

Preparing for take home exams: top tips

1: Before the exam

- **Revise as you would normally**

Right now, you should be revising as you would normally for your modules. Make a revision timetable and follow these practical steps to help you [revise effectively](#). The exam will be available for 24hrs in most cases but you are strongly advised only to spend the normal exam duration actually working on it, rather than spending time flicking through your original notes or searching on Blackboard for materials.

- **Practice active revision**

Make your revision as active as possible using a variety of techniques; make an online study group with friends, mind map the content, use post-it notes and revision cards to test key concepts. Check out our guides on [how to make notes a read effectively](#). Whilst your exams will probably take a different form to previous years, you can still make effective use of [past exam papers](#) to test your understanding and application of knowledge. Above all, don't waste time re-writing out your notes or just reading through content; these are passive techniques and are unlikely to help.

- **Be organised**

It's likely that you won't have long to submit your answers, once you are given the paper. Make sure you create a system for organising your revision notes on any particular subject so that you can access the most relevant information quickly. You may be asked for more complete references than you would usually be expected to provide. We suggest that you:

- Reduce notes to bullet points
- Focus on the main points, adding supporting detail to help your understanding
- Make sure to note different aspects, perspectives or issues to back up each point
- Note down any key references ahead of time. The [Reference Builder](#) and our [referencing guides](#) will help you do this as you go along.

- **Look after yourself**

Stop revising at least 90 minutes before bedtime on the day before, eat a healthy meal and avoid alcohol or high energy drinks.

- **Sort out the practical things**

Most exams will start on the day they were originally timetabled for, but there may be some adjustments to this. Read notifications from your module and programme leaders carefully to ensure you are prepared for and understand the timing, duration, format, expectations, ways of submitting and other technical needs you might have. We also suggest that you:

- Ensure that on the day you have somewhere quiet and comfortable to work, where you won't be disturbed
- Check you have the technology you need, such as access to Blackboard and Wifi. If you can move closer to your Wifi router, or pick a quieter time of day, your connection may be less likely to drop out.
- Have access to all the material you need nearby. You may also want to have a clock, to ensure you're keeping on track, and a bottle of water.

2: On the day

- **Double check...**

...that you have everything you need, and that all of your technology is working. Have a healthy snack before you make a start.

- **Manage your time**

24 hours might feel like a large amount of time to play with, but we strongly suggest you try to keep to the original length of the exam. If possible, sit down to the exam at the time of day you are usually at your most productive, and avoid distractions such as text messages and emails. Make sure you have read the instructions for the exam carefully, and apportion the amount of time you spend on each question, depending on how many marks each question is worth. Take some time at the end to review what you have done, and make any necessary edits, but try not to go over it again and again as this may make you increasingly anxious. There is a point where you have to stop and submit it, and then you can move on.

- **Stay focused on the question**

The commonest fault in exam answers is not answering the question asked and providing irrelevant information. Jot down the main points you want to include, then organise them logically, including any key thinkers/experts and theories that you may need to refer to. Repeat the key words from the question regularly to ensure you remain on track.

- **Watch for unintentional plagiarism and collusion**

It's OK to revise with others (in fact this can be an effective way of testing yours and your friend's understanding) but once you have been issued with the paper, it's important that you work on it alone. You may be asked to submit your work through [Safe Assign](#), which works by comparing student submissions to a range of internet resources, articles and other students' submissions. Make sure it's all your own work, as you would any other assessment. You can learn [how to reference and avoid plagiarism](#) using our online guidance.

3: After the exam

- **Move on**

Once you have submitted your work, try not to discuss it with friends too much, or go back over your revision notes. You have done your best, and other people may have misinterpreted a question. You now need to focus on your next exam or piece of work.

- **Take a day off**

If you can, take a day off from revising before the next exam. You will feel more refreshed and in a better frame of mind

More guidance on [preparing for assessments](#) is available from the Library's Study Skills webpages.