

Exam Preparation

How do you prepare for exams? When exam time arrives, how do you go about studying? Do you achieve the results you'd like to? Here are some exam tips to get you started:

Exam Preparation Checklist

Fill out this checklist to get a clearer idea of how ready you are for your exams.

HAVE YOU ...	YES	NO
Attended all your classes (or caught up on work missed)?		
Asked your teacher for suggestions on how to study?		
Asked your teacher what to study & format for exam?		
Drawn up a study plan?		
Planned preparation time so as not to cram?		
Joined a serious study group?		
Attended a study skills workshop?		
Obtained past papers?		
Reviewed class notes on a daily basis?		
Reviewed old tests?		
Found out when and where your exams are being held?		
Made summaries of notes and textbook readings?		
ARE YOU READY FOR THE EXAM?		

Have a look at all those questions to which you answered 'no' in order to get some suggestions on what you may improve on in order to better prepare for your exams.

The Study Environment

Where do you normally study?

- Try to sit somewhere where you can be sitting upright, i.e. not on your bed
- Sufficient lighting
- Good ventilation
- Try to avoid distracting factors, i.e. loud music, friends, cellphones
- Try to feel as comfortable as you can while still being alert and focussed

When do you study?

- Different people work best at different times of the day. Find the best time that suits you!
- Study when you are at your most energetic and your concentration is at its best.

- Avoid last minute studies! Start studying from early on in the year so that you have plenty of time to get through all your study materials

What Equipment?

- For the best results, organise your study environment
- Make sure that you are prepared for your study session. Organise your materials before you sit down to study otherwise your studying will continuously be interrupted by looking for your calculator or pens etc. Obtain your pens, pencils, papers, calculators, water, notes, dictionaries, textbooks, books before sitting down to study

What to Study?

- Using your time management skills, organise what subjects you will study in advance
- Make sure that you have caught up any classes that you missed previously
- Past papers, tutorials, portfolio work, exercises, activities, worksheets, class notes, textbooks
- Your teacher will also let you know what is important
- If you're unsure of anything or don't understand, ask your teacher
- Review old assignments, tests and exams to test how much you know
- Make summaries of your notes in order to reduce the amount of work you need to study closer to exam time
- For maths, accounting and science subjects: practice as many examples as possible
- Ask your teacher if you are unsure of anything

How Long?

- Plan your time depending on the number of subjects that you have as well as how much work is involved in each
- Study for approx. 45 min and take a break for 10 minutes away from your studies (try not to study for long hours at a time)

Time Management Strategies

- Be flexible with your timetable
- Make sure there is a balance between relaxation time and study time
- Be realistic about how much time you have available and stick to your plans
- Look at your study habits: when do you study best?
- Set deadlines for all that you need to achieve

- Use “to do” lists and plan your week ahead. Set your priorities and get the most important ones done as soon in the day as you can. Evaluate your progress at the end of the day briefly – reward yourself when you get things done
- Organise your time and materials: don’t spend time on unnecessary activities
- Find something to enjoy in whatever you do – assists in motivating you and using time effectively
- When you catch yourself procrastinating, ask yourself “what am I avoiding?”
- Start with the most difficult parts of the study materials first.
- Do not panic. Concentrate on one thing at a time
- Ask for advice/assistance when needed
- Examine your old habits and search for ways to change or eliminate them
- Put up reminders at home or in your diary about your goals and things you have to do
- Hints in drawing up your timetable:
 - ✧ Break up the course material into different sections, e.g. English can be broken up into grammar and literature
 - ✧ Once all the subjects have been broken down into different sections, assess which of the material requires the most attention
 - ✧ Write down

Goal Setting for your Studies

- Set goals: short, medium and long term.
 - ✧ Short term: a few days to a couple of weeks
 - ✧ Medium term: 1 month to 6 months
 - ✧ Long term: 6 months and beyond
- Write out the steps you need to take in order to achieve each of these different types of goals
- Your goals should be challenging but manageable
- Ensure that they are realistic. Do not set yourself a goal that you know will be out of your reach.
- Put a timeline to each goal. Make sure that you set yourself a time limit in which to achieve each of your goals. This will help you achieve your goals.
- Your goals should be very specific rather than general. This will assist in knowing what you want and whether you have been able to achieve your goal

Looking after Yourself

It’s important to understand that looking after yourself while preparing for exams will enhance your productivity:

- Eat well (protein)

- Avoid large amounts of sugar, coffee, red bull
- Getting enough sleep
- Exercise regularly
- Take regular breaks
- Reducing stress levels

Study Groups

Think very carefully before joining a study group. Study groups can be very useful in reducing the workload as it will be shared by the members of the group. However, they can also lead to a lot of time-wasting if the group members are not serious about studying. Also, you need to ask yourself if you trust that the notes of your classmates will be good.

Before the Exam

- Leave home a little earlier than usual to make sure that you get to the exam on time. Your examiners will not make considerations over your late-coming even if it is due to transport problems
- Make sure you have all your stationary, i.e. spare pens (that write well), pencils (sharp or with enough lead if you use a clutch pencil), erasers, rulers, calculators (with batteries) and any other equipment you may need
- Take water to drink, if allowed
- Don't take notes or anything extra that you don't need for that day unless you have somewhere to leave them
- Stay positive. It is easier to remember when you are in a positive state of mind
- Avoid people who make you feel anxious about the exams
- Get enough sleep, this will help you remember more in the morning and also you won't be too tired to write your exam
- If you feel nervous, find a place to close your eyes for a minute and take a few deep breaths while telling yourself something positive like "everything will be okay" or "I know my work and I'm going to do well"

During the Exam

- Work out the amount of time you have to answer each question; for example, if the exam paper is out of 120 marks and you have 2 hours or 120 minutes to answer, that makes it 1 mark per minute. If there is an essay question of 30 marks, that gives you half an hour to answer it.
- Number each question and leave space between each answer so that you can add to it if you need to
- Read the questions slowly. Highlight key words and ensure that you answer all parts of the questions. You only get marks for material which answers the question asked
- Make sure that you have answered all the questions and not missed any pages

- Structure your essay answers, i.e. introduction, clear reasoning to your argument in the body of the essay and conclusion. Plan out your essay by jotting down a few keywords first to make sure you remember all you'd like to say and organise a good flow to your argument
- If you go blank, stop and take a deep breath. Try to write down a few keywords or brainstorm some ideas to stimulate your ideas and then try again. Otherwise, leave a space and come back to the question; go onto something you can do rather than struggling with the same problem.
- Check through your answers at the end and look out for any point that does not make sense or that needs further explanation. Go back to any question you left out and attempt to write down anything that may answer the question

- Good Luck! -

Call the BHP Billiton Career Centre on 011 639-8400 for more information on this and other topics.

Sci-Bono Discovery Centre, Corner of Miriam Makeba and President Streets, Newtown

Fax: 011 832 3360

Email: careers@sci-bono.co.za