

Sitting Exams Successfully

It may be hard to believe, but there are some advantages to doing exams! For instance, you will not be expected to produce the same level of detail or write out lists of references or bibliographies, and examiners are generally more sympathetic to untidy handwriting or spelling mistakes.

Things to Do As Soon As You Sit Down



- ✓ Check you have the correct paper – mistakes do happen!
- ✓ Provide the necessary details by filling in the booklet as required.
- ✓ Read through the instructions slowly and read through at least one more time to check understanding.
- ✓ Write down the amount of time you plan to spend on each question, either on the question paper or your answer booklet. This will be based on the marks allocated for each question and the overall length of the exam, allowing time to read through questions at the start and check answers at the end, and should be calculated in advance.

When the Exam Starts



- ✓ Read through the whole paper – check all pages to ensure that you don't overlook questions or miss relevant data.
- ✓ Read through each question carefully – identify and highlight the key content words (i.e., what the question is about) and the trigger/command words (i.e. what the examiner wants you to do). Check that you have not misread any key words.
- ✓ If you have a choice of questions, tick the ones you could attempt, and double tick the ones you could answer best.
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During the Exam



- ✓ Before you start a new question, think before you start writing – planning your response will help to structure your answer and improve your communication.
- ✓ Re-read the question as you write – this is especially important for questions requiring a detailed response, in order to remain focussed on the question set.
- ✓ Stick to your time allocation – producing very long answers for initial questions that carry relatively few marks is not an effective strategy, especially if this prevents you from having any time to tackle subsequent questions.
- ✓ Label all diagrams fully and include any working out – easy marks to miss!
- ✓ Don't miss out questions – it is much easier to gain marks from demonstrating some understanding on all questions, so it makes sense to tackle all questions, however weak you feel on some of them.
- ✓ Review your answers at the end – this should allow you to spot any errors or omissions.