



Preparing for exams

Helpful tips for students



CAMBRIDGE
OCR

Most of you will be sitting an exam for the first time, for others you might not have sat one for a while. Exams can be an anxious time but a great way to cope with them is to plan and prepare in advance.

PREPARING FOR YOUR EXAMS

Understanding exam rules

- Always follow the instructions and guidance issued by your school/college and the invigilator (*tip*: invigilators are the people in exam rooms responsible for conducting examinations in the presence of candidates).
- Read the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) [candidate information for written examinations](#), as this contains information to help you prepare for exam day.

If you're in any doubt or have any questions about what you can or can't take into the exam hall, speak to your teacher or your exams officer.

Here are our top tips:

1. Understand your exam timetable

- Make a note of the important dates, whether your exams taking place in the morning or the afternoon and your seat number. Highlighting all the exams you're expecting to sit can help. If you're missing any or think something is incorrect, speak to your teacher.
- Don't forget to keep your timetable somewhere safe. Screenshot it or pop it in your locker.

2. Create an action plan

a.k.a. a revision schedule

- Use your timetable as a guide.
- Be realistic and plan for breaks to avoid stress or burn-out.
- Check out our handy guide on ['How to manage your time'](#).
- Download our [revision schedule template](#) and plan out your week. There are also lots of online planners that you can download for free.

3. Start revising

- Find a revision style that works for you. It might be different from what your friends are doing, and that's ok! We've got lots of advice on our [tips for successful revision](#) webpage, but here are some ideas to get you started:
 - Mind maps – a useful way of visualising lots of information.
 - Flash cards – ideal for testing yourself.
 - Quizzes – great to test topic areas.
 - Teach-talk – teaching and talking it through with someone else can be an effective way to learn.
 - Complete some [past papers](#) to practise answering the questions.
 - Don't worry, procrastination can happen ... here's our tips on ['How to beat procrastination'](#).

4. Look after yourself

- It's ok to ask for help – if you feel overwhelmed, speak to a friend, family member or teacher. Here are some tips about [managing exam stress](#).



EXAM DAY – YOU'VE GOT THIS

Before the exam starts

- Pack everything you need the night before (this might include black pens, pencils, erasers) and try to get a good night's rest.
- Fuel up with breakfast, including a drink. Remember to check in advance with your school or college if you're allowed to take a water bottle in with you.
- Aim to arrive at least ten minutes before it starts. If you're going to be delayed, be sure to phone your school or college immediately.



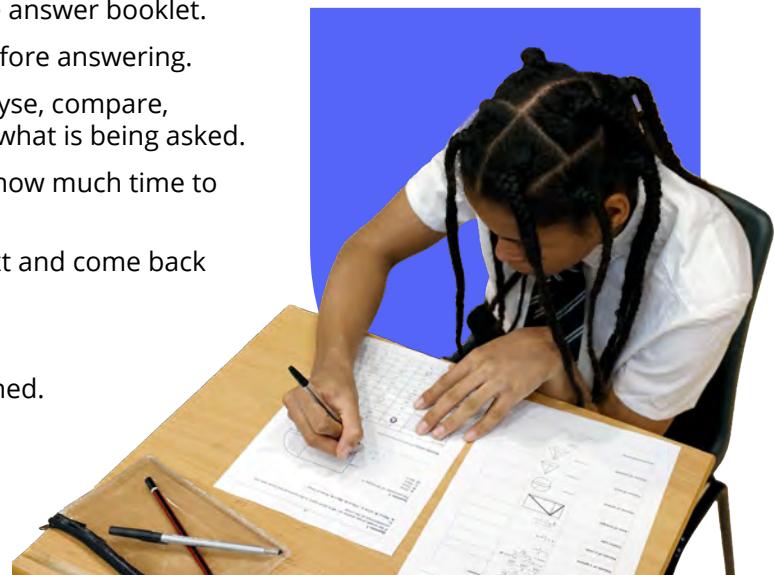
Exam guidelines

- Watches and electronic devices (including smart watches, mobile phones, tablets, iPods, wireless earphones, electronic dictionaries) must **not** be taken into the exam room. They must be left at home or in your locker.
- You may use a calculator unless you're told otherwise.
- Only take into the exam room the equipment which you'll need for the exam, in a clear pencil case.
- You must write in black ink. Coloured pencils can only be used for drawings, charts and rough notes.
- For more information, be sure to read the JCQ's [candidate information for written examinations](#).



During the exam

- Always listen to the invigilator and follow their instructions.
- You must not talk in the exam room. If you have a question, raise your hand and wait for the invigilator to come to you.
- When you're given your exam paper make sure to check it's the correct title, subject and level.
- The invigilator will tell you when you can start writing.
- When told to start, breathe and take your time to read and understand the instructions on the question paper and/or the answer booklet.
- Take your time to read each question carefully before answering.
- Look out for command words – for example: analyse, compare, describe, explain – these will help you determine what is being asked.
- Use the allocated marks as a rough guideline for how much time to spend on each answer.
- If you can't answer a question, move onto the next and come back to it later.
- Allow time to check your work before the end.
- The invigilator will tell you when the exam is finished.



AFTER EXAMS

Hooray! You've finished and hopefully you'll feel a sense of relief. Talk to your teacher if you have a concern about something in your exam but do try to take some time out to relax. We've answered some of your most popular post-exam queries. There are also options after you get your results.

2026 results days

13 August – A Levels, Cambridge Advanced Nationals, Cambridge Technicals and other Level 3 qualifications

20 August – GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals and other Level 2 qualifications

