

Study and Revision Technique

Whenever I discuss the ‘art of learning’ with any group of students, I quote the ancient Chinese proverb:

I see I forget,

I hear I forget,

I do I remember

In ‘doing’ we simply develop competence in those skills demanded of the book-keeper in the life-long learning experience.

Figure 1 illustrates the period of learning and consolidation through which you pass on your way to preparing for your examination.

Study is defined as ‘the systematic pursuit of understanding’.

The systematic approach to this experience involves drawing up a timetable for studying.

Start by asking yourself how many hours of study can I devote each day?

Always remember to:

- Avoid this being a burden and allow time for relaxation.
- Try not to let social pressure interrupt your plans.
- Form patterns of study periods – make a habit of regular study at times which suit you.
- Develop systematic break-periods to refresh the mind.

Whether planning your initial study period or revision sessions plan your programme and aim to stick to it.

Many students find it most effective to study and or revise early in the morning, others prefer later in the evening. If you have never studied early in the morning, if this is convenient to you, do try it – the brain is most refreshed at that time and usually it is a quiet period and conducive to learning.

It is useful to set up a grid, as shown in *Figure 2*; and to highlight your study or revision periods:

If you find, having set your target hours that you cannot meet them, then revise your

timetable.

Varying study and revision periods can be useful. Your mind can be rested as much by variety in your studies as by stopping altogether. Divide your time between topics in the same session. Spend no more than an hour on each.

The outcome of study and revision should be understanding.

You are pursuing understanding. Examinations test the understanding of underpinning knowledge. Systematic study and revision leads to understanding.

Here is a list of the important features in this process:

- Read over your study text material once or twice

Highlight any key words or phrases and make brief notes:

eg: The Accounting Equation

Assets = Capital plus Liabilities

or

Assets - Liabilities = Capital

- After a short period pause and focus on the main points. Recall the key points of the topic under review
- Take a short break – have a drink, walk about and then relax.
- Make the use of past questions – plan your answer and then check with a model answer for instant feedback.
- Make notes, particularly definitions – write these on separate cards, the size of a postcard.
- Read your newsletter for relevant articles and Questions and Answers features.

Revision

Revise often; do not simply reserve that until the end of the programme.

Competence develops with revisiting previous topics as some new areas of study build on previous experience.

- At the end of each day of study or revision, review the previous day's task.
- At the end of each week, review the previous week's task.
- At the end of each month, review those tasks.

The Examination Approaches

Three to four days before the examination – put your books and notes away!

The day before, if possible, do your own thing – play sport, take a long walk, visit your favourite sporting venue or the countryside.

Research suggests that last minute revision is counter productive.

I hope that this short paper has given you some ideas and thoughts to making your learning experience fruitful.

Preparing for the Examination

In my article on study and revision techniques I referred to the few days before your examination.

I recommend that you:

- Put your files and learning materials away three to four days before your examination. Last-minute revision is not an effective way of consolidating learning.
- Take a trip out and visit a place where you can relax.

There are other issues to consider in planning for the examination and these include:

- Make sure that your registration is up to date and that you enter for the examination by the closing date.

Late entries can be costly.

- Once you have received your examination acknowledgement and you are told of your examination centre be sure to visit it before the day to plan your travel route and timing. It is often the case that the examination centre may be near to you.

Two to three days before, check that you have:

- Pens, pencils, calculator and ruler. Do not take correction fluid, cross through any mistakes.
- An identity card or other form of identification that the invigilator may require.
- Change for the car park or for bus or train fares.
- A watch.

The day of the examination

- Set your alarm or early morning call – it is useful to have an early night on the eve of the examination.
- Make an early start, have some breakfast and a drink to boost your energy.
- Arrive at the centre in good time and have a walk round or relax for a while in the student lounge or café.
- Do not panic – practise deep breathing exercises if you feel too nervous.
- Find the right exam hall and the toilet if necessary.

Do avoid being late. I well remember two friends who were medical students and had been out late on the eve of one final examination, in the local bar.

The following day they rushed into college and were late into the examination hall. When they came out one commented ‘there were a lot of questions on the jaw John’.

‘Yes’, John replied, ‘we have sat the dentistry paper instead of anatomy’.

Once in the examination hall remember:

- Deep breathing
- Relax
- Find your desk
- Make yourself comfortable
- Listen to the announcements
- Read the requirements
- Read the questions
- Plan your time
- Present your work as clearly as possible and include your workings
- At the end of the exam make sure you hand in your paper

Summary

If you are sitting your examinations shortly please learn to relax and make the examination period a worthwhile experience to conclude your journey of learning.

Good luck!