

#ExamTips

1. If this isn't the first time you've sat the exam, reflect upon your approach before restarting revision – make sure that you aren't setting out to make the same mistakes again
2. Organise yourself #1 – book a realistic exam date allowing 6-9 months of revision
3. Organise yourself #2 – book study leave so that you have a week off before the exam..... time to relax (not cram!)
4. Choose a revision environment that is conducive to learning – that may change depending on time of day, time of year, subject being studied
5. Review college guidance – ensure you know what to expect, what topics will be covered and in what detail; check on examiners' guidance too
6. Create a realistic study plan – check the syllabus and map it out. what do you know already, what do you need to learn?
7. Evaluate work and homelife commitments so that you can be sure you are not trying to fit too much in and can still find time for relaxation and hobbies
8. Identify time-savers – this is the perfect excuse to stop ironing, or doing the housework. Think about paying someone
9. Think creatively – little moments of study time for 20 MCQs eg on the train, between clinics
10. Plot your life on a wallplanner, allowing time for relaxation and hobbies – put it somewhere visible and refer to it when you find yourself procrastinating or when you feel guilty about watching a box set!
11. Actively generate support #1 - from friends and family so that you don't get interrupted to take the bins out
12. Actively generate support #2 – from friends and family – identify your “go to” person when you feel stressed and tell them what they can say/do to help eg challenge negative self-talk
13. Identify colleagues #1 that have already passed the exam – quiz them on what they did, resources they'd recommend etc
14. Identify colleagues #2 that are experts in the areas that you struggle with (find boring or can't understand)
15. Check what revision courses are available and ask colleagues to recommend the best one
16. Apply the knowledge in the clinical setting as many times as you can...explain to colleagues that you are looking for these opportunities so that they think of you
17. Check your learning style and adapt your revision strategy accordingly – visual, aural, read/write, kinaesthetic
18. Don't rule out different learning needs if you are struggling to pass – dyslexia is identified in approximately 15% of trainees we see for exam support
19. Keep testing your knowledge with MCQs, write quizzes for colleagues, keep sitting “mock” papers in exam conditions
20. Break revision into chunks of either 40 mins with a 10 min break / 20 mins with a 5 min break. If it feels like it's a struggle to revise today, start with 20 mins and see how it goes
21. Get into the habit of a regular bedtime routine.....useful for when you're working shifts as it signals to the body that you're winding down to rest
22. Use the week before the exam to take a break from revision – sit one “mock” paper a day in exam conditions and spend the rest of your time relaxing
23. Exam day nerves #1 - challenge nerves about the exam with rational questions – what do I know about this topic? What is the first step in the situation described?
24. Exam day nerves #2 – get into the habit of deep breathing – in through the nose and out through the nose, right down into the lower part of the lungs
25. Exam day nerves #3 - create a positive affirmation “I have worked hard, I am clever, I can pass” and say it to yourself in the mirror in the days running up to the exam.