

# Almost there...!

Some words of advice  
for your exams...  
from those who know!



# Some little tips to make a big difference over the next few weeks...

It's (not) funny how your exams have a way of creeping up on you. It probably seems like just yesterday you were starting the year and now, your final exams are just weeks away.

We all know from experience how easy it is to get caught up in the stress of the final weeks. So to help you keep your head above water, we thought we would send through a few tips from our presenters. **These are the little tips and insights our presenters used to stay sane, focused, motivated and to ace their final exams.**

It has been fantastic working with you this year, we wish you the best of luck in your exams and with whatever you choose to do next year! We've got our fingers crossed for you!

Finally, if you find yourself lacking in motivation at any stage, you can jump on to the Elevate website at [www.elevateeducation.com](http://www.elevateeducation.com) and enter the password **springbok**

Adam Diprose

General Manager  
Elevate Education

## Pace Yourself

Pace yourself! It's very easy to find yourself in an 'eyes bigger than stomach' kind of situation when it comes to exam preparation.

Doing a practice exam for each subject everyday to be super prepared is impossible! Not even the best students could handle that heavy a work load.

Having a longer preparation period with more rest time is a lot less stressful! It's really important to make sure you only do high powered brain work when you're in a mental state to do so.

The biggest trap here is that we say "OK, so I am feeling a bit lack-lustre, I won't do an practice exam today, I will do it tomorrow!", then all of a sudden its the day before the exam and we've done one per subject (if that!). Using an exam planner enables you to make a sort of 'practice paper to do list', and gradually get through them all, rather than trying to cram them all in right before the exams start. Keep it balanced and don't bite off more than you can chew!

Best of luck to everyone, take it one step at a time!!

## Teamwork

For me, exams were the ultimate test, so I sought help. I consulted my teachers and got some extra resources, but nothing helped me as much as my peers. One mate and I, who was a similar standard in English to me, spent every day for a week together. That week, was all about English. We'd wake up, do a couple of hours study, then organise to meet. We would talk for half an hour about the texts we were studying, bouncing ideas of one another and discovering new angles. We'd take these ideas, write an introduction and compare it.

We'd talk about it then write another. We'd write whole essays, compare these, take them to our teachers, get them marked, get their perspective, meet up and compare again. We evaluated, analysed, discussed, compared and contrasted until we were sick of each other. Finally though, when it was all over, we both had English as our best subject.

**Anthony**

Believe  
in Yourself

UP  
Keep ↑ THE FLUIDS  
YOU  
CAFFEINE  
CAN  
DEHYDRATE

Go for a  
Walk

## Mix it up!

In the lead up to my final exams I found that reading over my notes was becoming more of a chore than ever. Summer was approaching and I wanted to spend my time outside enjoying the nice weather rather than cooped up in my room. What I eventually decided to do was read my notes out loud into a microphone and then transfer the audio files onto my iPod. I could then go for long walks and revise for my exams at the same time. Getting out of the house more often really cleared my head and I was in a really positive frame of mind by the time exam period rolled around.

**Bongani**

## Keep it simple

My advice is to write honestly and simply. In Grade 12, I took the approach that stuffing my sentences with long words and subordinate clauses was more important than understanding the poem or novel. I still remember the marker's feedback for one assessment, which concluded that my essay was 'elaborate padding with little substance'. In Grade 12, I dropped the balderdash and started writing my essays as if I were speaking directly to the examiner.

As a direct consequence, my marks jumped up and I performed well in my final exams. I suggest that when you write an essay, you needn't dazzle the examiner with 'hirsute', 'meretricious' or (the infamous) 'juxtaposition'. Instead, you need to write an essay that the examiner will understand and, most importantly, enjoy reading.

**Mark**

## Colour

Studying can seem extremely drab and boring. The best way to brighten up your studying, is to use colour.

Use highlighters and coloured pens when making your study notes.

Make use of sticky notes, printed files, colourful notebooks and funky bags / pencil cases to keep all your stationery.

Invest in a whiteboard / chalkboard and whiteboard markers or chalk. Buy as many different colours as you can.

If you can, wear your brightest and most colourful t-shirt to write your exam. But not too bright, you don't want your fellow students to have to wear sunglasses when they write their exam. . .

Carla, Studying Education



## Make a plan

Do not underestimate the importance of list making and planning! As the year goes on the “to do list” gets increasingly longer and if you have no plan, it is nearly impossible to get everything you need done and on time. In the final months of my final year, I wrote a list every afternoon of tasks to be done.

Everyone knows the feeling of having so much on your mind, all these things buzzing around in your head, and simply creating anxiety and stress. It is an amazing relief to just in fact write these things down. Just by having them on paper, you have removed the burden of a cluttered mind so that you can actually now think... and get done what you need to.

Then plan out when exactly these things will get done! This means writing next to the task: a day and a time... your life is now in order... now you just have to do it!!! Good luck guys, it comes down to you in the end, just give it the best you've got!

While you focus intensely on your upcoming exams, it's important to keep in mind that you will still be alive once they are over. This means that you should try not to neglect other important aspects of your life, such as your friends, family and your health. Stay in touch with friends, exercise regularly, and most of all, keep enjoying life.

Keep it in perspective!

## Sleep

Imagine this. You are at the London 2020 Olympics – representing GB – and are about to compete in the marathon. The race starts at 9am tomorrow morning. It is now 5pm the night before.

To perform your best tomorrow, you must prepare yourself thoroughly tonight. Do you:

(a) As last minute preparation, run two marathons and go to bed sweaty and exhausted at 2am?

Or:

(b) Relax. Pour yourself a tall glass of water. Eat dinner, watch TV and go to bed at a reasonable hour to get a great night's sleep.

The best answer – obviously – is (b). But it is surprising that students – even experienced ones – will often exhaust themselves with practice exams and cramming the night before an exam.

The night before the exam is too late to learn new information. Cramming the night before is therefore a waste of time. You might as well spend the time relaxing and resting. After all, you are running a marathon tomorrow.

So the key rule is – at 5pm, STOP STUDYING. It might feel counter intuitive, but trust me. Cramming until 3am is the easiest way to stuff up an exam. And as if you need an excuse to chill-out?

## Give yourself time

Don't factor in the day before an exam as a cram day.

It's so tempting to take things pretty easy the week preceding an exam telling yourself you can just work for twelve hours the day before.

Inevitably, the first thing that hits us when we really crank up the study is how much we don't know, and this is not a feeling you want the day before an exam.

I've always found it helpful to work pretty consistently on every subject throughout the final weeks, but have a few days where you exclusively focus on one or two subjects.

For me, these days are far more productive than the days where I try to have a look at a bit of everything, but don't make it the day before the exam that you do this.

Ideally, the day before the exam should be the most relaxed.

Often it's a day I use to get a study group together and chat about any problems you still have.

I find this relaxed, very helpful in terms of preparation and above all it allows you to overcome any concerns you have about the exam.

**Brendan**

"Make sure you break things up a bit when you are attempting to study for long periods of time. Even just a quick walk around the block every hour is a really easy way to wake yourself up and get the blood flowing again. Drink LOTS of water and keep windows open to let fresh air into the room and keep it well lit while you are studying."



## To-do lists

Nearing the end of year your weekends and holidays became less like the weekends and holidays you are used to. The amount of homework and extra study that needs to be done in this time can seem significant, however, one strategy which really helped me cope with doing work during this time as well as ensuring I got the break I needed was every Friday afternoon when I got home from school I would get a blank A4 piece of paper. On this piece of paper I would write down each subject I was doing and underneath all the homework or extra study I wanted to do for that particular subject. I would then put it up on my wall where I could constantly look at it. By addressing all subjects it made sure I didn't miss any out, and as I also knew when I had work and sport on, I could find time around these activities to get this work done.

I would then cross off each item of work when it was done (don't tick it, put a cross through the completed work...it feels much better!)

Although at this time of year it seems so much work has to be done, one thought that kept me going was knowing that 3-4 months of holidays awaited me, and if I put in the hard work now I would enjoy those holidays so much more.

GOOD LUCK!

**Angelos**

## How to do Practice Papers

### **Week 1: 1 practice paper – open book, open time**

Open book, open time means the paper should be completed with all your notes and textbooks available without the pressure of time constraints. Aim to complete it over 3 days in 20 minute sessions. Enjoy this process, have some music on in the background, take your time.

### **Week 2: 1 practice paper – closed book, open time**

Complete the 2nd paper without your notes and textbooks. However, continue to take your time with it. Aim to complete it over a few weekdays, or over a weekend.

### **Week 3: 2 practice papers – exam conditions**

The third and final week before your exam is the most important. By this stage, all your notes should be finished. Try to do this with friends if you find it difficult on your own.

Perhaps going to the library with some friends on Saturday afternoon, complete the paper under exam conditions then have the evening off. Meet again the following day and discuss the answers. A great way to brainstorm and share ideas!

## Work with friends

The only way I can muster up the energy to study is to work with friends – so study groups are a key part of my exam prep. To get motivated, I like to make these study sessions really epic: massive to do list, phones off, whiteboard, diagrams – the lot. If I lock out a whole afternoon, take over a whole room and tell myself that we are going to get a stack of work done, then I kind of pump myself up for it.

- Before you meet, **map** out everything you plan to do. Make sure you have something (notes, practise questions) to do in preparation – it will force you to get it done.
- Bring something **delicious** to share – tea and biscuits will make everything easier.
- Use a whiteboard or big bits of paper to **draw** things out.
- Bring along a **list** of things you're unsure about and see if you can work it out as a group. If none of you get it, write it down and take it to your teacher to explain.
- Set a clear end **time** - so you know how long you need to concentrate for.
- As much as possible, make it **fun and creative**. Plan out incentives for you along the way – When I studied Indian history, my friend and I would get Indian food after a big day of study.



**Chiara**

## Forget about it!

One of the most important elements of an exam period is being able to complete each consecutive exam to the same high standard. The greatest challenge in doing this is keeping your focus from one exam to the next. With everyone having at least 5 exams, during what is sometimes a very short exam period, a really important skill is being able to forget about an exam the moment you put your pen down. Once you put your pen down and walk out of your exam room door there is absolutely nothing constructive you can do about that exam. The best thing to do is leave the exam room and change your focus to the next exam immediately.

Whatever you do, do not spend the next hours (or days) analysing, worrying, dreaming and comparing your answers with others and finding all the mistakes you will undoubtedly think you have made, this serves no purpose apart from destroying your confidence and hurting your chances in that next important exam. Once an exam is finished, forget about it. Move on. When the final exam is finished, forget everything and celebrate.

Good luck.

**Nondumiso**

## The power of practice

For me, practice papers are by far the most powerful study tool I came across. Here's a quick story for you that may make me sound a little full of myself, but it is true. Basically, I just finished a science degree at uni, so hoped I would be ok at science at school. During my mock exams, I failed chemistry. I got 42/100. I was devastated and sort the help of a teacher at school who said she'd tutor me. I thought she'd just teach me the whole subject again, but instead she handed me a pile of 15 past papers and told me to do them all. She said, "don't write another note, don't learn another note, just go away and do as many of these as possible". She said to do them open book, meaning if you don't know the answer use your notes to find it, but just do as many of these papers as possible.

So that is all I did. We would meet once a week to mark them, but otherwise practice papers is all I did for chemistry for the last 6 weeks of Matric. And in my final exam I ended up getting over 90. The more practice papers you do, the more comfortable you will become answering exam questions. You will also begin to see the same or similar questions come up over and over again. I cannot emphasise enough what this study technique did for me, so feel free to use it.

Good Luck!!

**Pedro**

One of the things that I did during Matric was record my notes on my phone and then play it back to myself before I go to sleep and just when I wake up. That way, it's the first and last thing I'm thinking about during my day. Also, it helped me learn my notes a different way – there's only so many times you can look at your notes without going a little bit crazy, so mixing it up a bit can make a big difference.



**Yolisa**

## Mind maps

Mind mapping is a term most students groan about when they hear. It is something that I rarely, if ever, used until my final year of school. However throughout Matric, and now in my third year of university it is something I use every single essay I write. Normally as soon as the invigilator says 'you may start writing' people go bananas trying to write as much and as quickly as possible. Instead, I would turn the page over, draw up an essay structure and write down the start of the quotes I was going to use.

I learned that it was better to write a 55-minute essay with a good structure than 60 minutes of whatever came into my head. I was also more likely to remember quotes in the first few minutes of the exam than the last ten when I was frantically trying to finish an essay.

**Adam**

At the end of your final exam, the invigilators will say “you must now stop writing”.

You can drop your pen.

That’s it.

It’s over.

And so begins the rest of your life.

If you’ve worked hard, it’ll be a good feeling.

If you’ve worked really hard, it’ll be a really good feeling.

If you’ve given every ounce of energy and effort;

ignored the voice in your head that kept saying

“just do that work later”; not been on

Facebook or watched TV

for weeks; given it everything you’ve got...

...Well then it’ll be one of the greatest feelings

you’ve ever had.

**Matthew**

## Manage stress

There are 2 reasons that we stress about exams. Firstly, we worry that something might come up in the exam that we don't know, and secondly, we worry that we might not be able to answer a question. In reality though, there is no need to stress about either. Firstly, there is only a finite body of information that can come up in the exam. If you have worked your way through the syllabus / study design, made notes on all the points and memorised all of these points then there is nothing that can come up in the exam that you don't know. So that is stressor one taken out of the equation. Secondly, if you do enough practice papers, you become used to answering hard questions. When you are doing practice papers you might stress the first time you

see a hard question, but then after your 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> practice paper, you stop stressing when you see something out of left-field, because you begin to realise that no matter how difficult the question, you know you will be able to find your way to the answer.

There is no need to stress about exams, because there is no mystery to what you need to do. If you have made notes on everything in the course, memorised these notes and practiced writing answers you are ready.

Trust in your preparation and relax.

**Benjamin**