PREPARING FOR EXAM BLOCKS

STEP 1: FACT FINDING

Ask your teachers (politely!) the following questions about the exams. Ideally this should happen around 6 weeks prior to the exam but some questions may not be able to be answered until closer to the actual exam.

- What topics are being tested?
- Are we being tested on the whole year’s work or part of the year?
- What is the structure of the exam i.e. what types of questions and how much are they worth?
- What sort of studying should I be doing for this exam?

If you have a number of exams it is a good idea to collect the information in an examination preparation grid:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eg Spanish</td>
<td>Common objects</td>
<td>Tuesday, May 16th</td>
<td>1.5 Hrs</td>
<td>20 multiple choice</td>
<td>20 mins mult.choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greetings</td>
<td>2pm-3.30pm</td>
<td>(90 mins)</td>
<td>30 mins section 1</td>
<td>30 mins section 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People places &amp; things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>worth 30 marks</td>
<td>10 mins checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80 marks total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STEP 2: GETTING ORGANISED

Ideally this should have been an on-going process throughout the whole year so that when you get to the exams you are ready to start studying straight away! But, if you haven’t been doing this, it is not too late! (But remember for next time.)

To get yourself organised for the exams:

i. For each subject, get together all the material you need to study for that subject.

ii. Check that you do not have anything missing.

iii. Sort through your notes from each subject's topic into 'things to learn' i.e. content and 'things to practise' i.e. revision sheets, past tests, question sheets that you could do as revision.

iv. Check if you have already done any study notes for your subjects.

v. Brainstorm everything you could do to study for the exam for each subject
   - Are there chapter reviews you should redo?
   - Are there past tests or essays you could redo and resubmit?
   - Can you get a list of sample essay topics that you can do draft essay plans for?
   - Do your textbooks have sample examination papers?
   - Are there particular topics you need to focus on?
   - What is the most worthwhile revision you could do for this subject?

vi. Decide if you have enough resources to study from and if not borrow or purchase some extra books you can use to study from.

vii. Find out if you can get past examination papers (and answers) to use as revision sources.

viii. Decide if you are going to allocate equal time to each subject. Do some subjects need more preparation time than others? Do you need to spend more time on your weaker subjects?
STEP 3: PLANNING YOUR TIME

Try this approach to planning your time for exams:

Draw up a table that shows each week and how much time you have left until the exams. Write in each of your exams. Write in all your commitments like sport etc - any time where you won't be able to study so you can see how much time is left.

When planning time for exams, remember the following guidelines:

- Do you need more time for some subjects than for others?
- Try and study each subject at least once a week but preferably twice a week.
- Leave some ‘spare’ time in the week in case things take longer than expected.
- Spread your study for the subject out as much as possible.
- Take a short break every half hour.
- Study contrasting subjects together.
- Do the hardest subjects when you are most alert.
- Make a decision as to how many hours you will study each night or week.

At the start of each week allocate subjects to each available timeslot.

You can either plan out what you will do in each timeslot at the start of the week or each afternoon decide what you will do for that subject that night.

The weekend before focus on the subjects you have on Monday in particular and perhaps Tuesday and Wednesday. It depends how spread out your examinations are over the examination period. Look over the examination timetable and see if you will have time during the week to prepare for some of the exams.

STEP 4: START STUDYING

Main things to remember:

- If you didn't do them at the end of each topic, make summaries or study notes as the first stage of your revision.
- You need to spend time learning, understanding and remembering the information and then TESTING yourself to see if you are able to recall this information in a test situation.
- Spend time practising as many different types of questions as possible under exam conditions. Then check and see what you got right and what you need to ask about.
- Do past exam papers to work out what else you still need to revise.
- Keep a list of things you need to ask your teacher.
- In each study period spend some of that time learning and memorising and some of the time practising the skills of the subject.

THE SOONER YOU START, THE MORE TIME YOU HAVE AND THE MORE YOU CAN GET DONE!

So what do you need to do to prepare effectively for your exams?

Enhanced Learning Educational Services
"the study skills specialist"