

How do you get ready for exams?

The basics:

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| 1. What day is your exam? | You can get a timetable from www.nzqa.govt.nz |
| 2. Morning or afternoon? | Morning exams start at 9.30 – Be here by 9am.

Afternoon exams start at 2.00 – Be here by 1.30. |
| 3. What standards are in the exam? | You can look at old exams on www.nzqa.govt.nz |
| 4. Have you got your notes? | Check that you have all the info from class. |

How to get started:

1. Make a day and time to start studying and stick to it! Put a reminder alarm in your phone or a note on the fridge. Tell people that you are studying and to not text you.
2. Decide what subjects you want to study for. A good guide is to spend about 45 -50 minutes per subject (just like in the school day).
3. Choose a topic/standard to focus on.

E.g. Tuesday night. 7.30pm – 9.00pm. 45 minutes on Maths. 45 minutes on Biology.

So you have made it -your notes are in front of you. Now what? Reading your notes does not work and is a waste of your time. You keep busy, but you are not learning. You need to trick your brain into using the information in a different way. It is called TRANSFORMATION.

The theory: We remember things better the more often we do them. The process of doing an activity helps our brain make MORE connections to the information and STRENGTHENS the ones we already have.

The analogy: You can balance a basketball on your finger for a bit (make a connection with it), but to really hold onto the ball you need to use your whole hand (lots of connections to the ball). The more often you bounce or catch a ball – the better you get.

Tip of the Day: Make your own Fill-in-the-gaps worksheet (a cloze).

This is a task to test knowledge of content or specialist words and every subject has them. You can combine it with a word bank to help you learn the words/quotes/definitions.

Task 1: Make your cloze (20 minutes).

1. Take a handout from class and select the words to delete by underlining them. It is usually best to delete the NOUNS or VERBS because they are the words you will need to learn.
2. Rewrite those words at the bottom of the handout/page. This is your wordbank.
3. Now, go back to the handout and permanently twink/delete the words. If you are a bit anxious about that, take a photocopy of the handout first.

Task 2: Complete the cloze. Do this on another night so your brain gets another chance to realise that these words are important.

- Arrange with your friends for them to do a cloze on a different topic and you can swap resources.
- Not sure about it? Check your worksheet with your teacher. They will be able to suggest other handouts /quotes/vocab lists for you to make next time.

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The basics

1. You want to do well in your exams so you can go and be fantastic out in the world. It can be hard to remember this when you have so much work to do and you kind of don't really feel like doing it anymore.
2. Make a short list of why you want to do well or choose a quote that you like and put it somewhere you will see it a lot – the fridge, your pencil case or your phone. Ask one of your friends or the folks at home to send you a text with a quote.

Here are some you might like.

Just keep swimming.

Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there!

Winners never quit and quitters never win.

Success is just lots of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.

The theory The human mind much more easily remembers meaningful information than just a list of random things. This is because something meaningful has connections to many different parts of the brain, including the part that remembers emotions. Emotional memories are often much stronger and we remember them for longer. We feel like we can see and hear the event again.

The example Some people remember what they were doing when they heard that Michael Jackson was dead because that day was quite sad for them. The emotion of the day helped them remember it, while many other days have no memory. E.g. Can you remember what you were doing on March 4th this year? If it was your birthday I bet you can.

Tip of the Day: Make up your own Mnemonics

A mnemonic is any link you make with something you already know to learn something new. **It is a pattern/system of letters or ideas that aids the memory.** A lot of mnemonics are verbal—such as a very short poem or a special word used to help a person remember something—but may be something you see, hear or touch. You are tricking your brain into making a meaningful connection = better memory.

Task 1 (10 minutes)	Task 2 (20 minutes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a 10 minute walk somewhere familiar. During your walk, make an effort to notice around 10 specific things in order – a letterbox, a tree, a house, etc. An easy one is the trip home from school! • (If you don't want to walk or if you want to make more of these you could do the same thing by letting your eye notice 10 significant things in your bedroom, classroom, 10 dance moves to your favourite song, 10 friends, 10 family members or a word- use the letters). • Once you are back at your desk, write these 10 things down in the order that you saw them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select the new bit of information that you want to learn – lists work best. Eg: the names of human ancestors (Level 3 Biology) • Match the 10 things you are familiar with up with the 10 things you need to learn. Imagine Australopithecus afarensis leaning on the letterbox and so on. • As you see the familiar things each day, you can go over the list in your head or explain it to someone else.

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Now, is not the time to start a fitness programme, take up a new hobby or work on your tan. **Your job is to train your brain and get it ready to perform in the exam.**

Your brain will work better if it is well looked after.

- Go to bed at the same time each day – you should be asleep by 10pm when you are brain training. (So you need to heading for bed by 9.30pm).
- Get up at the same time each day –even on the weekend.
- Eat lots of healthy food at regular mealtimes.

The theory: Your body has all sorts of things to do – sleeping, breathing, digesting your food, getting rid of waste, growing new skin and hair, etc. Your brain controls all of those things on a timetable and things need to get done in the right order for everything to work. Changing your sleep pattern can muck it all up.

The example: Jetlag. When you change time zones you muck up your body's rhythm for when to be working. It takes days to get it right. Every time you sleep late on the weekend, you give yourself jetlag on Monday and Tuesday.

Tip of the Day: Make your own flash cards for a topic (45 minutes)

A Flash card is one where you have the word on one side and the meaning on the other.

- Option A – buy a set for \$2 at the student office
- Option B – cut out bits of paper and number them / get your little sister to cut up a cereal box
- Option C – you can do the same trick with one sheet of paper and Column A and Column B (so you can cover up one side)

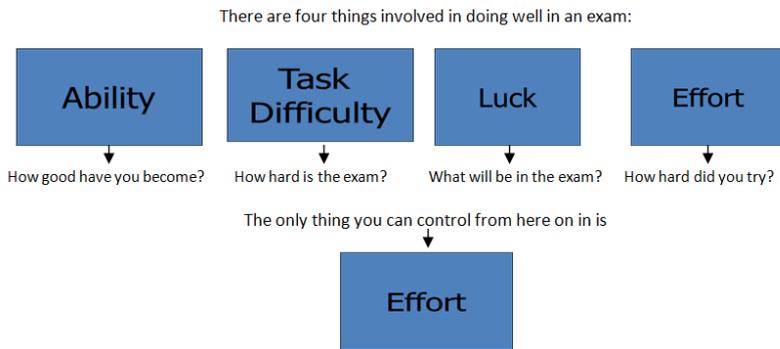
Task 1: Make the cards (45 minutes)

- Try to stick to a maximum of 20 words/phrases so that you stick to the essential parts to learn for a topic.
- The trick is to know which words to use and to make sure the meanings are right, so check with your teacher once you have made it. Again, you could swap with your friends, if they do a different topic to you.
- Don't spend ages making it look pretty - studying needs to be much more than colouring in. To save time, you could take a photocopy of the definitions and glue them on.
- www.studystack.com or <http://quizlet.com>
Make your own study flashcards (and crosswords, hangman, etc). This is web based and you can also use it on a touch phone.

Task 2: Use the cards (10 minutes at a time).

- Time trials: Set a stopwatch and see how quickly you can say the correct answers aloud. (Ad breaks on TV are good for this.)
- Make a 10 minute treasure hunt around your house. For every one you find and get right – you get a point/treat.
- Regularly swap your activity around so that sometimes you start with the definition.
- It is a waste of time testing yourself on words you know well. Put those ones away for a few days. Go over the ones that you got wrong. Change the order around.
- Take them to school with you. Ask people to test you (avoids cheating).

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The basics:

So you need to work on your **Motivation** so you put that effort in. (effort = intensity)

- Motivation can come from within. For example – feelings of self-worth, enjoyment and competence.
- Motivation can also come from outside. For example – competition for rewards, prizes, results and social standing.
- Choose the thing that motivates you the best / most and remind yourself of it – put an alarm in your phone to remind yourself to go and study and add a motivational message.

Examples of motivational quotes:

All things are difficult before they are easy.

Some people develop a wish bone where their back bone should be.

Nobody's a natural. You work hard to get good and then work hard to get better.

It is not so important who starts the game but who finishes it.

It is hard for an empty bag to stand upright.

Tip of the Day: Make your own PowerPoint for a topic (45 minutes)

Task 1: Making your PowerPoint (30 minutes)

- Choose a topic to review and open the PowerPoint programme. Create about 10-15 slides using a template that allows a heading and some text/picture.
- A good PowerPoint slide will have about 3 short sentences / phrases so you should select the keywords from resources your teacher has given you and then write a summary of the meaning or create a picture.
- Check your resource with your teacher to make sure it is correct. (Email works well for this.)
- Don't spend ages with the custom animations or choosing a theme. Content is more important.

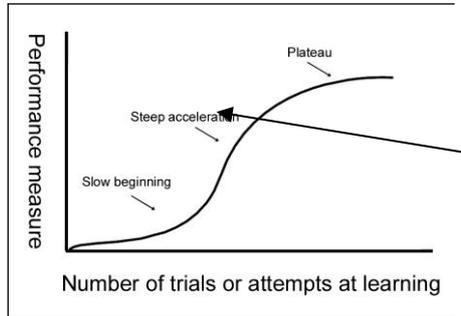
Task 2: Use the PowerPoint (15 minutes at a time).

- PowerPoint's can work like flashcards – read them yourself, test them on your friends, perform them for your pets?
- You can view them lots of times to keep them in your memory. Change the order around after a few times, if it makes sense to, so you are learning things in different orders.

How do you get ready for exams?

The Learning Curve: The more times you do something the better you will get.

It takes a while to get the hang of a new idea, but then you improve quickly.



After a while, you will not notice as much improvement because it takes a long time to fully understand something.

Studying is about sticking with a topic until you fully understand it and can

Learning Curves also work by progressing what you can do.

I can talk about the ideas in class.

I can complete the tasks when my teacher tells me how to do it.

I can work on my own to complete any task.

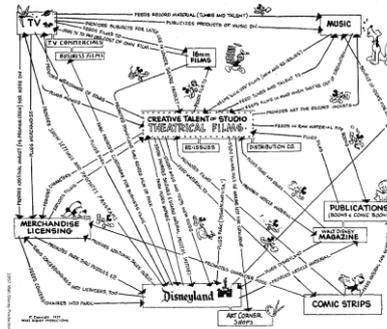
Tip of the Day: Create a mind map to see what you know

Task One: The mind map

- Choose a topic to revise and take a blank sheet of paper (or use a whiteboard and take a photo)
- Choose one keyword from this topic and place it in the centre of your map.
- Create octopus arms out from the keyword that can 'hold' the relevant connections with the keyword.
- From memory write down all the things you need to remember. The more important things should be on the 'arms' and the smaller ideas on the 'fingers'. You can make linkages across areas – so it might start to look messy, but it will show the links.

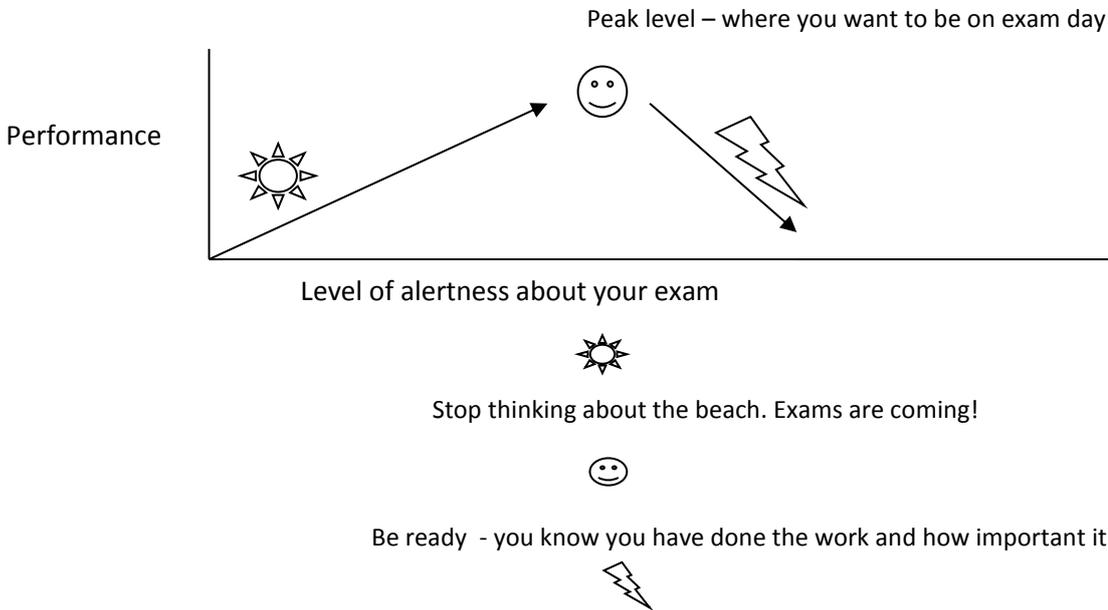
Task two: Map reading

- This is not a brainstorm (random ideas) it is map that shows linked ideas so you need to be able to 'read it'.
- Compare it your notes – what is missing? This is the real value of this task. You need to know what you need to revise.
- Add the missing information in, but use a different colour so you can see what you know and what you don't.
- Get your teacher to look over your mindmap to make sure you have got it right.
- Try it again another day but with a different keyword at the centre. Eg. Character one day, Theme the next.



How do you get ready for exams?

You need to get your mind and body ready to go – build a sense of energy and alertness. You basically need to care about these exams and decide to pay attention to what you need to do. Up to a certain level, your alertness will energise you but after a while it will interfere with and lower your performance because the energy turns into stress and anxiety (worrying about it a lot).



Relax: If you panic you're lost! The exams are going to happen so you might as well give yourself the best chance of doing well by revising and keeping calm.

The analogy: It is a marathon, not a sprint race. You need to look after yourself if you are going to last the distance – eat well, keep some energy for later, but keep moving forward.

Tip of the day: Study Groups

They can help to build revision habits, motivation and can help you feel happier. They get your mind ready to go AND will also reduce your anxiety. But you have to follow some rules to make them work.

Size of the group: 2-3 people and you will just gossip, more than 20 and you will be invisible. Around 6-8 is a good number.

Stick with the same people and make a commitment to be there. It is an appointment that you can't miss. You should work with people who are taking these exams as seriously as you are.

Make a plan of how the group will run – where will you meet, how long will you work for, what will be your reward. Keep to the same rules each time.

For example: Meet in Tech 1 from 3.30 – 4.30 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays to study for Maths, English and Science. Take turns to bring some snacks / finish up with a visit to the Nayland Store. Cellphones and i-pods off.

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Clozes Power Points Mnemonics Flashcards Mind maps Study groups

Motivation Effort Repetition Learning Curves Self-care

So, you know what all these terms mean and have used each one of them to make a start on your revision. You have made a start – well done. At this point in your revision you can be feeling pretty darn pleased with yourself at what you have done. **But, there are still lots to cover and you need to make sure you cover all the areas that you are going to be assessed on.**

Keep doing these things:

1. Go to all your classes and any tutorials on offer. Your teacher has put thought into your lesson and the activities they have planned will help you. Participate with a smile 😊
2. Keep using the resources you have made – repetition works and every 10 minutes helps.
3. Check with your teacher that the information in your resources is correct.

Things to watch out for:

1. **Going over and over the same information is lovely and you will feel so gosh darn clever – but what about the information you haven't even touched on?**

Solutions:

- Time to check your resources with your teacher – ask them what is missing.
- Go back to the keywords for the topic and check you have made a resource for each idea/term.
- Make a list of what you are getting wrong. Every time you use a resource or complete an activity in class and get something wrong or muddled add those questions to a special list. A good idea is to write a True/False list or a quiz just for you. (Be sure to write the correct answer somewhere so you can mark your test.)
- Go online
 - www.nzqa.govt.nz - check the assessment specifications
 - <http://quizlet.com> – great for flashcards

2. **Not having enough time to complete all the tasks you want to do. How do you fit it all in?**

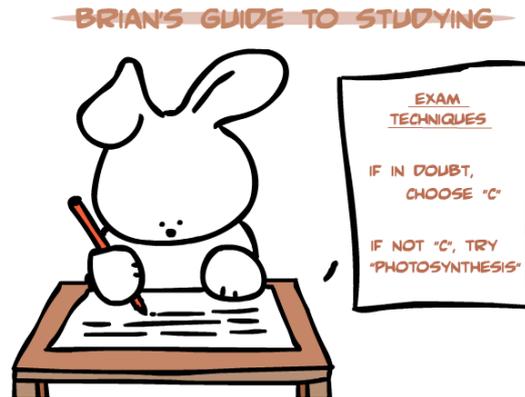
Solutions:

- Make little bits of time count. Find the 10 x 5 minute pockets of time to use your flashcards and mnemonics. Here are 10 timeslots: the trip to school, before form time, interval, lunch, straight after school, trip home from school, just when you get home, break at work, before tea, after tea.
- You can do a mind map anywhere – you don't need your notes with you because the information is in your head. So, NEVER just sit there and say "I can't do anything my books are not here". You don't get to take your books into the exam with you!
- Get other people involved in your study plans. The folks at home and your teachers are great for this; they will help motivate you even when you find it hard. We all want you to be proud of your results – we are on your side.

How to study for exams

You will be moving towards practice answers soon, so there are some techniques to know.

1. You can never pass if you leave it blank. Your brain knows more than you might realise so, just settle into it and get writing. What are the keywords for your topic? Fall back on those.



Good luck!