



How to survive exams

If you're not sure whether you are up to surviving an exam, try these tips...

Know why you are sitting it. This may seem silly. And obvious. But there will be many times over the exam period when you will wonder if it is really all worth it. So as you begin to prepare for an exam, force yourself to think through the advantages of taking the exam.

Perhaps your list might include:

- focusing your studies and revision
- developing your study skills
- forcing you to remember what you have learnt
- having a point of 'closure' on your current studies before you move on
- attaining the best possible mark

Once you are confident in your own mind why you are sitting the exam, write your thoughts down so you can come back to them for encouragement when things get tough.

Know what to expect

If you haven't already done so, it is important to find out what the exam will involve. Key questions you need answers to include:

- how long is the exam?
- how many questions do I have to answer?
- is there a choice of questions?
- how many marks are available for each question?

It will be helpful to look at the sample paper that came with your book. You may also be able to obtain sample papers from the Open Bible Institute office. If you have a group leader, you could ask them. You may even know others who have taken the exam in previous terms. Once you know what to expect, the exam should contain no surprises – apart from the questions...

Some thoughts on questions

Contrary to popular belief, examiners are not ogres trying to trip you up. They will not write questions that will deliberately mislead you or trick you. Instead, the questions are there to give you the opportunity to showcase your knowledge, understanding, and communication skills. It is always worth re-reading the question – at least twice. Even the most intelligent students can misread or miss out a word. It would be a shame to spend five minutes answering the question 'what happened at the exile?', when the exam actually asked 'what happened at the exodus?! There is

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◀ a direct correlation between the number of marks available and the amount of time you should spend on a question. One of the most common causes of exam 'slip-ups' is people spending too long on questions that only carry a few marks, thus leaving themselves with insufficient time for the questions with the bulk of the marks.

Finally, take care to choose your questions on the basis of how well you can answer the specific question set, rather than how much you know about the topic in general. For example, an essay question might be: 'What does Luke's Gospel teach about salvation?'. Even if you know all about salvation, and plenty about Luke, it would be unwise to answer this question unless you could write a whole essay on what Luke says on salvation.



The last 24 hours

Remember that it is usual to feel nervous before an exam! It can even be a good sign that you are keyed up ready for the exam. Some students try to combat their nervousness with frenetic, non-stop cramming. Only rarely is this successful. Far more helpful is to make sure that you arrive at the exam in a position to do as well as possible with the revision you have already done.

Some key things include:

- make sure you eat properly (there's nothing worse than a hungry tummy after 20 minutes of the exam!)
- make sure you allow plenty of time for relaxation and sleep
- make sure you read through your revision notes, but then put them away and go for a good walk/ enjoy an evening with friends/listen to some music ...

Preparation checklist

Use this to help you prepare for the exam. As you check each area, put a tick in the box – this will give you confidence that you are ready for the exam, and haven't forgotten anything.

in the week before the exam

- do you know what the exam will involve? ▶



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- ◀ • do you know where the exam is to be held?
- do you know when the exam will start?

on the day before the exam

- do you have A4 paper to take with you?
- do you have sufficient spare pens?
- have you allowed time to relax and sleep well?

on the day of the exam

- eat well – sufficient to sustain your brain's efforts!
- arrive in plenty of time
- leave your Bible, study notes and revision aids outside the

exam room

before the exam starts

- is your chair comfortable and desk steady?
- is the room sufficiently warm and light?

the exam itself

You are now ready and prepared for the exam. All that remains is to read the instructions thoroughly, look at the questions carefully, and answer them as well as you can.

Key Points:

- Know why you're sitting it
- Know what to expect
- Prepare for, and READ the questions
- Use your last hours wisely!
- Sleep and eat
- Be organised (use the checklist!)

