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for tomorrow

**HOW2 SUCCEED IN TESTS AND
EXAMS
(LSD6)**

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TIPS FOR EXAMS AND TESTS - HOW TO SUCCEED IN TESTS AND EXAMS

Many students have good study techniques and have planned a sound study programme, but fail to prepare for the actual exam. Answer the following questions to find out how effectively you approach tests or exams. Circle the response which best applies to you. Your response to the questions will be:

R=Rarely; S=Sometimes; F=Frequently; A=Almost Always

		R	S	F	A
1.	I do not rely on all-night cramming for an exam or test.	0	1	2	3
2.	I quickly look through my notes and books as I am waiting for the exam or test to begin.	3	2	1	0
3.	I usually begin an exam paper after reading ALL the instructions.	0	1	2	3
4.	I lose many marks on essay questions even when I know the material well.	3	2	1	0
5.	I draw up a plan before I begin to answer an essay question in the exam or test.	0	1	2	3
6.	After I leave the test or exam room, I tend to recall answers that I could not remember in the test/exam.	3	2	1	0
7.	I do <u>not</u> get upset by the fact that other students have finished the test or exam before me.	0	1	2	3
8.	My mind goes blank when I have to write a test or exam.	3	2	1	0

		R	S	F	A
9.	When the test instructions of a test or exam are ambiguous, I ask the lecturer/invigilator for clarification.	0	1	2	3
10.	I always discuss the work with my friends before I go into the test or exam room.	3	2	1	0

Add up your score: _____

Count up the total number of points and enter your score in the appropriate place in the table below.

My Score	Range	Interpretation
	26 - 30	You are on the right track – Keep it up!
	20 – 25	Risky
	19 and less	Dangerous

If you would like to improve on your current score, continue reading...

The following section is aimed at providing you with tips which could help you to perform optimally (at top level) in an exam or test.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important that you:

- Get enough sleep.
- Eat healthy food.
- Get enough exercise.
- Do not drink excessive tea or coffee or make use of stimulants.
- Plan your study time.
- Schedule regular breaks in between study time.
- Use the time of day (or night) when you are usually most alert and when your concentration is at its best for intensive studying.

PREPARATION BEFOREHAND

- Ensure that your lecture notes / study material are kept up to date during the course of the year. This would eliminate the last minute rush of getting notes together. Being well prepared will make you feel more confident!
- Revision should take place at least 3-6 weeks before the exam commences.
- A week before, do a final review – go over summaries, notes, etc.

DAY/NIGHT BEFORE THE EXAM

- Avoid all-night cramming and make sure that you get 8 hours of sleep.
- Set your alarm.
- Know where the exam will be written and what time the exam will start.
- Ensure that you have all the equipment that you would need and that it is in working order (calculator, watch, pens, student card, etc).

ON THE DAY OF THE EXAM

- Make sure that you feel refreshed and awake by having a bath or shower.
- Do not scan through your notes and summaries if it makes you panicky.
- Have a leisurely breakfast or lunch including some form of protein.
- Give yourself enough time to get to the exam or test.

ARRIVING AT THE EXAM

- Arrive at the test or exam venue before the time, so that you are calm and not rushed.
- Do not engage in conversation with people who are discussing possible questions, etc.
- Take time to relax, use a relaxation technique (Refer to pamphlet SS7: *How to manage test and exam anxiety*).

AS YOU BEGIN – THINK BEFORE YOU INK!

- Listen carefully to any spoken instructions.
- Read through the whole exam/test briefly.
- Read all the instructions very carefully - make sure you know how many questions per section you need to answer. Cross out those questions you don't need to answer to avoid reading unnecessary parts again
- Evaluate the importance of each section - check mark allocation and time needed for each section. Plan your time according to the mark allocated for each question.
- Jot down memory aids, formulas, equations, facts or other material you know you will need and might forget. Do this in the margins.
- Underline important words in the directions and questions (criticise, evaluate, describe, etc). Refer to the pamphlet SS9: *How to understand the terminology of assignments, tests, and exams*.

GENERAL TIPS DURING THE EXAM

- **Answer the easiest, shortest question first.** In this way you experience success and you gain confidence to tackle the more difficult questions. If you encounter a difficult question, note the question, move on and then return to it later. Be sure that you number each question correctly.
- **Use memory techniques if you are stuck.** For example, if your recall of a certain point is blocked, remember something that is related. Brainstorm related ideas. You could use a small mind map to stimulate your memory.
- **Pace yourself.** Watch the time. Follow your time plan. If you are stuck with a particular question, move on. Make full use of the time available. Check your work if you have time left at the end.
- **Leave plenty of space between answers.** This makes it easier for the examiner who marks your test/exam and you can use the extra space if there is time to write additional information.
- **Look for answers in the other test questions** - a term, name, date, or other fact that escapes you might appear in the test itself. Use other questions to stimulate your memory.
- **Make sure that your answers and numbers correspond to the correct question number.**
- **Multiple Choice Questions**
 - In multiple choice/true false questions, follow your first instinct – it is usually the best.

- Don't change your answer unless you are sure the second choice is correct.
 - Answer each question in your head before you look at the possible answers.
 - Mark questions you can't answer immediately and come back to them if you have time.
 - If you have no clue as to what the answer is, and if incorrect answers are not deducted from your mark, use the following guidelines to guess:
 - If two answers are similar, except for one or two words, choose one of these answers.
 - If the answer calls for a sentence completion, eliminate the answers that would not form grammatically correct sentences.
 - If there is not a penalty for guessing and none of the above techniques work, close your eyes and go for it.
- **True or False Questions**
 - Answer true or false questions quickly.
 - Do not waste time trying to get 2 marks on a 100-mark exam.
 - **Essay Questions**
 - First find out what the question is asking precisely. Look for words such as compare, describe, explain. See the pamphlet SS9: *How to understand the terminology of assignments, tests, exams*.
 - Before you begin to write, make a quick outline.
 - When you start to write, get to the point. Expand your answers with supporting ideas and facts.
 - Write clearly.
 - Be brief.
 - When possible, write on one side of the page only.

- Finally if you have time, review your answers for grammatical errors, clarity, and legibility.

AFTER THE EXAM

- Forget about it! Congratulate yourself and take a break before the next one!

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