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Exam techniques

What is an exam?

EXAMS ARE DESIGNED TO TEST A STUDENT'S KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING UNDER TIMED CONDITIONS.

Exams differ in both their form and structure. Some require written answers, while others involve multiple-choice questions or practical tests. Exams usually last between 30 minutes and three hours.

What is in an exam?


How students are examined depends on the subject; how they have been taught, and the material they have been studying. It also depends on how old the students are and which stage they are at in their learning. Short-answer questions are more common in exams for younger students, while essay-based exams are used later in school life. Here are three main types:

 **Short question**

△ **Brief answers**
Short questions usually require brief answers to demonstrate a knowledge of facts, figures, key dates, or theories.

 **Multiple choice**

△ **Right choice**
A multiple-choice question asks students to choose the correct answer from a list of possibilities.

 **Essay**

△ **Write an essay**
Essay questions require a student to analyze something, rather than supply short, fact-based answers.

Be prepared

The key to success in any exam is to be prepared – knowing the type of questions that will be set by the examiners and learning the knowledge and skills needed to succeed. Revision is crucial so that information is committed successfully to memory and can be retrieved quickly in exam conditions.



In the winter, early in the academic year, take time to understand notes and learn efficiently.



In the spring, during the latter half of the academic year, think about the types of questions that could be asked in an exam.

▽ **Revise all year round**
It is a good idea for students to keep revising information in small portions as they progress through a course rather than all in one go at the end.

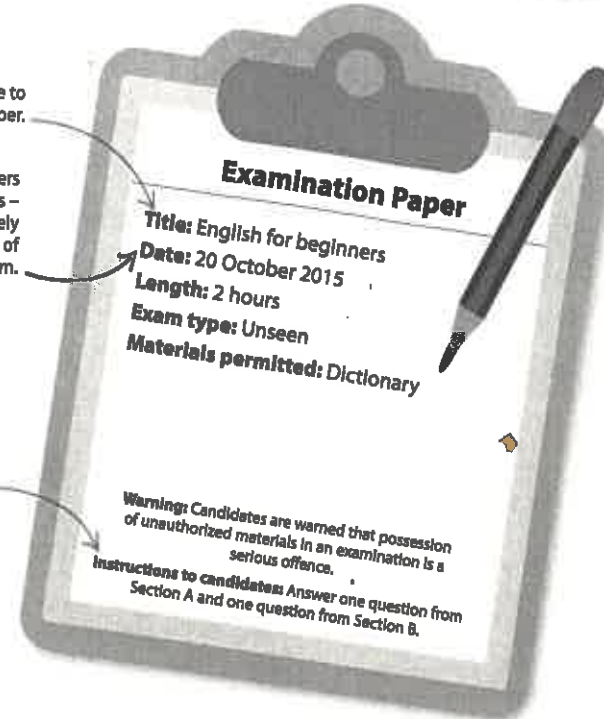
SEE ALSO	
< 18-19	Studying effectively
< 26-27	Enhancing memory skills
< 128-131	Learning theories
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Exams come in many different forms.

Past papers

Exam papers from previous years give a good idea of the structure of an exam for a particular subject, including how many questions have to be answered, whether the paper is divided into sections, if any questions are compulsory, how many points each answer is worth. Past papers also enable students to practise dividing up the time given to complete all parts of the exam, and help them to anticipate the type of questions that may be asked. Often, students will be able to identify a pattern of questioning that will help them to revise effectively.

▷ **Exam papers**
Study the past papers and consider whether the questions ask for facts, analysis, or both. Students should attempt to complete a past paper, following its instructions, to judge how well prepared they are.



Check the title and make sure to refer to the relevant exam paper.

Try to get papers from recent years – they are more likely to match the style of the upcoming exam.

Always check the instructions before starting an exam – they can change every year.

Warning: Candidates are warned that possession of unauthorized materials in an examination is a serious offence.
Instructions to candidates: Answer one question from Section A and one question from Section B.

REAL WORLD Time management



Students need to ensure they have enough time to revise materials in the weeks before the exams. It is a good idea to practice answering a past paper under timed conditions to check the information learned and the rate questions are answered, as well as giving an idea of what can be achieved within the set time.

Draw up a timetable

It is important to prepare for an exam as soon as possible. It can be helpful to draw up a revision timetable that includes the following – the dates and titles of exams; how much time might be needed to revise for each exam, breaking these time allocations down into the subjects covered on the course; the dates of any revision sessions offered by teachers; and a weekly plan of revision activities.

▽ **Follow the schedule**
Students should try and stick to their timetables, as it will keep them focused on what has to be done and when.

Start by writing down the date of the exam.

MONDAY					
TUESDAY					
WEDNESDAY					
THURSDAY					
FRIDAY					
SATURDAY					

Written exams

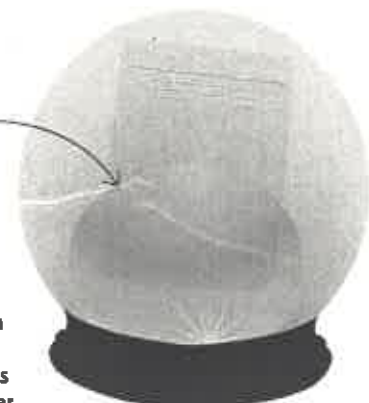
THE MOST COMMON FORM OF EXAM IS THE WRITTEN EXAM, WHICH IS EITHER HANDWRITTEN OR WORD-PROCESSED.

Written exams are either composed of short-answer questions, testing specific knowledge, or long, more traditional, essay-style questions that require more detailed and analytical answers.

Unseen papers

The most common form of written exam is the "unseen" paper, where the students do not know in advance what the questions will be. So, it is better to review all the material gathered and revise all the topics learned throughout the course to prepare for the exam. Like any exam, unseen papers test students only on the subject matter taught in the course they have been taking.

Students can review past papers to develop a strategy for studying.



▷ **Predicting the paper-** Papers from previous years can be invaluable, as they can help students to predict which types of questions may come this year.

Some students record their answers and learn them by listening to the recording and memorizing them whenever, and wherever, they can.

▷ **How to remember**
Students can try different methods of memorizing answers, such as listening to recorded essays, and then choose the method that works best for them.

HINTS AND TIPS

Remember...

Exam papers are not designed to trick students. Instead, they are an opportunity for the students to show the examiner what they have learned from the course. Students need to demonstrate that they understand key facts, ideas, and arguments, and the importance of events, theories, and/or processes.

All exams are timed events. So, it is important for students to not lose focus and to answer using only the most relevant points.

SEE ALSO

- 88-89 Improving writing skills
- 90-91 Breaking down the question
- 92-93 Answering the question
- 94-95 Building an argument
- 96-97 Checking work
- 148-149 Revision
- Hints and tips for exam day 184-187

Seen papers

Some written exams have "seen" papers. This means that the questions are published in advance to give students time to prepare. If that is the case, students should plan their answers to all the questions before the exam and learn those answers. This can be done by rereading the answers to memorize them, as students will not be able to take their written answers (or any notes) into the exam room.

Students might not believe it, but examiners want them to succeed.

Answer the question!

A common mistake among students is not answering the questions with the right information. Students should answer the question(s) set, and not the one(s) they would have liked it to have been. If they start writing everything related to a topic, they would most likely run out of time. Like a standard essay, question, keywords – such as "analyze", "contrast", "comment", or "why" – can be important, and will determine how the question should be answered.



Students should not rush their answers. They should use an appropriate amount of time to think and answer with the required points.



Students should keep rereading the question until they are sure that they understand what is being asked. They might find it helpful to imagine the examiner in front of them – what does he or she want in the answer?

◁ **How to write**
No question will ask students to write down everything they know about a topic. Students need to think about what the question is actually asking.

Make a plan

After reading the exam paper carefully, students should write a brief plan for the questions they will be attempting. These notes can be crossed out if necessary, or written in pencil to indicate that they are not part of the student's final answer. Some examiners will look at plans to see if the students have missed anything out in the actual answer, and may award marks accordingly.

Key ideas and events should be highlighted.

It may be useful to include keywords in the plan.

Plan: The American Civil War

Abraham Lincoln was [redacted] in [redacted]. This divided the country on the [redacted] of [redacted]. Lincoln was elected by a majority of votes in the Northern States, many of which were abolitionist.

The Southern states were afraid that Lincoln would try to abolish slavery in the US and seceded. The [redacted] began.

The [redacted] was issued in 1863. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in 1865.

▷ **Structure of the plan**
A plan of how to answer the question could be written in the form of sentences, detailing the introduction, analysis, and conclusion, or it could simply be a series of bullet points.

How to write an essay answer

While writing an essay-style answer, it is a good idea to include a brief introduction before moving on to the analytical content, and to end with a conclusion. In other words, students should follow the standard essay structure and show that they understand what the question is asking. They should also try to ensure that the text "flows" – one point logically following on from the next. Students should not ramble. The time limit of an exam makes it important to get to the point of the question as quickly and as clearly as possible.

Write clearly

Written work should be legible. It is easier for the examiner to grade the work if it is readable. It is also important to use the correct spelling and grammar, so students should try to proofread what they have written towards the end of the exam.

Start small

The introduction to the essay answer need only be a brief one. This small piece of text is very important, as it is a means of telling the examiner about the approach the student is going to take while answering the question.

What impact did the two world wars of the Twentieth Century have on global politics?

The First and Second World Wars would have a profound effect on global politics. These two catastrophic wars would result in tens of millions being killed, a number of empires collapsing, and two new superpowers emerging.

... The origins of the First World War can be traced back to the development of internal instability on the European continent, in particular the rise of Germany and the "Eastern Question"... The war would leave European states economically ruined and with weak political structures, a situation made worse by the economic downturn known as the Great Depression...

... The world at the end of 1945 was unrecognizable to that of 45 years earlier. The Austro-Hungarian, Turkish, and Russian empires had collapsed. China slid into civil war, to emerge as a communist country in 1949. Most dramatic was the decline of Europe as the pre-eminent continent in the world. The rest of the 20th Century would be shaped by two new superpowers challenging each other, the USA and the USSR, as the Cold War began.

In the middle

Having set the scene with an apt introduction, the crucial part of the essay is the analysis in the middle. This is where the student needs to demonstrate a real understanding of the subject matter, perhaps by contrasting opposing ideas or theories.

Quality is far more important than quantity. What you write is more likely to get you marks than how much you write.

Wrap it up

Essay answers should always include a conclusion. It does not have to be long, must not include anything new, and needs to summarize the student's arguments clearly. A good conclusion can make all the difference for a good result.

Short-answer questions

Short-answer questions are usually designed to examine a student's knowledge of key terms and phrases, names, dates, facts, theories, concepts, and formulas. They generally require less analysis and are more concise than essay-style answers. Students should not waste time by giving unnecessary information, and try to move on quickly to the next question.

Structure
A short-answer question does not ask for a long explanation, but the answer should still be presented in a suitable structure. Below is an example of how a short answer could be written.

Account for the outbreak of the Cold War

At the beginning of the Second World War, Europe was at the centre of world affairs. By the end, it had been replaced by two new global superpowers: the USA and the Soviet Union.

Though some argue the roots of the Cold War stretch back to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and the seizure of power by communists opposed to the values of the West, key post-war events also shaped the relationship that led some to blame the USA.

For Russia, these events include: the setting up of buffer states by Stalin and the creation of the Warsaw Pact. For America, events include: the Truman Doctrine of containment and the Marshall Plan of 1947 offering economic aid to Europe, and the creation of NATO in 1949.

The beginning of the answer gives the student's interpretation of the question.

Give examples to back up one argument.

The key is to be brief and to the point. It is not necessary to rewrite the question.

Students should demonstrate that they are aware of differing arguments.

Draw attention to examples that support an opposing argument.

HINTS AND TIPS

Answering a question

Time is always important in an exam, so students should be specific while writing an answer and not give more information than what is asked for in each question.

The number of words an answer should have will depend very much on what a student can write in the time allotted for the exam and how many marks are awarded for the question.

Everyone writes at a different pace. Students who write slowly should try to cover more points in fewer words.

Short-answer questions do not normally require quotes, but if students think it is appropriate to include some, they should keep the quotes short and, if possible, provide a reference for them.

If allowed, when running out of time, write in bullet points – some examiners accept them.

Multiple choice

A COMMON ALTERNATIVE TO WRITTEN EXAMS, WHETHER ESSAY OR SHORT-ANSWER, IS THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE EXAM.

These exams are designed to test a student's knowledge by providing a series of possible answers to a question, from which the student must select the correct answer(s).

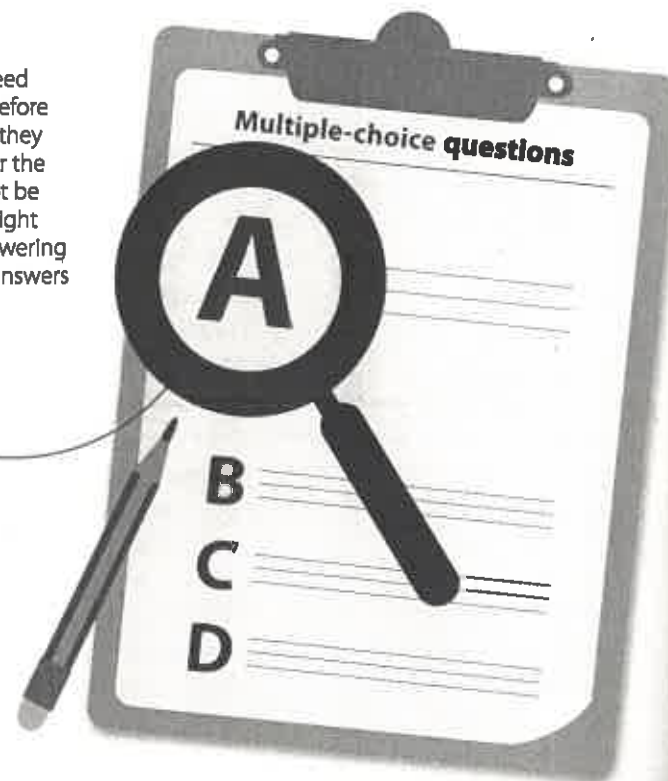
How to succeed

As in any exam, students should read the instructions so that they know how many questions they need to answer. They need to make sure they understand what each question is asking before answering it. Students could also try to answer the questions they know the correct answers for first, and then go back to answer the more difficult questions. They should check that marks will not be deducted for a wrong answer. If marks may be deducted, it might be wiser to leave the answer blank rather than potentially answering the question incorrectly. Students should always check their answers once they have completed the exam.

Students should ensure that their answers are clearly marked (as many multiple choice papers are now scanned).

▷ **Not an easy choice!** Many people think that multiple-choice exams are an easy way for students to demonstrate their knowledge. However, a lot of revision is required to be sure of success.

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HINTS AND TIPS

What would Sherlock Holmes do?

With multiple-choice questions, students sometimes have to think like a detective, using the process of elimination. If they are not sure of the correct answer, they should try to rule out the answers that they know to be wrong. What is left just might be the right answer!

If students are still unsure of an answer, they can make a calculated guess – they could be right. The skill is to be able to choose the most correct answer(s). After all, if they do not answer a question, they will not get a mark, so they have nothing to lose by answering. Beware, though, if marks are deducted for wrong answers – check if this is the case before guessing.

With multiple choice, sometimes all the answers can be correct. If so, "All of the above" is the option to choose.

Focus on the detail

Multiple-choice tests tend to focus on detail rather than analysis, so it is important for students to begin their revision early – perhaps learning a few answers each day to build up a bank of information relevant to the exam. Learning key points or facts from the outset is more likely to make them stick in the mind. It is not a good idea to leave any kind of revision to the last minute.

▽ The focus of multiple-choice questions

The type of answers that students are required to give will very much depend on the subject that they are being tested on. Questions on history might be interested in dates or events, while those on science might be focused on theories or terminology.

Names

Terminology

Theories and concepts

Formulas

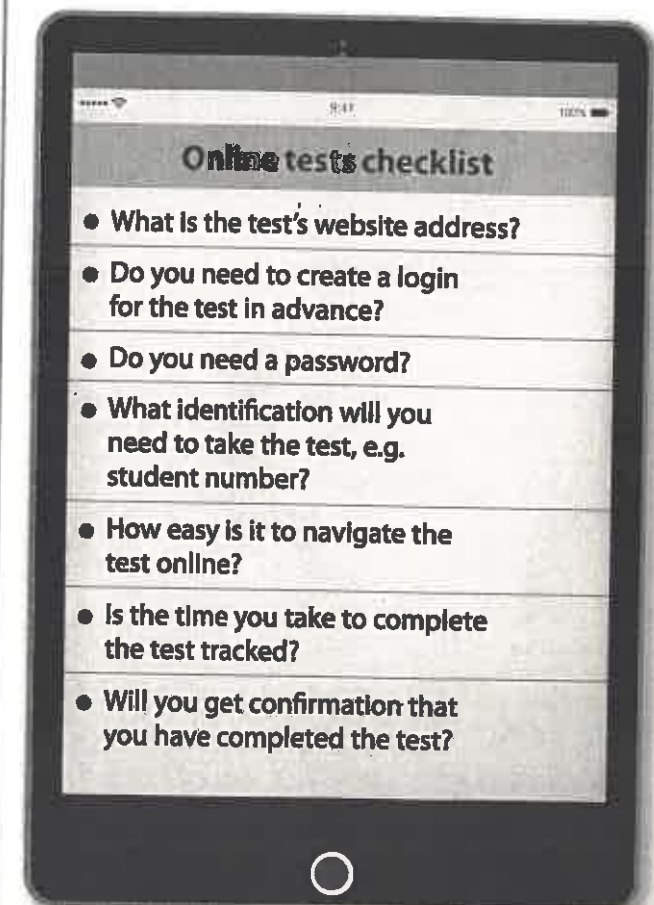
Dates

Events

Online tests

Thanks to recent developments in technology, online tests are becoming more popular, for exams at school and even for job applications. The type of online test depends on the subject that students are taking, so it is important to know in advance how to take the test. If possible, students should practise beforehand. If they are allowed to take the test from home, they should make sure their computer is technologically capable and has the required browser and connection speed.

A number of questions have to be answered before students can take the test.



△ Online checklist

Some tests will not allow students to change answers, or will only allow them to attempt the test once. Therefore, students should be absolutely sure about what they are expected to do.

Oral exams

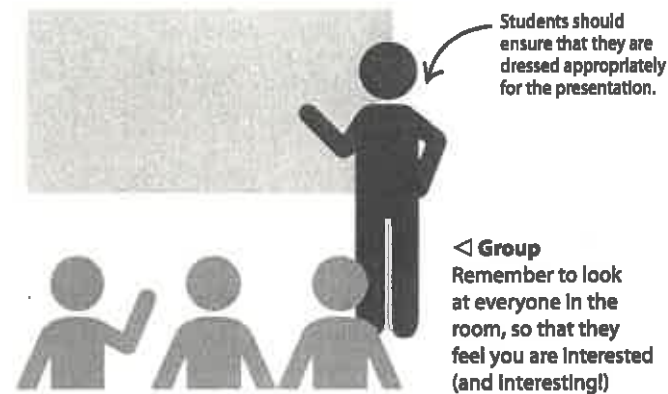
AS WELL AS WRITTEN EXAMS, STUDENTS MAY ALSO HAVE TO TAKE ORAL EXAMS TO TEST WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED.

These exams are usually designed to test learners' verbal communication and presentation skills, along with their knowledge and understanding of a subject.

What will be involved?

In an oral exam, a student normally responds to a question, which the examiner listens to and then grades. This can take place on an individual basis, or it might be with, or in front of, other students. Alternatively, a student might have to give a presentation, which would be graded in a slightly different way. It is important for students to find out from a tutor or exam board, in advance, what an oral test will involve. They will then be able to practise answering the type of questions that might be asked.

SEE ALSO	
< 68-69	Active listening skills
< 98-99	Enhancing presentation skills
< 100-101	Open practising
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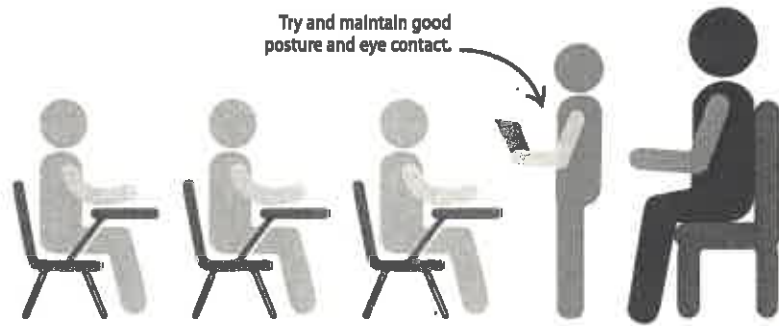


To make it easier, students should think of the exam or presentation as a conversation with someone they know.



△ One on one
It is important for students to be attentive, and not to be distracted or fidgety while speaking.

Try and maintain good posture and eye contact.



△ Presentation
Students can use notes, if necessary, while giving the presentation, but they should try not to read directly from them.

HINTS AND TIPS

Success in an oral exam

Before taking an oral exam, students should revise the subject thoroughly. This will make them more confident in their understanding of the topics they may be tested on.

When taking the exam, students should try not to mumble or talk in a monotonous voice. If they intend to use an overhead projector or computer, they should make sure the equipment is working before they begin the exam.

Remember to **thank the examiner at the end of the exam.**

How to listen

In an oral exam, students must remember that, although they are being examined on what they have said, they are also being tested on what they have heard. It is important for students to listen carefully to each question, so that they understand what the examiner is asking. If unsure, they should not be afraid to ask for it to be repeated or rephrased, rather than guess the meaning of the question and, as a result, give an incorrect answer. Be an intelligent listener as well as an intelligent speaker.

▽ Testing language
Oral examinations are most commonly used in language courses to test a student's verbal skills.



How to answer

Students should answer questions logically, so that they can develop a clear train of thought. Even if they are not sure of the answer, they should give it their best shot. It is important to speak calmly and clearly, so that the examiner can understand what the student is saying. Being positive, and answering more with a "yes" than a "no", can help to keep everyone in an upbeat frame of mind. Do not be afraid of silences. Students should not rush to answer but pause and take time to think about the question carefully. Then, they can offer the best answer possible. As with any other exam, they should keep an eye on the time in order to answer all of the questions.

▽ Pause and think
During an oral exam, students may find it useful to pause, take a sip of water, and gather their thoughts. These four questions might help the student to focus during this short break.



Other exams

OTHER COMMON EXAM FORMATS INCLUDE THE "OPEN BOOK" EXAM, "TRUE OR FALSE", AND "FILL IN THE BLANK" TESTS.

There are many exams that do not require students to write much, while some require them to work with diagrams or formulas. The important thing is to understand what the question is asking.

Searching for the truth

When answering "True or false" questions, there are a number of clues that students should pay attention to. Usually, the question will be in the form of a statement. There will not necessarily be just the one "true" or "false" fact in the statement. There may be a combination of both correct and incorrect facts in any one question, so students need to be careful when choosing an answer. Understanding how the question is phrased can make all the difference. Here are four examples of "True or false" questions:

This question is in the form of a statement.

Albert Einstein formulated his General Theory of Relativity in the 18th Century.

False. Though Einstein did formulate a General Theory of Relativity, he did this in the 20th Century.

The answer is "False" – the first part of the statement is true but the date is incorrect.

Pay attention to facts, such as dates.

Check facts
For a statement to be true, each part of it must be 100 per cent true. Just one word can make a difference in the answer, so it is important to read the text carefully.

All types of aeroplane have some type of engine.

True. "Some" allows the answer to be general, allowing for a wider variety of engines (e.g. oil-based or solar).

The clue is in the word "some".

Qualifying words
Some questions may have "qualifying" words, such as "some", "often", "usually", "ordinarily", or "few". These allow for exceptions.

Is it the case that "all types" have an "engine"?

SEE ALSO

- 88-89 Improving writing skills
- 90-91 Breaking down the question
- 92-93 Answering the question
- 94-95 Building an argument
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HINTS AND TIPS

When to doubt

In "True or false" exams, if students do not know an answer or are unsure, they can make an educated guess. The answer is either true or false, so students have a 50 per cent chance of being correct and gaining some marks. If they do not answer a question at all, there is no chance of scoring marks on it.

All men have blue eyes.

False. This is clearly not true.

Taking time to think, it becomes obvious that there are exceptions and that the word "all" is what makes the statement false.

Absolute words
Some questions may use "absolute" words, such as "no", "never", "always", "entirely", "all", or "only". These suggest there are no exceptions to the facts stated in the question.

Students should think: do "all" men have blue eyes?

It is not true that London is not the capital city of England.

True. It is true that London is the capital city of England.

This is an example of a statement with a double negative.

After removing both instances of the word "not", it becomes clear that the statement is true.

Beware of negatives!
The double negative is a common way of clouding the facts in a question. Read carefully to check if the statement is, in fact, positive.

A negative statement may be true or false.

"Fill in the blanks" tests

In this type of exam, students are expected to fill in the missing word(s), fact(s), or number(s), usually as part of a sentence, theory, or mathematical problem. They normally involve short-answer questions. Students should first attempt the questions they are confident they know the answers to, and then go back through the paper to attempt the tougher questions.

1. Einstein's theory of Special Relativity can be shown as $E = \underline{\quad} c^2$.

$E = mc^2$

2. The capital city of China is Beijing.

3. $26 \times \underline{\quad} = 104$.

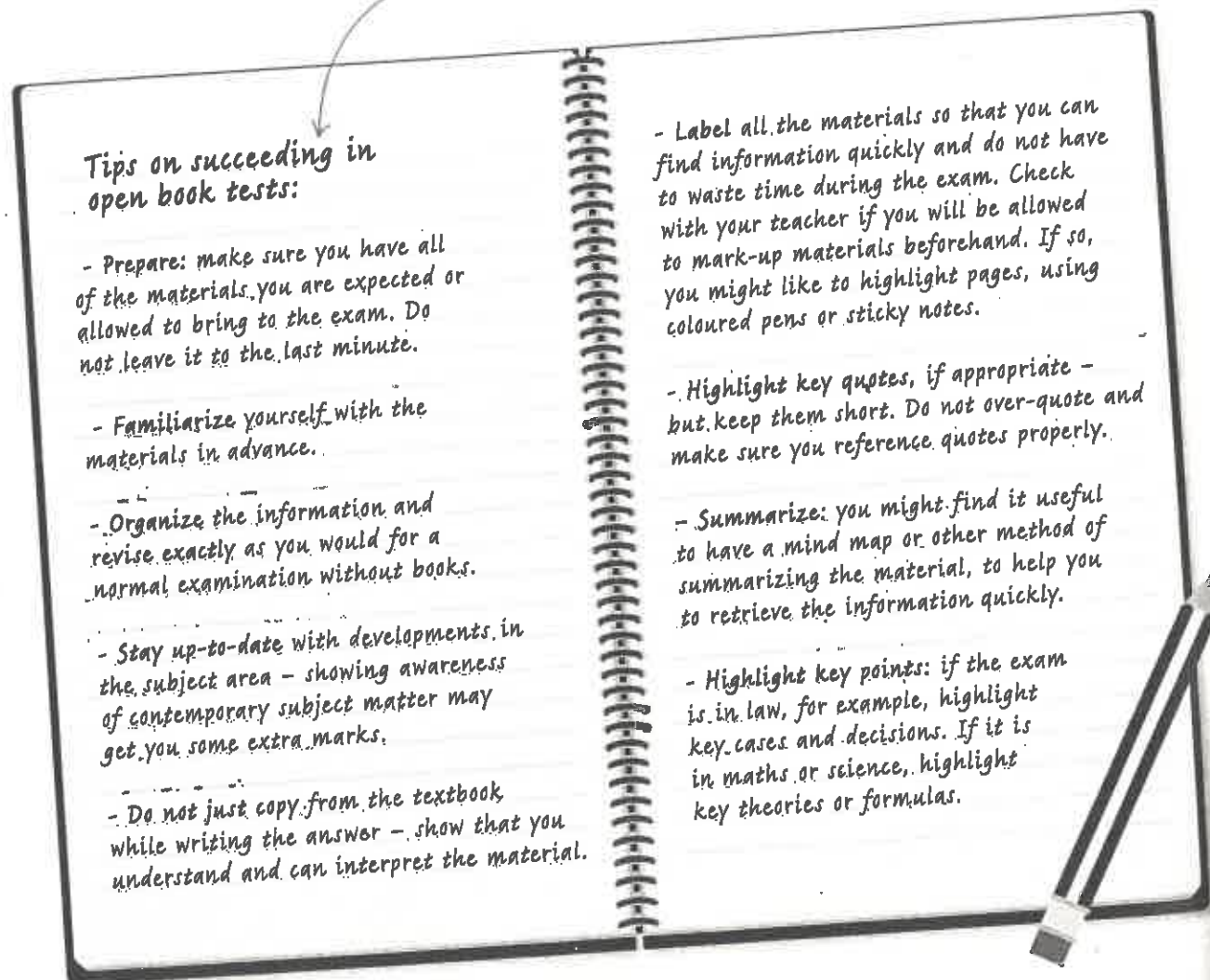
$26 \times 4 = 104$

Examples of blank tests
A "fill in the blanks" test might relate specifically to one subject area – such as mathematics, geography, history, science, or English – or it might be based on more general knowledge. Here are three examples, with the statements on the left and the answers for the blanks on the right.

» Open book exams

In an open book exam, students are allowed to take in items such as books, documents, handouts, or journal articles. The materials allowed depend on the type of open book exam. For example, in a law exam, students are often allowed to bring in resources detailing particular legal cases. Such exams are not designed to test the ability of students to memorize information, but rather their ability to find and retrieve information from the provided materials, and to analyze and present that information in a clear and coherent manner.

Students can customize this list according to their personal experience.



Tips on succeeding in open book tests:

- Prepare: make sure you have all of the materials you are expected or allowed to bring to the exam. Do not leave it to the last minute.
- Familiarize yourself with the materials in advance.
- Organize the information and revise exactly as you would for a normal examination without books.
- Stay up-to-date with developments in the subject area - showing awareness of contemporary subject matter may get you some extra marks.
- Do not just copy from the textbook while writing the answer - show that you understand and can interpret the material.

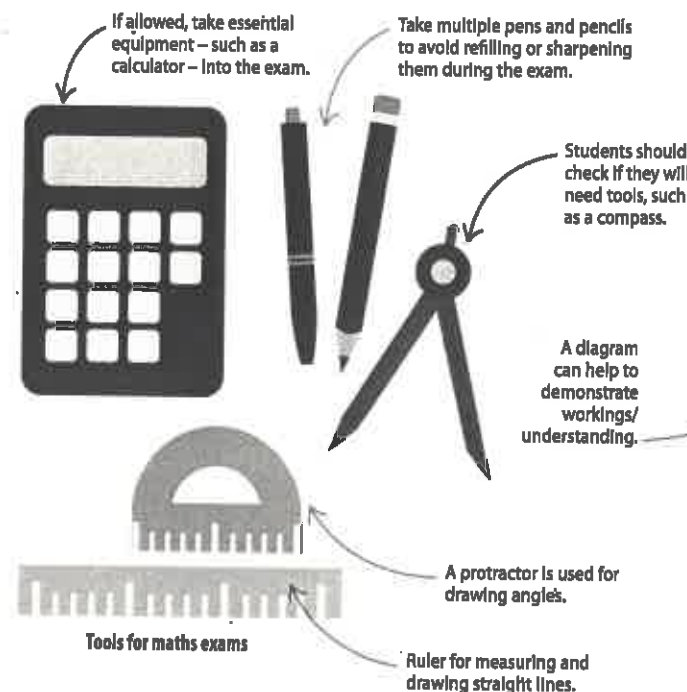
- Label all the materials so that you can find information quickly and do not have to waste time during the exam. Check with your teacher if you will be allowed to mark-up materials beforehand. If so, you might like to highlight pages, using coloured pens or sticky notes.
- Highlight key quotes, if appropriate - but keep them short. Do not over-quote and make sure you reference quotes properly.
- Summarize: you might find it useful to have a mind map or other method of summarizing the material, to help you to retrieve the information quickly.
- Highlight key points: if the exam is in law, for example, highlight key cases and decisions. If it is in maths or science, highlight key theories or formulas.

△ Plan carefully
In an open book exam, taking in the allowed resource materials can be really helpful if students plan ahead. Following these tips will help them to get ready for the exam.

It is important to prepare just as thoroughly for an open book exam as for a closed book exam.

Formulas or diagrams

Maths and science tests will often require formulas. If they do, students must remember to write them down, to show the examiner that they know the required formula. Also, they should show the method of working in as much detail as appropriate. If relevant, it is good practice to draw any illustrations or diagrams that demonstrate further knowledge. Students should draw these in pencil, in case they have to amend them - they can always go over them in pen, if needed. The diagrams or drawings should not be too small, and should always have a label.



If allowed, take essential equipment - such as a calculator - into the exam.

Take multiple pens and pencils to avoid refilling or sharpening them during the exam.

Students should check if they will need tools, such as a compass.

A diagram can help to demonstrate workings/understanding.

A protractor is used for drawing angles.

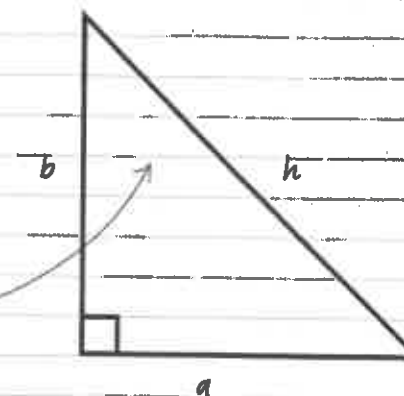
Ruler for measuring and drawing straight lines.

Tools for maths exams

Pythagoras Theorem

For any right-angled triangle with sides a and b and hypotenuse h , the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.

$$a^2 + b^2 = h^2$$



△ Diagrams
Students need to make sure that their diagrams are clear and explain the point they are trying to get across to the examiner in an appropriate way. Use tools, if allowed, such as those shown on the left.

REAL WORLD

Practicals

Some science tests will involve a practical examination. Students should make sure that they know which items of equipment they will be using and which materials, if any, they will need to bring to the exam. If the science practical involves moving between work stations or tables, to carry out specific tasks, students must remember to keep an eye on the clock, as there may be strict time limits for each activity. However, students must remain methodical and not rush through the steps.



Hints and tips for exam day

STUDENTS CAN DO A NUMBER OF THINGS TO INCREASE THEIR CHANCES OF SUCCESS ON EXAM DAY.

The most important thing to do is to turn up on time. However, there are also many ways in which students can improve their focus and reduce any anxieties that they may have.

Where and when?

In the days before the exam, students should spend time rereading their notes, looking at past papers, practising their answers, and thinking about the types of questions that might come up. They can then do some simple things to make sure the exam goes smoothly on the day. Students can start by drawing up a checklist of the basic information that they will need to know to sit the exam.

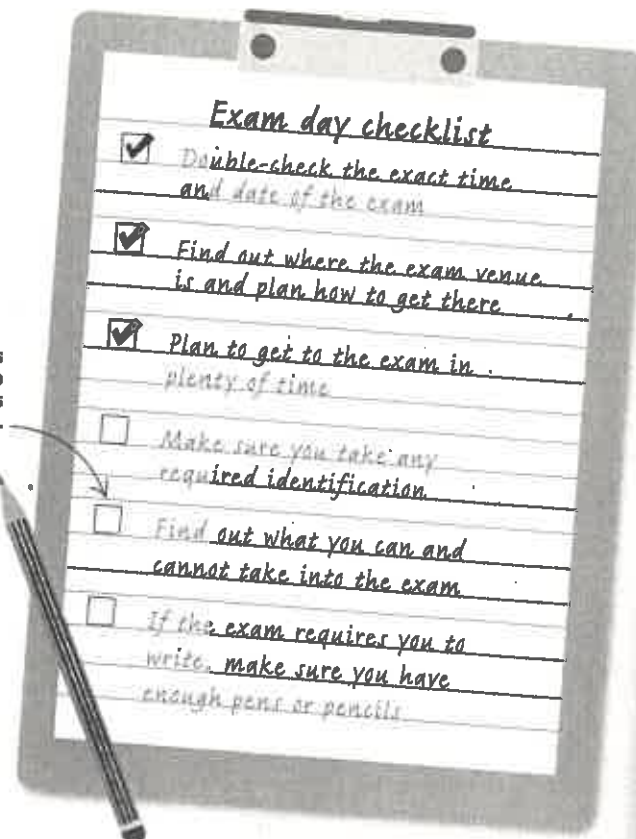
REAL WORLD

Exercise

An active body can help to maintain an active mind. Studies have shown that 20 minutes of exercise before an exam (a brisk walk, or even a run, cycle ride, or table-tennis) can help the brain to stay in top working order. Exercise gets blood pumping around the body and boosts brain power for at least two hours. Students should find an exercise that suits them best – and do it regularly.



SEE ALSO
 (32-33) Handling the pressure
 (34-35) Keeping well
 Healthy studying 200-203



Some exams allow students to use calculators or dictionaries.

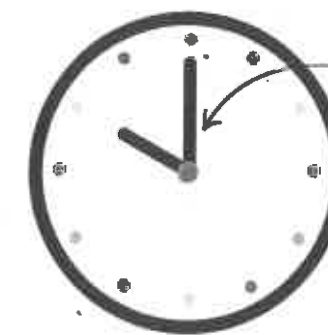
Exercise can be good for reducing stress levels.

△ Be prepared

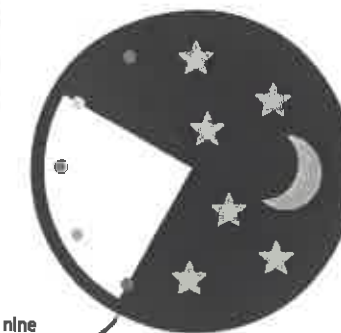
Exams run to strict timetables. Being late may mean that students might not be allowed in – and even if they are, a loss of time could mean a loss of marks. Students can use the checklist above to make sure they are better prepared.

Sleep

It is important to get a good night's sleep. Staying up all night to do some last-minute revision does not work, as students will be too tired in the exam room to perform successfully. The night before an exam, students should make sure they find time to relax and go to bed at a sensible hour. Being tired can often lead to simple mistakes, and can even make students late for an exam.



Go to sleep by 10pm.



Get up after nine hours of sleep.

▷ Sleeping well

A good night's sleep can make all the difference to a student's performance. Students should try and get at least nine hours of sleep every night.



Evidence suggests that keeping hydrated improves performance.

◁ Drink

Due to being nervous, many people sweat during an exam, which means they may become dehydrated. Students should remember to take water with them into an exam, so that they do not become dehydrated.

Eat well before the exam

To get through an exam with an active mind, students need to eat the right type of food. They should stay away from sugary foods, such as chocolate and high-energy drinks. Such foods might give them some extra energy for an hour or so, but after that their effects can wear off quite quickly – so students might begin to feel tired. It is better to eat foods that release energy slowly, such as pasta, eggs, fish, and bananas.

The first minutes

When students turn over the exam paper, they should take a deep breath and collect their thoughts. They should try to keep positive and remember that examiners do not want to fail them. Rather, the exam is an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they have learned.

▷ Simple dos and don'ts

The points in this list will help learners to cope with the stressful first minutes of the exam, when they start to look at an exam paper.

Do's	Don'ts
Read the entire exam paper and make sure you follow the instructions carefully.	Do not read an exam paper until instructed to do so by the invigilator.
Look at all of the questions and work out which ones you are going to answer.	Do not spend too much time on questions you know very little about or cannot answer.
Plan your time and how long you may take to answer each question.	Do not allow yourself to get bogged down with one question.
Show your 'workings'. Show the steps you have taken.	Do not answer more questions than are asked.
Think carefully and tackle the questions you think you can answer best.	Do not rush your answer. Think about what the question is asking you.
Write out a plan in the student book.	Do not panic. Try and relax a little.

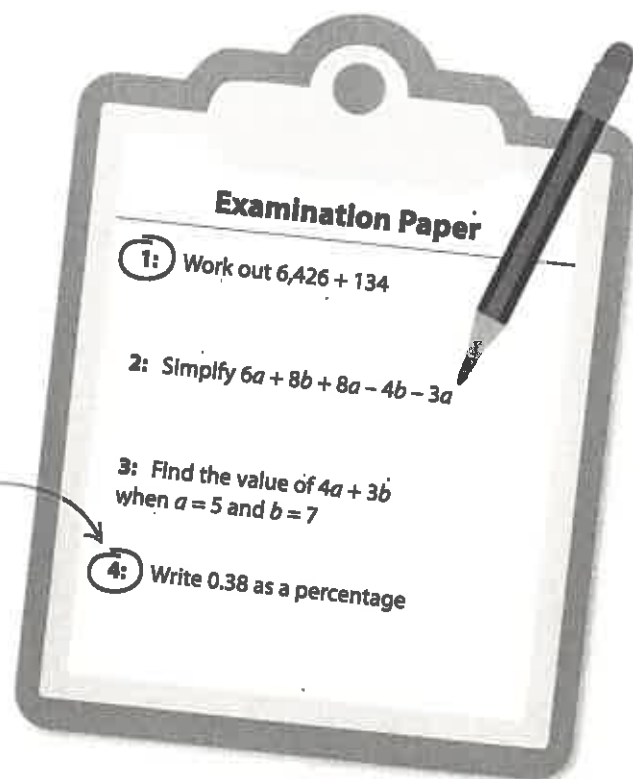


» **Make it easy for yourself**

Unless the exam tells students otherwise, they should attempt the easiest questions first. This can help, because those questions are probably going to take up less time, which might put students ahead of schedule in their timetable plan for the exam, freeing up more time for the harder questions. It will also boost their confidence, because students will have successfully completed some questions, which might help to reduce any concerns that they might have about the other questions left to be answered.

Answer the easiest questions first, not the hardest.

Students should identify the easiest questions and answer those first.



▷ **Look at the marking scheme** If some questions carry more marks, students should spend more time on those than on the questions that carry fewer marks.

Look at the marking scheme

Many exams now have visible marking schemes. So, if there are five marks available for a question, it probably means that there are five key points that the examiner is looking for. If a question is worth 30 marks, the examiner is expecting students to write considerably more than they would for a five-mark question. Evidence also suggests that the maximum marks are usually picked up at the beginning of an answer, so it is more important to start than to finish!

Question	Marks	Time required
Section A	25	30 mins
Section B	25	30 mins
Section C	50	60 mins
Total	100	120 mins

HINTS FOR EXAM

Show the steps

If the paper is for mathematics or science, it can be important to show the steps taken to reach the answer. Even if the final answer is incorrect, students might be awarded marks for demonstrating that they understand the relevant methods.

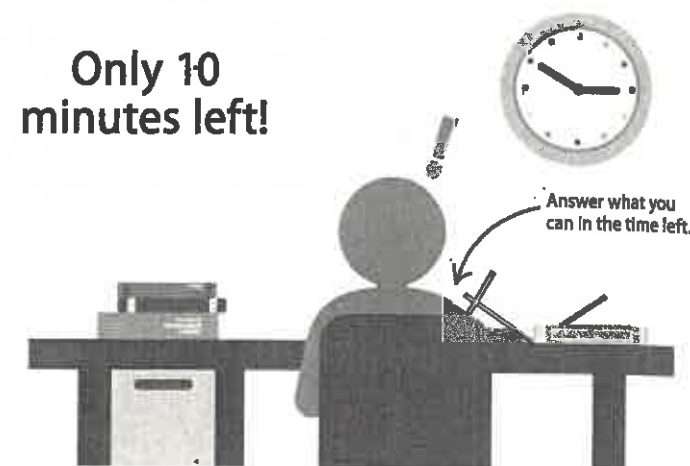
◁ **Work out time for each question** Students normally lose most marks by not following instructions, falling to answer the question, or running out of time. Here (left), half the marks, and half the total time, should be allocated to section C.

Running out of time

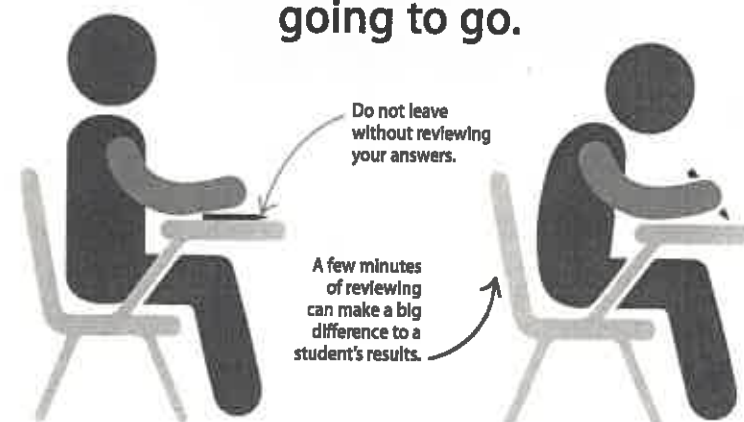
If students begin to run out of time, they should concentrate on the questions that they can score the most marks on. If they have two questions left, but time to answer only one of them fully, it is a good idea to allocate half the time left to each question, and to use bullet points to summarize their main ideas (if bullet points are accepted by the examiner). This is likely to maximize the marks that can be achieved in the time remaining.

▷ **Time management** Keep an eye on the clock and work out how much time is left for attempting the remaining questions.

Only 10 minutes left!



I have finished. I am going to go.



Try not to leave early Students should not leave immediately if they finish an exam early. They should use the remaining time to reread what they have written. This might give them a chance to improve their answers further, adding in additional points, looking for mistakes, or even answering a question that they only half-answered, because they initially found it problematic.

I have finished. I will use the remaining time to check the work.

Be positive

Feeling nervous in an exam is quite normal. It does not imply that students are not doing well. It simply means that they feel like everyone else taking the exam is feeling. Try to be positive and stay focused. Each time students attempt an exam, they learn from the experience.

I have done my best. I will learn from the results.

▷ **Relax** Once they finish the exam, students should take a moment to relax – they will have earned it!



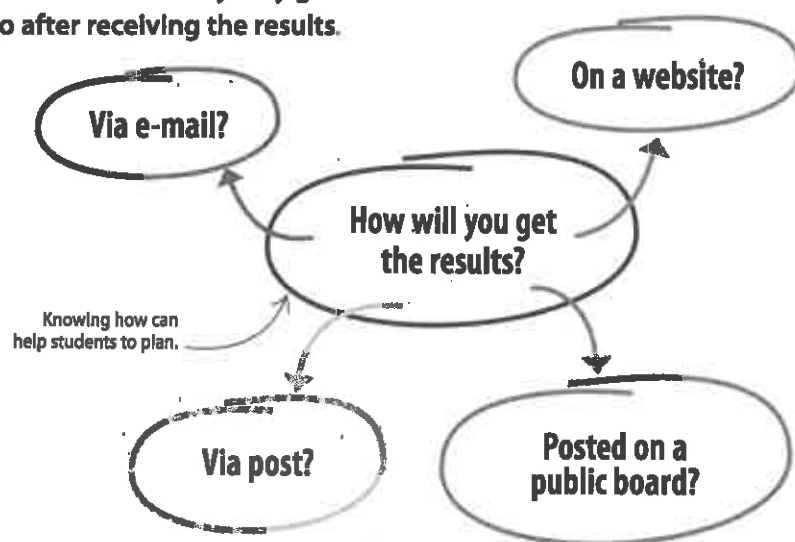
Results day

ALL THE PREPARATION AND HARD WORK THAT STUDENTS PUT INTO A TEST IS REWARDED ON RESULTS DAY.

The build up to results day can be both exciting and stressful. Students can prepare themselves for whatever results they may get by staying aware of what they need to do after receiving the results.

How will you get your results?

Students are always eager to know how well they have done in their exams. It is important to find out in advance how the results will be shared – different institutions publish their results in different ways. Some will do so electronically, others in paper form. Students should plan accordingly to avoid any unnecessary delay in getting to know their results.



▷ Where to look?

Students should be aware of how they can access their results. For instance, if the results will be published online, students should know which website to go to, and if they need a username and password to access it.

When will you get your results?

It is important to know when the results will be available. An employer or a university may request the result details by a certain date. Family and friends will also want to know and share in the students' success.



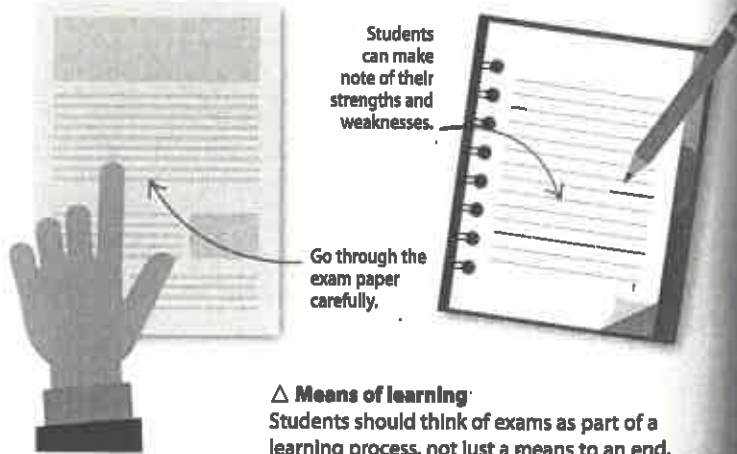
Students should also make a note of the time when the results will be published.

△ Mark the date

Students should make a note of the results date in their planner or calendar. They should confirm that they have the up-to-date details – sometimes the dates change.

Reflect

When students have their marks, they should look back at their exam paper and analyze where they did well and where they could have done better. Many tutors will be happy to discuss the answers with students. This practice can help students to prepare themselves better for their next set of exams.



SEE ALSO

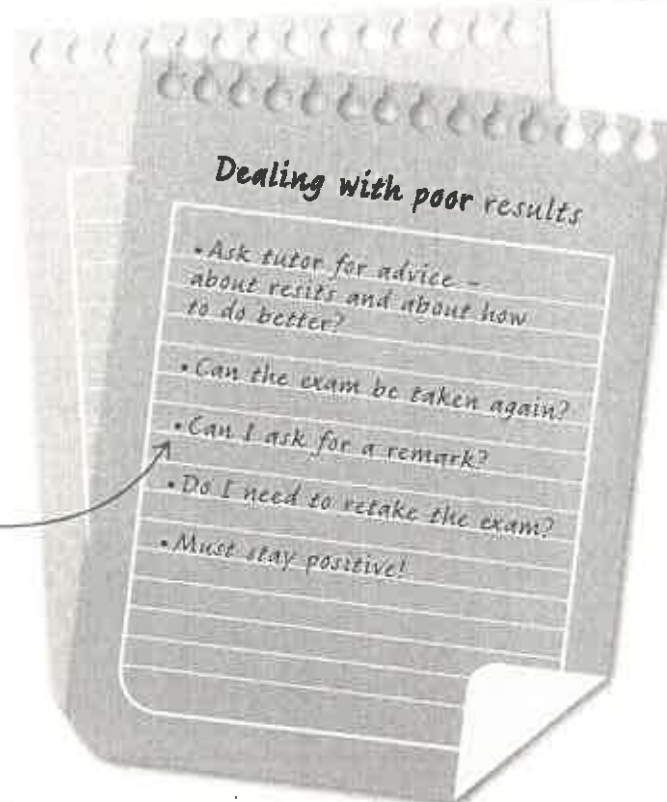
- ◀ 24-25 Getting motivated
- ◀ 52-53 Personal development planning
- ◀ 184-187 Hints and tips for exam day

Know when to seek help **210-211**

Learn and improve

Students should not get too disappointed if they do not get the results they hoped for. They should stay positive and try to find out what went wrong – and learn from the experience. If required, there are often many options they can pursue to improve the grade. Students should find out if they can retake the exam – and, if so, how and when? The tutors, as well as the exam board, will usually be able to offer advice on how to do this. Students should find out if they need to retake all of the exam or only a part of it. Some boards may ask for an additional fee for retaking an exam.

Students should make a list of what they need to know in advance about potentially retaking an exam.



▷ Ask for advice

Students can find out if there is advice on how to resit the paper. There may be some revision classes, for example, that they can attend instead of retaking the entire course.

Certificates

Students usually receive a certificate along with their results. They must be kept in a safe place, as it can be expensive to replace them, or an exam board may not exist in future years. An employer or a university might want to see students' qualifications, even years after the exams. If a certificate is not issued, students should make sure to keep a record – as official as possible – of their achievements.

Certificates are an official record of students' achievements, so they should be stored safely.



▷ An official record

Certificates are usually printed and will state the level of the qualification, the subjects taken, and the grades achieved by the student.

HINTS AND TIPS

Who do you need to tell?

Often, exam results can determine a number of things for students: a seat at a particular school, college, or university; or securing a job. So, it is important for students to know in advance who they need to share the results with and how. For example, they may need to contact an educational department, institution, or employer by phone or e-mail.

Remember: in an exam you can only do the best you can. So celebrate that!