



**!** It is normal to feel some anxiety about tests and exams. Accept a higher level of anxiety at exam time, but if you are not coping, contact the Health, Counselling and Disability Service on (08) 8201 2118; a counsellor can help you to devise strategies to combat stress.

## PREPARATION

### WHAT DOES THE EXAM REQUIRE?

Think about:

- What content will be covered? Check the course outline.
- What types of questions can you expect: multiple choice, essay, short answer?
- What equipment are you allowed: special pencils, calculator, dictionary?
- Is it open book? If so, download the chapters beforehand.

### START PREPARING EARLY!

Unfortunately, SWOTVAC is not adequate exam preparation time.

- Ideally, spend an hour each week during semester dedicated to revision. Revise your notes after each lecture and keep them organised.
- Start exam revision around four weeks before your exam period.

## SPACE OUT YOUR STUDY

Spread your revision for each topic over a few weeks. This makes use of a technique called spaced practice which is, basically, the opposite of cramming.

Our brains need time and space to process information and develop the neural pathways and patterns necessary to **consolidate** it.

Studies show that students who **space** their learning don't just memorise it better, they **understand** it better.

The same level of memorisation can be achieved in **shorter total time** when that time is spaced out.

**So, this:**

SESSION  
1

SESSION  
2

SESSION  
3

**Is better than this:**

ONE SINGLE SESSION

## CREATE A REVISION TIMELINE



- What are all your exam and major assessment dates?
- How much time do you have each day to study?
- Block out study sessions of 2-3 hours.
- Map out all other commitments such as work, family, and hobbies. Break down concepts to be revised into chunks and create aims for each study session.
- Keep your timetable flexible and take time for rest! Sleep is a crucial element of consolidation.



## ACTIVATE YOUR NOTES

You may need to spend some time at the beginning of the revision process re-familiarising yourself with the topic's key concepts and ideas. It is important to do this actively rather than passively.



- **Scan** through your lecture notes to get a picture of the main ideas. This might also include looking at the contents page of a textbook or headings in lecture slides. Use these to **organise** your revision notes. Create headings and subheadings, use colour-coding and key words.
- **Re-write** your notes into a condensed form. The process of **summarising**, not just reading, is important. When we **intake** and then **output** information, we are forced to process it. This leads to far better recall.
- Try a note-taking method like **Cornell Notes**. This involves splitting the page into three sections: a wide left margin for key words and questions, a large section for content, and a summary section at the bottom.

There are some evidence-based techniques we can also apply when creating and using our study notes:

### ELABORATION



Elaboration involves adding new information to a memory. It involves organising, connecting, and integrating ideas together.

Elaboration forces us to think more deeply about meaning and makes it easier to remember later on as it gives our brains multiple pathways to the same information.

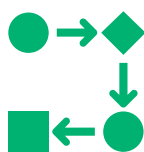
### ASK QUESTIONS



Interrogating our notes and topic concepts allows us to expand our understanding and make connections. It also helps identify weak areas.

- Ask questions about how and why things work.
- Write these questions in the margins of your notes.
- Explain steps and processes out loud as you solve a problem.
- Reflect on the meaning. Ask: how can I apply this? Try to make a picture in your mind or tell yourself a story to consolidate the material.

### DUAL CODING



Dual coding combines words and visuals together. We process verbal and visual information through separate channels so formatting information in two ways gives you two ways of remembering that information later on.

- Create diagrams, images and maps to explain your written notes.
- Describe images in your textbooks or notes in your own words.
- Try to find different ways to represent the material visually. For example, try an infographic, timeline, cartoon, or diagram.

### CONCRETE EXAMPLES



Abstract ideas are hard to grasp. We remember concrete examples better. If there is a strong association between the idea and the example, and we understand the mechanics, we understand and remember more.

- Look through lecture slides and your textbooks to find as many concrete examples as you can find.
- Explain to yourself how the examples demonstrate the concept or idea. Add these to your notes.
- Create your own real-life examples of concepts to ensure you understand how ideas can be applied.
- Share examples with friends or your study group.



## RETRIEVAL PRACTICE



Retrieval practice, or active recall, is **the most effective revision strategy**. It works because it focuses not simply on getting information *in*, which is what we do when we re-read notes or re-watch a lecture, but on getting information *out*. Retrieval practice forces us to bring information from our memories into our minds in order to apply it and examine it. This is an important meta-cognitive process that helps us consolidate information and identify gaps in our understanding. Try these active recall techniques:

### PRACTICE TESTS

**Start** revision with a practice test. This will assess your ability to retrieve information and show you the areas that need the most attention.

- Follow up on mistakes and add these to your revision strategy.
- Make your own quiz out of your lecture notes or textbook. Creating questions forces you to **intake** and **output** information in your own words which helps you understand it more deeply.
- Test yourself often and under exam conditions. This is particularly important if you have long-answer or essay questions. If you need to write by hand, you need to get your hand used to writing. Avoid the cramp!



### FLASHCARDS

Flashcards are an excellent and simple way to test your recall.

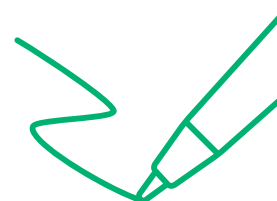


- Write a question on one side and the answer on the other.
- Make them yourself: this forces you to **intake** information, summarise it, then **output** it in your own words.
- Add images as well as words to cards to create stronger associations. This makes use of **dual coding**.
- Break complex concepts into chunks across multiple cards.
- Say answers out loud when you revise with flashcards and **elaborate** on them. Study flashcards in both directions. This creates stronger associations between the content and prepares you for exam questions written in a variety of ways.

### FREEWITING AND DRAWING

Freewriting and drawing involves writing or mapping everything you remember about a topic onto a piece of paper. It's important to do this from **memory**; the purpose is to test your recall.

- Try writing everything you know about a topic. Don't worry about sentence structure or grammar.
- Draw diagrams from memory. Try naming as many elements as you can.
- Check what you've written or drawn against your notes or textbook and correct mistakes.
- Explain everything you remember about a process or concept out loud to a friend or your study group, as though you're teaching it.





It is normal to feel some anxiety about tests and exams. Accept a higher level of anxiety at exam time, but if you are not coping, contact the Health, Counselling and Disability Service on (08) 8201 2118; a counsellor can help you to devise strategies to combat stress.

## RECALL TECHNIQUES

**Context-dependent memory** is the phenomenon whereby we recall information better when it is retrieved in the same context in which it was learned. Basically, our brains make associations between what we're learning and the conditions in which we're learning it. This context might be physical, like the room we're in, or emotional or psychological, like whether we feel stressed or motivated when we study.



## REVISE UNDER EXAM CONDITIONS

Create similar conditions between where you study and the exam room. This will help your brain make associations and recall information better. Do practice tests with a timer, a cheat sheet, and scribble paper. Lay out pens and papers on your desk as you would in an exam.

## VISUALISE YOUR STUDY SPACE

When you first enter the exam room, visualise where you learned or revised the content. Create a mental image such as items in the room or its spatial layout.

**For example**, if you learned material in a lecture, imagine yourself watching that lecture. Was it in the theatre? On your laptop at home? What did the recording look like? Picture the lecturer and the slides.

## IN THE EXAM ROOM

### DURING READING TIME



- Check that you have all the pages, questions, answer sheets, and scrap paper that you need.
- Scan through the exam and note the number of questions, distribution of marks, and estimated time per section.
- What information do you need to remember immediately? Write it on your scrap paper.

### DURING THE EXAM



When you first enter the exam room, visualise where you learned or revised the content. Create a mental image such as items in the room or its spatial layout.

**For example**, if you learned material in a lecture, imagine yourself watching that lecture. Was it in the theatre? On your laptop at home? What did the recording look like? Picture the lecturer and the slides.

### MULTIPLE CHOICE

- Try to answer the question before looking at the choices.
- Don't choose too soon. Read the question & all options properly.
- Take note of phrasing such as 'choose the option that doesn't describe', or 'choose the most correct answer'.
- If stuck, try a process of elimination.

### ESSAY EXAMS

- Sketch out your argument in dot points on scrap paper first.
- Spend more time on your introduction, topic sentences, and conclusion.
- If you run out of time, use dot points to outline your argument structure.

### OPEN BOOK EXAMS

- Download readings or chapters before the exam. Some e-books have limited access.
- Find out if materials are limited to your notes, specific textbooks or readings.
- Plan ahead: ensure your notes and materials are organised.