

Independent Learning Newsletter Tips

Top 10 Tips for Dealing with Examination Pressure

1. Know Your Material

The more confident you are about the topic(s) in your exam, the less stress you will feel come exam time. Make sure you stay on top of your school work and homework throughout the term. Follow up with your teacher, or another subject matter expert, if there are things you don't understand, well before the exams. Trying to understand new concepts the night before the exam is very stressful.

2. Practice

Make sure you do practice papers if they are available, or practice questions. This might include multiple choice, short answer or essay style questions. Always study in the way you will be tested. Work out a plan of action so you know how long you are going to allocate to each question type, what question types you will start with and what you will do if you come across things you aren't sure about.

3. Fuel Your Body and Your Mind

In the days leading up to an exam make sure you get enough sleep. Being tired makes it harder to concentrate and remember. Fuel your body and mind by eating well and drinking plenty of water.

4. Manage the Physical Signs of Stress

Familiarise yourself with how your body feels when you are stressed. Do you get headaches? Tension in your neck or shoulders? Does your heart race faster? What happens to your breathing? Whenever you feel these effects, quickly start some relaxation exercises. A good one to try during an exam is to breathe in deeply for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds and breathe out for 8 seconds. Do this a few times to calm yourself down and allow yourself to refocus.

5. Be Prepared on the Day

Make sure you have packed or prepared everything you need for the exam day the night before. Have a plan for how you are going to get to school on time - including a back-up plan if necessary. Eat a nutritious breakfast and make sure you are hydrated.

6. Visualise

Use visualisation techniques to help reduce your stress on the day. Every day in the weeks prior to the exam, last thing at night and first thing in the morning, visualise yourself calmly walking into the exam room, preparing your equipment, reviewing and completing your exam paper and feeling good about how you did.

7. Involve Your Parents in Your Schoolwork

Throughout the term talk to your parents about what you are studying. Show them your bookwork and homework. The more your parents understand about what you are doing and how you are going along the way, the better they are able to manage their expectations. They may also be able to help you study by testing you on what you are learning.

8. **Talk To Your Parents About Realistic Goals**

Keep talking to your parents about what you want to achieve, in individual subjects, at school overall and in other aspects of your life. Involve them in helping you to identify where to concentrate the most effort to achieve your goals.

9. **Understand Expectations**

Many students feel like they are not meeting their parents' expectations. Often this is a result of poor communication about expectations by both parties. Assessment and reporting systems also change over time and are different in different schools and systems. Making sure your parents really understand what your report means may help them to understand what you are actually achieving. Your school can assist you to explain these to your parents if need be and most schools provide booklets of explanation. Often students are achieving, but reporting structures may not clearly represent this to parents.

10. **Ask For Help**

The most important way to deal with stress is by talking to people and asking for help. Don't try and go it alone. Your school, teachers, parents and friends are your support structure so keep lines of communication open (that means talk to them!) and let everyone know how you are feeling and what help you need.

You can learn more about goal setting and many other topics to help you achieve your best at school by going to the links section in your portal and opening the ELES handbook:

