

## Study and Exams – Preparing Yourself for Success –by Karen Boyes

If your exams are coming up soon, now is a great time to pause, look forward and ensure you have planned the next few weeks for exam success. Here are eleven reminders to assist you ...

1. **Maintain a Positive Attitude:** Now you are at the business end of the year, it is important to keep a positive focus – you can do this! Top sports people imagine or visualise seeing themselves winning and achieving their goals, great students do too. Of course this is not just about positive thinking, you have to put in the work and it is better to work from a positive base than a feeling of ‘what’s the point.’
2. **Pay Special Attention in Class:** In the next few weeks, teachers will give extra hints and tips to assist you towards passing your exams. They might say phrases such as: “This is important”, “Make sure you know this,” or “This is likely to be in the exam”. When you hear this, be sure you mark your notes with an asterisk, circle, or symbol to remind yourself to go back and check you understand it.
3. **Clarify any confusion with your teacher:** Your teachers are expecting you to ask if you are unsure. It is now or never. If it is not easy to ask in class, ask for a meeting outside of class. Alternatively check out the free iTunesU, which features video lessons from top Universities around the world.
4. **Make a plan:** Spend 10-15 minutes each week planning which subjects you are going to revise, look over and learn. Remember the most important idea is to learn what you DON’T KNOW. Find your old test papers and practice exams and learn what you got wrong.
5. **The night before the exam:** Revise your notes a final time however avoid cramming any new information in. It is too late. Before you go to bed, pack your bag for the exam, ensuring you have extra pens and batteries. Get a great night sleep. If you can’t sleep, just rest quietly, relax and focus on your breathing.
6. **The morning of the exam:** Eat a sustaining breakfast – something low in sugar and high in energy. Arrive 10-15 minutes before the exam and avoid stressed people. Stress is contagious and you want to keep yourself as calm as possible.
7. **During the exam:** Keep your attitude positive. If you have completed the work throughout the year and learned what you don’t know – you are on track. Scan through the paper and start with the easy questions first. This will help relax you and give you a good start. Always read the question carefully and circle the key words. Show your working in maths and your outline plan for essays.
8. **Manage your time:** Pace yourself in the exam. If there are 100 marks and you have 60 minutes, allow 5 minutes at the start to scan the paper and 5 minutes at the end to check. That leaves you 50 minutes and thirty seconds per mark. If a question is worth 20 marks, you have 10 minutes to complete it. If you have not finished it in the 10 minutes, move on and come back to it.
9. **If you can’t remember:** There is nothing worse than drawing a mental blank in the middle of an exam. If you do, simply take a deep slow breath, jot down what you can recall and see if you can recall your study notes, or the textbook. If you are not sure, stay calm and move on to the next question. You can always come back to it.
10. **Neatness counts:** Remember if the marker has difficulty reading your writing or are unable to decipher it, they will mark it wrong. Cross out your mistakes with one line and move on. Avoid spending time erasing or rewriting mistakes so the marker will not see them – they do not have time to look at what you didn’t want to write. Ensure your numbers are clear and avoid using text language – this is a formal writing time.
11. **At the end:** Go over the questions you have skipped, recheck your answers, check your spelling and double check your name is on your paper and any supplementary pages you have used.

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Karen Boyes is an expert in effective teaching and learning, study skills, motivation and positive thinking. She was awarded the NSANZ Educator of the Year 2014 award and works in schools throughout Australasia teaching students how to Study Smart and teachers how to raise achievement.