

## Coping with Exam Stress

### Organisation

1. Sort out your topics for revision -- base selection of topics on syllabus and examination requirements, on predictions derived from past papers and on guidelines suggested by tutors.
2. Come up with a routine of study periods that is realistic and productive and includes rest intervals!
3. Pay attention to diet, sleep and recreation – all are important factors in maintaining balance and keeping stress levels under control.
4. Break tasks into manageable units. Tick them off as you go. A checklist for the day's targets (making sure the targets are realistic and achievable) can also boost morale.
5. Use your time wisely – deal with less demanding tasks in periods of the day when you are less alert or focused. If you find yourself struggling unproductively with a problem, take a break or switch to some other work.

## Maximise Learning

The more you actively interact with the subject matter, making it your own, and linking it to previous knowledge, the more meaningful and memorable it becomes.

Follow the **PQRST** model:

- **P**review - skim the material to get an overall preview
- **Q**uestions - formulate questions that highlight what you aim to derive from your reading
- **R**ead Actively - make appropriate notes of key ideas
- **S**ummarise - identify the main points using lists, key words, flow diagrams, etc. and connect them with knowledge from other sources
- **T**est - test yourself by reciting and reviewing the summaries immediately after learning the material and again at later intervals

## Top Tips

- Use flow diagrams, keywords or patterns linking ideas to make master summaries for revision purposes.
- Use cue cards. Index-sized "flash" cards are easy to carry around and are useful for learning information you find particularly hard to remember. You can put facts, figures, formulae on the cards and use colours, keywords, mnemonics and other memory aids to help you learn.
- Space your studying - give yourself time for the information to sink in. Study related topics together and take regular, short breaks at suitable "achievement points".
- Compare notes with other students and get feedback and/or clarification from tutors.

## Short-Term Relaxation Response

### Techniques

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Try these simple techniques before and during the exam to help you stay calm.

### Differential Relaxation

1. Sit up straight in your chair.
2. Place both feet on the floor, making sure they are flat.
3. Grasp the bottom sides of your chair with your hands.
4. At the same time, use your hands to pull up on the chair and push your feet firmly down onto the floor.
5. Hold this position while counting slowly to five (approximately five seconds).
6. Release the tension in your hands and feet and let your body relax while counting slowly to five.
7. Repeat the process several times before the test begins.

## Deep Breathing

1. Inhale, taking a deep breath that fills your diaphragm as you push it down and outward. By moving your diaphragm your lungs can fully inflate.
2. Hold your breath as you slowly count to three.
3. Slowly release the air as you exhale.
4. Focus on the feeling of your diaphragm moving back inward.
5. Repeat the cycle five times.
6. Repeat if needed.

## Visualization

This visualization method is easy to perform while sitting at your desk before taking a test.

1. Close your eyes.
2. Use the palms of your hands to gently cover your eyes, being careful not to touch your eyes with your hands. To do this, place your fingers on your forehead and your lower palms on your cheekbones.
3. Imagine a relaxing scene or a quiet place you love to go. The place you choose can be real or imaginary.
4. Imagine yourself at the relaxing, quiet place.
5. Begin practicing the palming method of visualization several days before the test date. The more you practice this technique, or any relaxation method, the easier it becomes