day, or on the weekend.

**Test one another** (friends, family) on subjects they have in common: this could benefit both of them, as we tend to remember material we 'teach' to another person, so this could reinforce learning.

**Quizzem revision apps** are fun, multiplayer, educational games, designed to improve your exam results and spice up your study time. The first editions of Quizzem are aligned with the **Irish Science Curriculum**. Our first app, Quizzem JC.

**USEFUL REVISION / STUDY WEBSITES**

**Mocks.ie**

**Studyclix.ie**

**Juniorscience.com**

**Irishtimes.com**

## UNHELPFUL THINKING - CHALLENGE YOUR WORRY'S

- **'All or nothing' thinking** – you see things in black and white e.g. I only got a pass for my last assignment therefore I'm a total failure.
- **Negative Thinking** – positive experiences are filtered out e.g. I'm not that smart, the test was just easy (or I was lucky)
- **Catastrophising** – you exaggerate the importance of things e.g. I only got a pass, therefore I'm the worst student in the class
- **Should Have** – you try to motivate yourself with 'I should have got a better mark than xxx' or 'I should be getting As in all of my subjects' and when these goals aren't met, you feel guilty or annoyed with yourself.

## PRACTICAL THINGS TO DO

### Write a 'To Do' list of the tasks/goals

You need to work on for a given time frame

How realistic is your list? Need to postpone anything?

Order the tasks from 1 onwards as to what things need to be done first etc.

Break the task into all the small steps that are involved in achieving the task

### Tell time - Improve your timing:

Time how long it takes you to do things

Make more accurate estimates of how long each step of each task will take you

- **Worst-first** – knock off the worst task first.
- **Just 5-minutes** – plan to spend just 5 mins on the task. At the end of the 5 mins reassess
- **Set time limits** – set a specific amount of time to work on a task and stick to it
- **Prime time** – work out what time of the day you are most productive or energized and attempt tasks when you are at your optimum e.g. nights, Sun mornings
- **Prime place** – be aware of what types of environments you get *more* done in, and what types have *distractions* that make you more likely to procrastinate.
- **Reminders** – if forgetting tasks is a big part of why you procrastinate, use visual reminders and prompts to help you (e.g. notes, lists, diary, wall planner)
- **Focus** – if you are feeling unsettled when sitting down to commence a task, take a moment to close your eyes and focus on your breathing.
- **Plan rewards** – The more you plan regular rewards for your achievements, the less you will feel like you are missing out on something and less likely you are to procrastinate. *Try to find a balance between pleasure and achievement.*

# Tips for effectively studying for exams—

## **Write. Every day. Write lots.**

Writing is the cornerstone of learning and cognitive development, and is an invaluable tool when studying for exams. Writing constantly, every day, can do several things.

1. **Writing allows** you to make connections between ideas, texts, and concepts.
2. **Writing gives** you materials to go back and study. Instead of re-reading texts, make sure your notes are comprehensive enough to study from.
3. **Writing provides** evidence of what you've done that day. Taking notes, writing out connections, writing practice questions, all act as physical evidence that you are learning. Being able to look back at the volume of what you have done can help motivate you to keep studying, and help to avoid the feeling of not knowing anything.

## **Read previous exams and write practice questions**

Writing practice questions, especially timed, can give you a sense of the things you do well, the things you still need to work on, and what the exam situation is going to be like. Knowing what you're up against takes the stress out. Prepares you mentally for the task ahead.

## **Take study breaks—long ones.**

But taking time for yourself is important. Taking small breaks while studying will help allow the concepts you've learned to cohere and give your brain time to solidify connections. Good studying always includes small breaks—do the laundry, make a snack, go for a walk.

**But big breaks are important** too. Take an entire day off to do something you enjoy. Try to de-stress, guilt free. Spend time with your family. Go see a movie or a play. Go to a sports event and cheer on your favorite team. Go hiking. Build a snowman. In short, take some time to do things that you enjoy, so you'll feel more refreshed and relaxed when you do hit those books again.

### **Set small, attainable goals (and rewards!)**

Setting goals for the day or week is an important part of keeping yourself motivated, and making sure that you are tackling all the material. But it is important that these goals are realistic and attainable. Know your limits, and work within them. Instead of saying “I will read ten books by the end of the week!”, have a goal of 40 pages of reading per day, and 2 pages of writing. Daily goals give you something to work towards, and meeting them gives you a sense of accomplishment and momentum that can help you stay motivated. And make sure that you have a reward system for reaching goals, even if it is something small. Read a book for pleasure when you’ve reached your weekly goals. Eat a piece of chocolate after finishing a text. Promise yourself new shoes, or a trip to a new restaurant when you finish a chunk of readings.

### **Enlist others.**

A network of people who are encouraging and supportive can help get you that final mile. Find a study partner. Enlist family members or spouses to encourage you to reach your writing goal for the day. Ask friends to quiz you or read over practice exams. Talk to a colleague about your study process. Ask other students about their exam experiences. It is easy to feel isolated and alone when studying, but including others in your study plan can help make studying easier (and more fun!)

### **Focus on what you do know**

It is all too easy to think about all the things that you haven’t learned yet, or all the books you haven’t read, or all the questions you can’t answer yet. It’s easy to panic, and focus on the negative. But there are lots of things that you know already, and focusing on that can help ease your mind. Write a practice question that you know you can answer. Get a friend to ask you trivia questions about a text you know well. Read back over your notes to see how far you have come. Read a paper from a year ago to remind yourself what you’ve read. Focus on what you know, not what you don’t.

Exams can be hugely intimidating, but it is absolutely possible to study for them without driving yourself insane.

# Here are 10 ways to destress before the big test.

Sweaty palms, sick stomach, headaches, items that I studied a million times mysteriously disappearing from my memory" ; does this sound like you?

10) **Study:** don't do all your studying at once. 35 – 40 mins at a time. TAKE A BREAK and do something that has nothing to do with studying for a half and hour - play a video game, call a friend, yoga, cat-nap, have a snack, etc. **The key here is to rest your brain.** Don't even think about the material until the half hour is over.

9) **Make studying more fun.**

**If you make it fun and interesting, your much likely to remember it.** Make some flash cards, grab a sibling or a roommate and play your own version of jeopardy, or 20 questions, family feud, what ever it takes.

8) **Study on the go** - When ever you are on the train, bus, waiting in line, just pull out your study guide and put in five to ten minutes, the constant re-enforcement of the material will help you to remember it.

7) **Get a study-buddy.**

6) **Take time to visualize. If you believe it, it will happen.** The night before your test, or in the shower the morning before take to time to visualize your self doing well on the test. Picture your self bent over the paper and knowing each of the answers, imagine the look on your mom's face when you show her the "A". Athletes often do this before a big game, besides, it can't hurt any" ;

5) **Go to bed early the night before** the test. I recommend an hour earlier than you usually do. A good nights sleep will help you focus better tomorrow.

4) **Have breakfast the day of the test.** It's hard to concentrate when you're hungry, also breakfast provides you with nutrients that will give you energy to keep your body and your brain active.

3) **Reward your self for your efforts.** Make plans to get a movie and ice cream after the test. Don't let it distract you, but let it be something you can look forward to after all the work you've done.

2) **Brain drain before you begin.** Ask for a blank piece of paper, or flip the test over and drain every thing your can think of regarding what you studied on to the page. Key-words, theories, formulas you just know you might forget, this way you can use this brain drain as reference. It also allows you to gather your thoughts before you conquer the complicated confusing word problem that makes you forget you even learned math in the first place.

1) **Breath & Relax** It's not the end of the world if you get a B, and besides if you did half the items on this list you had to have been doing something right, and never underestimate the odds of multiple choice" ; just kidding. But relax you'll do fine!

# Stress Busters

- A. Remind yourself that your family still loves you.
- B. Ask yourself, 'How significant will these exams be in 5 years time?'
- C. Tell yourself you can always take a year off, or re-do the exams.
- D. Remind yourself of the story of John Major and Albert Einstein (both had poor school records).
- E. Listen to relaxing music on the floor in the dark with cucumber slices on your eyes.
- F. Watch your favourite film for the 25th time.
- G. List all the things you're going to buy yourself when you go to the shops on Saturday.

## What Causes Test Anxiety?

- 1. Past experiences of blanking out on tests or the inability to readily retrieve answers to questions**
- 2. Lack of preparation for an exam** which is a real reason to be worried about test performance.
- 3. Errors in time management**
- 4. Poor study habits** - put off studying longer than they should.
- 5. Failure to properly organize material and cramming the night before the exam**
- 6. Negative thinking and worries**

If a test has been adequately prepared for, the precipitating anxiety may result . Focusing on past test performances, how friends and other classmates are doing, or the negative consequences of doing poorly are also major factors contributing to test anxiety.

- 7. People who put a lot of pressure on themselves to perform well.**

They often have unusually high expectations for themselves and, many times, have been very good students in the past.

# General Exam Stress-Busting Tips

**Believe in yourself.** If you prepare for the exams properly you should do fine, meaning that there is no need to worry excessively.

**Take steps to overcome problems.** If you find you don't understand some of your course material, getting stressed out won't help. Instead, take action to address the problem directly by seeing or talking to your course tutor or getting help from your classmates.

**Don't keep things bottled up.** Confiding in someone you trust and who will be supportive is a great way to alleviate stress and worry.

**Keep things in perspective.** The exams might seem like the most crucial thing right now, but in the grander scheme of your whole life they are only a small part. Interrupt negative thoughts with positive ones. Examples: "I can do this", "I will do my best", "I can pass this test", "I will focus only on the question in front of me." "I have done it before, so I can do it again." Actively challenge your irrational thoughts.

**Plan your study time.** Too much material + Too little time = Anxiety. Plan your studying with regularly scheduled study sessions about 50 minutes long separated by 5 – 10 minute breaks.

**Try to maintain a healthy lifestyle.** Anxiety increases when one feels tired, run down and overwhelmed. Overall resilience depends on one's physical and mental health, which can be strengthened by:

- enough movement and exercise (vs. couch potato lifestyle)
- balanced life (vs. over-stress)
- positive thoughts/beliefs (vs. self-defeating thoughts/cynicism)
- health focus (vs. self-neglect)
- replenishing nutrition (vs. junk food)
- regular and adequate sleep (vs. late night lifestyle)

**Get accurate information.** Check your course syllabus and get an understanding of the grading procedure. **If you don't understand, ASK.** Well before the exam, make sure you know where it will be held, the start time, how long it will last, whether extra time will be allowed. **Ask your lecturer whether it is an open-book exam or not, when the marks will be available, what materials can or should be brought into the exam room.**

**Get yourself into exam mode.** Practice on sample tests in the textbook or study guide. Look at past exams. Ask for suggestions from your lecturer what to expect on the exam, what course materials should be emphasised, how to prioritise study time for the course.



**Plan.** Rest well the night before the exam. Plan to arrive at the test location early. If you can pick your seat, choose one away from the doors, windows or other distractions. Plan to monitor the time during the exam so wear a watch or sit where you can see the clock. Plan to wear layers of clothing so you can adjust your need for more warmth or coolness. Check out the examination room ahead of time if you can.

**Avoid bad things.** Give coffee and other stimulants a miss the night before the exam or on the day of the exam. Avoid anxious or talkative students. Avoid other people or things that may disturb your self-confidence, focus and level of relaxation. Definitely avoid arriving late.

## Tips for the Exam Itself

**Avoid panic.** It's natural to feel some exam nerves prior to starting the exam, but getting excessively nervous is counterproductive as you will not be able to think as clearly.

The quickest and **most effective way to eliminate feelings of stress and panic** is to close your eyes and take several long, **slow deep breaths**. Breathing in this way calms your whole nervous system. Simultaneously you could **give yourself some mental pep-talk** by mentally repeating "**I am calm and relaxed**" or "**I know I will do fine**".

If your mind goes blank, don't panic!. Instead, focus on slow, deep breathing for about one minute. If you still can't remember the information then move on to another question and return to this question later.

**Take a small bottle of water** into the exam with you and some sweets (if allowed—find out ahead of time). Have a drink of water.

### Survey what's in front of you

- Read the instructions carefully
- Quickly survey every page of the test
- See what will be expected of you
- Re-read the instructions a second time (are you really being asked to answer either one or three of the questions?)

### Prioritise what needs to be done

- place a mark beside all questions you know you can answer
- Divide up your time according to the importance of the questions
- Answer the easiest questions first to guarantee marks

### Pace yourself

- Do not rush through the test
- Regularly check time left for the rest of the questions

# Anxiety Reduction Techniques

## Take a deep breath...

- Hold it for 5 seconds
- Exhale audibly all at once and let your head, jaw and shoulders drop
- Breathe easy 'into' your neck, jaw and shoulders and breathe again into the relaxed state. Repeat cycle once or twice

## Total tension release (can be done lying down or sitting)

- Tense your whole body one part at a time
- Lift your toes and tense both calves
- Tense your thighs and buttocks
- Tighten your abdomen
- Tense your chest and back
- Tighten your arms and clench your fists
- Tense your neck and clench your jaw
- Tightly close your eyes
- Take a deep breath and hold it for five seconds
- Let your breath and the tension in your body go all at once
- Feel the tension leave your body

## Relaxation sanctuary (useful in the exam)

- Focus on the inner screen of your mind's eye
- Imagine your ideal, safe, relaxing place
- Close your eyes
- In your mind, send yourself there for 15 to 30 seconds
- Breathe easily and enjoy the relaxation
- Go there whenever you need a quick relaxing break (make sure you don't fall asleep if you are in the middle of your exam, though!)

## Smile!

- Really feel that smile spread throughout your body
- Take a deep breath and exhale through your mouth

# LEAVING & JUNIOR CERTIFICATE REVISION SUPPORTS

The logo for StudyClix, featuring the word "studyclix" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The "studyc" part is in a light blue color, and "lix" is in a darker blue.

NEW website, [StudyClix.ie](http://StudyClix.ie), launched April 2012. Free revision resources.

Each subject at Jnr & Leaving Cert level is broken down into topics. Pick a topic to study and view all past questions on that topic. Try answering the past questions on that topic and then view the marking schemes to see how you did.



[Skool.ie](http://Skool.ie) provides study notes and exam guides on a wide range of subjects at Junior & Leaving Certificate level

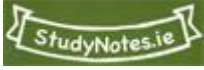


[Scoilnet](http://Scoilnet) A website for parents, teachers and students. The student post-primary section allows you search for additional material resources under syllabus topics for each subject in the leaving certificate.

[MyStudyMate.ie](http://MyStudyMate.ie) [MyStudyMate.ie](http://MyStudyMate.ie) Leaving Cert study videos made by students for students - All Free!

The logo for Examtime, featuring the word "examtime" in a lowercase, bold, blue sans-serif font.

[Examtime.com](http://Examtime.com) allows students and teachers to create their own personal learning environment. You can create Mind Maps, Flashcards, Quizzes, set yourself Study Goals and share your resources with your friends or class. Visit [Examtime.com](http://Examtime.com)



**StudyNotes.ie** is a free site provided for both Junior and Leaving certificate students where you will find study notes and other useful resources.

**Post Primary Academic Websites**

Visit our new **Post Primary Academic Websites** section for details of websites to help with project research and revision.

**PositiveMaths.ie** **PositiveMaths.ie** An online resource for Maths students with free seminars and small online tutorials on maths topics for junior & leaving cert students

**Examinations.ie** Past examination papers, marking schemes and examination papers can be viewed on the Examinations Commission Website under their **Examination Material Archive Section**. Sample examination papers can be viewed on their Examination Information Section

**Benn Hogan Exam Archive**

A Leaving Cert exam archive by Benn Hogan which allows you to change the year or see the solutions without re-entering everything - ( which is required on [examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie))  
<http://www.bennhogan.com/examarchive/>



The **Paper Mate Leaving Certificate Edition app** provides easy access to past examination papers and marking schemes for all Leaving Certificate subjects from 2001 right up to 2011. [See more info...](#)

**CareersPortal.ie**

**CareersPortal.ie** is an online resource which incls a Career Exploration toolbox, an Occupational Database, a CAO database and wizard along with facilities to search by employment sector, occupations and courses