

EXAM REVISION SESSIONS - SESSION 1: Revision Strategies

1. Take some time to reflect on your current revision strategies. What is your study plan? How do you plan your work? How do you decide what to do each time, how to allocate your time?

2. What do you think works well about your revision strategies? Think back to a day that you had a really good revision session – what made it so productive?

3. What is not working so well about your revision strategies? Think back to a day you had a really unproductive revision session – what made it so unproductive?

Developing Effective Revision Strategies

To design an effective revision strategy two things are key: be realistic and understand the goal.

Be realistic:

1. Make a calendar that counts backward from the date of the exam until this day. (I know it's scary – be brave!)
2. It's helpful to partition each day into blocks: morning and afternoon; or even 2-3 hour blocks of study time
3. Block out any time that you know you will be busy (sports, social events, sleeping etc.)

Note: blocking out time for rest and social activities is important. You need to be mentally and physically fit in order to do your best studying – also your brain needs time to process all the information you're feeding it. If you feel guilty for taking time off, then think of it differently: sleeping, relaxing, talking to friends are activities that will enable you to perform to the best of your abilities during your study time.

Understand the goal:

On exam day you need to write 3 essays in 3 hours on a range of topics. This knowledge should affect how you study. Before the next session do the following:

1. Take an old exam, sit down and write 3 essays, 1 hour each

It is likely that you'll feel like you haven't read enough yet, that's ok, we don't care about the content of the essay, but you have to sit for 3 hours and write. If you don't know what to write then write the following instead of answering the question:

1. I wish I had information on so that I could answer/argue/show
 2. I wish I knew about so that I could answer/show/argue.....
2. After the 3 hours reflect on the following:
 - a. How did it feel to write 3 essays in 3 hours, how did this compare with your "normal" essay writing for tutorials?
 - b. How many words could you write? How long is each essay?
 - c. Did you immediately start writing? Did you take time to plan out the essay?
 - d. Did you have enough information to write your essay? If no – what type of information do you need? What does that mean in terms of your study plans – which articles/books should you read?
 - e. Are your study notes helpful? Do they answer the gaps in your knowledge? Should you consider a different note-taking approach?

SOME REVISION SUGGESTIONS

1. Based on the exercises you have conducted in this session, write out a list of Do's and Don'ts for yourself, for instance:

| DO | DON'T |
|--|---|
| Work in environment that works best for me (library, home etc) | Go on Facebook whilst studying |
| Arrive at the library with a plan for the day | Bring my phone to the library |
| Set clear goals on what I want to achieve | Go to the library with very chatty person |
| Start immediately to avoid procrastination | |
| | |

Try and see the list as a contract with yourself, you decide to adhere to these guidelines because they will help you achieve your goal (do well in exams)

2. Make sure to create some rewards for yourself. Plan fun activities with friends for evenings or weekends. Having these activities scheduled will motivate you during study time
3. If you feel you're being unproductive: stop – go for a walk – have a nap – and then come back to work feeling more refreshed
4. If you feel you're being unproductive because the work is difficult/complicated – ask for help. Identify what you are struggling with and reach out to either peers or your tutor to help you address the hurdle
5. Mix up your study activities. Reading for hours on end is sleep-inducing and not a very effective method to retain knowledge. So mix it up – here are some suggestions:
 - a. After reading, write flashcards, try and stick to 1 flashcard per article or book to really distil the key findings/arguments
 - b. Practice old exams – this is highly effective and you should do at least 1 hour every day. If you don't know the answer, then identify what your knowledge gaps are
 - c. Swap exam answers with friends and provide each other with feedback
 - d. Meet up with friends and verbally go through exam questions, pool your knowledge and learn from each other
 - e. Get a large piece of paper and make a mind map of all the articles/books you've read, how do they connect? How do they speak to each other?