

Examination Anxiety

Coping with revision and examinations

The phase leading up to examinations, when you trying to revise, as well as the period of examinations themselves, can be very stressful leading to acute anxiety and panic. Often talking to friends and making sure you have a good exercise routine can help considerably. Maintaining a reasonable social life is also important as it may help you to keep a sense of proportion.

For most students exams will bring at least a degree of anxiety. The following lists present some brief guidelines on actions you can take that may help to keep this anxiety under control, and prevent this anxiety spiralling into panic. These guidelines cover the revision process, the examination period and during the exams. Just Ask have also compiled an [exam survival guide](#) that you might like to take a look at.

The revision process

If you can please try to:

- **Plan** a revision timetable so that the bulk of your revision is completed before the exams start.
- Get an **overview** of each course and then select areas for more detailed revision.
- Decide **how much** work you personally need to do.
- Find out the **best time** of day for you and plan to do most work then.
- Take a ten minute **break** after every fifty minutes.
- Include a couple of **free evenings** each week in your timetable.
- Fix time to discuss revision topics with your friends.
- Work at an uncluttered desk, without too many distractions in the way of papers or posters.
- Tidy up after each revision session and put books away.
- **Eat** sensibly and regularly.
- Establish a **regular sleeping pattern**.

But try not to:

- Leave it all to the last minute.
- Revise each course in detail.
- Compare the amount of work you are doing with that of your friends.

- Push yourself to revise at a biological 'low' time.
- Work for more than an hour without a break.
- Work every evening.
- Work all day, every day.
- Do all your work on your own.
- Work surrounded with distractions and unread papers and books.
- Leave books and notes open as a distraction.
- Live on snack meals, chocolate, biscuits, etc.
- Miss out on sleep.

The examination period

If you can please try to:

- **Plan** a revision timetable for the **whole examination period**.
- See the course as a whole, but concentrate on **selected detail**.
- Work in a **calm** uncluttered atmosphere.
- **Concentrate** on your own priorities.
- Put each exam behind you as soon as it is **completed**.
- **Eat** sensibly and **regularly**.
- **Sleep regularly**.
- Put most of your **effort** into writing the exam papers.

But try not to:

- Do last minute revision.
- Revise the whole course.
- Flit from topic to topic.
- Compare your revision with your friends.
- Discuss an exam paper with friends after the exam is finished.
- Put off eating.
- Stay up all night.
- Get so tired and panicky that you don't do yourself justice in the exam.

During the exam

If you can please try to:

- Read the **whole paper** including the directions carefully before you start.
- Underline key words in the questions you select (**Describe, Evaluate, Compare, Account for**, etc.).
- **Plan** your answers.
- Answer the right number of questions and **allocate your time** evenly.
- **Get help** at once if you need it.

But try not to:

- Start at the first question you see without reading the directions.
- Write before thinking.
- Waste time including irrelevant material.
- Spend too much time on one question at the expense of another.
- Suffer in silence.

If you are finding it difficult to cope on your own ...

During the build up to exams when you are trying to revise, or during the examination period, please do NOT Suffer in silence and let your anxiety inhibit your performance

Get help with problems before they get too big: if talking to your friends doesn't help, then please contact one of the following:

- Your Tutor
- [Student Health Service](#)
- [Counselling Service](#)
- [Just Ask](#)