



ISAAC NEWTON
ACADEMY

Isaac Newton Academy

Planning your revision

Planning Your Revision – Top tips

Exams are not about remembering everything and favour those with a good memory. They are about showing what you have understood. But don't worry if you feel that you haven't understood *everything* from your course. There are bound to be areas of uncertainty. In the run up to exams it is better to consolidate what you have learned rather than worry about what you haven't learned.

Revision strategy



Given that exams are about what you *understand* not what you can *remember* your revision strategy should be based on pulling ideas together then making links and connections between them. Revision gives you the opportunity to round off a course and get your thoughts in order.

Allow enough time

There is no set formula for working out when to start revising. It depends on so many things. How much time you have? How much material you have to review and your own personal way of studying? If you are reading this, then you are probably thinking about revision and therefore now is probably a good time to start.

Key points for effective revision

- **Get hold of past exam papers.** This confirms the format of the paper and familiarises you with the language and style. Look to see if the exam paper has a structure which corresponds with your course. Is it divided into sections or themes? This information is important in guiding your revision strategy.



- **Ask your teachers for advice and guidance.** She or he may direct you to selected areas of your course. If you have a lot of course material you might use this advice along with evidence from past papers, to help you judge which sections of your course you are going to concentrate on.
- **Sort out your course materials.** Group or file it by section or sub-topic. Include notes, handouts, photocopies, essays, and coursework. Try and limit the number of sections or sub-topics to seven.

If handouts or notes seem to cross between sections you may find that you have to mark up documents by using highlighter pens, where each colour represents a section or sub-topic. Or you may have to photocopy the document so a copy can be included in each relevant section.

- **Draw up a timetable.** Identify how many hours you have for revision between now and the exam. Divide the hours by the number of sections or sub-topics. If each section or sub-topic on your course carries equal weighting in the exam then you need to allow equal time to revise each part.

- **Identify the central issues with each sub-topic.** You may have to ask yourself fundamental questions about the topics in order to find these. For example you may have to ask, what is this part of the course about? Or, what is the point of X or Y?
- **Make condensed notes on the central issues.** Work with each topic at a time to reduce the amount of information so they concentrate only on the main themes.
- **Summarise your notes onto a single sheet of paper or index card.** This creates a highly portable revision system which you can carry with you in the weeks and days before the exam. The purpose of making summaries is to extract the essence of a section or sub-topic and turn it into a manageable format. Your summaries could be bullet points, diagrams, flowcharts or other images depending on which format works best for your subject or personal preference.
- **Attempt as many past exam questions as possible.** Don't write out a full answer but spend 5-7 minutes jotting down the main points, just as you will in the real exam. Use your notes to check for anything you may have missed.
- **Work with other students where possible.** This is so you can share useful strategies and to give mutual support. Revise by testing or quizzing each other on key sections.

Practical Tips

Before the exam

- Mark the date, time and venue of the exam clearly on your calendar.
- Try and give yourself a break from revision the night before the exam. Relax, watch television or go for a walk.
- Get a good night's sleep

On the day of the exam

- Allow enough time to get to the exam.
- Think positively. This is a chance to show what you have learned.
- Have a clear strategy for tackling the paper.

In the exam room

- Scan the paper for the questions you have prepared for. Mark them.
- Tackle your best question first. This helps to get you started.
- Note the time you start writing by each question and stick to the time you have allocated beforehand for each answer.
- Make a brief plan for essay type answers before you begin.
- Tackle all the questions.
- Jot down quickly any new thoughts that occur to you while you are writing.
- Do your best to write legibly. Cross out any rough notes with a straight **line**.

What do the questions on the exam paper mean?

Look at the keywords below and then check your understanding using past papers.

Glossary of exam words

Word	Meaning
Compare	Are the things alike or are there important differences? Which do you think is best? Why?
Contrast	Look for differences
Criticise	Use the evidence to support your opinion on the value of merit of ideas, facts or views of others
Define	Give the meaning
Describe	Write in detail
Differentiate	Explain the difference
Discuss	Write about important aspects of the topic, are there two sides to the question? Consider the arguments for and against
Distinguish	Explain the difference
Evaluate	Judge the importance of success/failure
Evaluate (Maths)	Find the numerical answer to a problem
Explain	Make clear
Illustrate	Give examples which make the point clear
Interpret	Explain the meaning in your own words, for example you may have to interpret a graph
Justify	Give reasons to support and argument of action
Outline	Choose the most important aspects of a topic. Ignore the minor details
Relate	Show the connection between things
State	Write briefly the main point
Summarise	Bring together the main points