

## From the start of the session

It's never too early to start! Here are some tips that will help you avoid last minute panic:

### Plan your study time

Add regular revision times to your session planner (see [A step-by-step guide to planning for your assignments Quick Guide](#)), particularly as you get close to the exam date. Short, regular study sessions over a long period of time are more effective than trying to cram in one or two long sessions just before the exam.

### Read the unit outline and objectives at the beginning of the study session

This will help you organise your information into topics and subtopics and set learning goals. Throughout the session, you might like to tick off what you have already covered in your assignments, readings and activities. Stay on track throughout the whole session and it will be much easier to revise your notes before the exam.

### Find a way to make notes that works for you

Organise your notes in a meaningful way that will make it easy for you to revise and remember them. For more information and to see examples of note-taking techniques, go to [Taking notes Quick Guide](#).

### Keep up with the set readings and highlight, bookmark or take notes as you read

Always keep in mind where these readings fit in with the unit objectives. This will help you to revise and also find information and resources to use in your assignments.

### Take brief notes before, during and after each lecture

Schedule in some time to prepare for your lecture and to revise and, if necessary, re-write your lecture notes after the lecture. For tips on how to do this go to [Getting the most out of lectures Quick Guide](#).

### Complete all the activities you are asked to do

This can be excellent exam practice as these types of questions and activities are often very similar to the types of questions you will find in an exam. This is also an effective way to revise your work and identify any gaps in your own knowledge and understanding of the unit material.

### Pay attention to directions given in class and online and take note of any topics that are emphasised

It is likely that topics which are emphasised will be covered in your exam. Your lecturer might also give you some exam hints and tips, so pay attention to these.

## As the exam day approaches

### Study tips and revision strategies

- Consider scheduling extra revision sessions into your timetable in the weeks before your exam.
- Double check which topics and learning outcomes are likely to be tested in the exam. Organise all lecture/tutorial/lab notes, handouts, textbooks, readings, assignments and other materials for each topic.
- Focus on learning, not just memorising.
- Use reading strategies that help you recall. (see [Some tips on reading effectively Quick Guide](#))
- Create summaries using your learning objectives as a guide. Organise your information into topics and subtopics.

# Academic Skills Quick Guide

### What is in this guide

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- How to overcome common problems
- Preparing for exams checklist

**Try a combination of the following:**

- Highlight, re-write and underline important information and key points.
- Use headings and subheadings to make point-form summaries
- Create mind maps, diagrams, tables and/or flowcharts. To see examples of these go to [Brainstorming and mind-mapping Quick Guide](#).
- Try using strategies like chants, songs, sayings and sentences that you can make up to help you to remember ideas and concepts. Try using the following:
  - Rhymes make things easier to remember. (For example, to remember how many days are in each month, we learn the rhyme: 30 days has September, April, June and November...).
  - Acronyms are abbreviations which use the first letter of words. (For example, to remember the colours of the rainbow, we make a name that contains the first letter from each colour, in the correct order: Roy.G.Biv [red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet]).
  - Acrostics take the first letter of words we want to remember and make a new sentence out of words starting with those letters. (For example, to remember the order of the four directions, we learn the following saying: Never Eat Soggy Weetbix (North, East, South, West))
- When you are making your notes, include real life examples to help you to memorise the information.
- Use a combination of revision strategies to memorise your summaries:
  - Consider creating posters to stick on your wall.
  - Read your notes aloud.
  - Explain what you are studying to someone (or something) else, even to your dog if it will listen.
  - Ask one of your friends to read your notes to you.
  - Create flash cards. Write a question on one side and an answer on the other, or a word on one side and a definition on the other. Test yourself. Re-read the ones you don't know the answer to and then try again.
- Study with others. Talk about your information. Test each other.
- Take regular, short breaks. Consider trying to learn just one important piece of information before each break.
- Set yourself up to do a trial exam at home. Practice will help you to remember the material and highlight any areas that might need more work. It might also help to reduce exam nerves, and help you manage your time better during the exam.
- If you can't find past exams you can set your own questions from the readings/lecture material or text book. This is an excellent form of revision.

**Things you should know before exam day**

- The date, time and location of your exam – consider how long it will take you to get there and how easy it will be to find a parking space.
- How long the exam is and what percent of the total marks for the unit is it.
- The format of the exam (Will it have essay questions? Is it a short-answer exam? Is it an open book exam?)
- How long it might take you to hand write your answers clearly. Time yourself!
- Do you need and/or are you allowed to take in any special equipment or materials. (calculator, dictionary, textbooks etc). Do you need to take along proof of your identity such as your student card.
- It is important that you look after yourself by making time for yourself, eating well, getting exercise and getting enough sleep (especially the night before the exam).
- Everyone gets stressed before an exam. If you are stressed and in real difficulty, seek help from the [Counselling Service](#) at SCU, which can provide useful information on services and support available to students.

## Exam day

### Things to remember on the day of the exam

- Arrive early so that you have time to get settled.
- Listen carefully to instructions given by exam supervisors.
- Scan the entire paper so you can plan your response. Decide on the order you are going to answer questions. For example, will you start with the questions you are most confident with or will you start with the ones which are worth the most marks?
- Read every question carefully and at least twice.
- Underline or highlight key words and jot down any relevant notes/prompts as they come to mind.
- Try to calculate how much time you have for each question or section. Look at how many marks are allocated and allow time for each question/section according to the weighting of each. For example, if a question is worth 10% of the marks, it should take approximately one tenth of the time available for the exam.
- Allow time for planning and, if appropriate, time for editing and revising. Stick to your time limit!
- Attempt all questions and avoid getting stuck on difficult questions. If you get completely stuck move on and come back if you have time.
- Get the key points down. If you are running out of time use dot points to highlight your ideas.

## How to overcome common problems

### What do I do if I get a mental block during the exam?

- Take time out, close your eyes and take some deep breaths.
- Use the relaxation techniques you have practised.
- Think positively. ("I can do this!")
- Jot down any words that relate or come to mind (this might prompt your memory).
- Visualise the summaries you made before the exams and try and reproduce an overview of them.
- Try to make a visual/concept map of the subject area.
- Don't panic. If you get stuck, move on to the next question and come back to the problem question later.

### How do I avoid using exam time poorly?

- Give yourself exact time limits and keep an eye on the clock.
- Don't just write everything you know about a topic. You need to answer the question, analyse what is being asked of you and stick to that (see [Types of exam questions and tips for handling them Quick Guide](#)).

## Remember: Preparation is the key to succeeding in exams!

Preparing for exams checklist			
Have you	Yes	No	Comments
Checked the date, time and location of your exam(s)?			
Allowed time for study and revision sessions in your session planner?			
Made sure you are familiar with the unit outline and learning objectives?			
Found a note taking technique that works for you and summarised your notes?			
Kept up with set readings and study guide and textbook activities?			
Added additional revision sessions closer to your exam date?			
Checked which learning outcomes and topics are likely to be in the exam and gathered all related material?			
Tried using reading strategies to help you learn rather than just memorise?			
Tried a variety of revision strategies?			
Practised answering past exams or created your own exams to do?			

## Related Quick Guides

[Taking notes](#), [Getting the most out of lectures](#), [Brainstorming and mind mapping](#), [Analysing Assignment tasks](#), [Types of exam questions and tips for handling them](#),