



ARKS KEYS TO LEARNING

ORGANISING YOUR WORK

INTRODUCTION

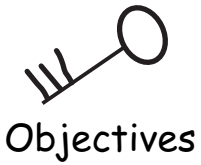
This chapter deals with some important practical aspects of organising your work

- Making the best use of your time and learning to prioritise your workload.
- Finding somewhere suitable to work so that you can work more effectively. This may involve some co-operation from your family and friends.
- Keeping files and papers safely, so that you can find them whenever you need them, avoiding wasting your time and energy.

The aim is to help you to find your own solutions to these problems and to organise your work in a way that fits in with your lifestyle and commitments.



ORGANISING YOURSELF



In this section you will:

- examine your own working methods
- consider how best to organise your time and workspace



Activity

Many people lead busy lives and often have difficulty getting everything done.

How do you manage **your** time? Here are some questions:

- Do you have pressures on your time?
- Are you easily distracted from your work?
- Do you put off doing things until the last minute?
- Do you work in a place where there are lots of other things going on?
- Do you have problems finding old notes or information when you need them?

If you answered **YES** to any of these questions, then you need to give some thought to **organising yourself and your work**.

Organising Time

Studying involves regularly setting aside time to work. It is important that you can plan how much study time you have and how it can fit in with other commitments in your life.

How many hours do you have available to study each week?

When is the best time for you to study?

First you need to **create time** for study and then you need to **use time** effectively.

Creating Time

One way of discovering how much spare time you have, is to draw up a timetable of your typical week. Make sure that it includes all your regular commitments, including work, looking after your family, classes, as well as leisure and social activities. This should let you see what time you have left for study.



Activity 1

Complete the timetable on *page 111*.

Think carefully about all the different things you do each day. If you want to make sure that you finish an important piece of work, then you will have to give it **priority** over some other activities (this may mean giving some activities up for a while, or learning to say **no** to people!). However, it is important to be realistic and to keep some balance in your life.

Once you have completed the timetable, note the times you have free that could be used for study. Remember that you don't always have to work in long sessions and that some useful tasks can be finished in 30 minutes or less.

Make a note of your free time here:

Activity 1 continued



Activity
continued

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Using Time

Having found some time, you then need to use it as effectively as possible.

Example: a member of a School Parents Association has agreed to find out more about HIV/AIDS education materials and report back to the committee. What different tasks will he need to fit into his timetable?

- Write to Local Health Board
- Contact Health Education Unit; find out what they have available; arrange for information to be sent to him.
- Contact voluntary organisations involved in AIDS work.
- Discuss the subject with other parents, to test their reaction to the subject.
- Make time to read/view any information sent, before the meeting.
- Prepare a short report on his findings so far, to take to the meeting.

Keep more difficult tasks for when you are fresh, or when you have a good chunk of time available. Writing the report for the meeting, for example, needs an uninterrupted chunk of time.

Easier tasks can be fitted into shorter periods, even odd moments. For example, telephoning to make an appointment, or discussing the subject at the school gate with other parents, are easily slotted in.

Activity 2

Make a list of all the work you have to do this week. These will be your priorities for the week.



task	when it has to be done by

If you haven't thought about it before, try dividing your work into two lists:

- 1 . Those requiring a lot of time.
- 2 . Easier or shorter tasks.

big tasks	smaller tasks

Now look at your lists and timetable together.

Can you give each task a time slot?

Remember, only you can decide which tasks will fit best into your timetable.

Deciding Your Priorities

If you have a number of things to do, it can be difficult to decide how much time to spend on each piece of work and which task should be completed first. The grid on page 115 may help you to **prioritise** your work.

Everything in the top half of the grid is important work. Everything in the bottom half is less important. The left hand side is for work that is urgent, while the right hand side is for less urgent work. This means that the top left hand quarter is for the most important and urgent tasks and should be tackled first.

Example:

Mary is 35 and lives with her three children. She attends an Adult Education Centre two days a week. Here is a list of the things she has to do:

- Read an article for her class next week.
- Practise percentages, because she wasn't very confident about them in class.
- Answer some questions on an article discussed in class.
- Write a letter to the council to complain about closing the local children's playground.
- Take her son to his gymnastic training.
- Read the book a friend lent her, so that she can return it.
- Prepare the garden for seed planting.
- Visit her mother.

See how Mary can decide which tasks are important and urgent by placing them in the grid over the page. She would like to do all these things but the grid will help her to decide where she should start.

IMPORTANT		
U R G E N T	Read articles for class Answer questions on article	Visit mother Gymnastics class Write to council Practise Percentages
	Plant seeds	Read book from friend

Activity 3

Use the grid like the one above to arrange your own tasks, deciding how important or urgent they are. Remember to keep the larger (and more difficult) work for when you are fresh. Fit smaller tasks into short periods of time.



Flexibility

It isn't always possible to keep to your timetable exactly. Circumstances change, unexpected tasks crop up, or you may have overestimated how much you could do in a given time.

The advantage of making a timetable or a grid, is that you can see at a glance how you can reorganise your time, or readjust your priorities for the week, so that your most important tasks get done.



**What you
have learned**

Evaluation Questions

What problems have you had in getting your work done on time?

Write about your experience here:

Can you think of ways you might solve some of these problems?

Write your ideas here:

Ask yourself:

“Does it need to be done now?”

“Does it need to be done by me?”

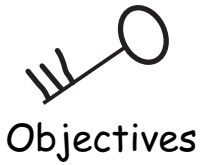
With experience, you will soon be able to estimate how long certain tasks will take and to plan your time more accurately.

Organising Yourself Checklist

- Make a **timetable** or **planning grid** for the week.
- Try to work out how long different tasks will take and match them to appropriate time slots.
- Plan your most demanding activities for the times when you work best.
- Fit short tasks into spare moments in the day.
- Be realistic. Don't try to achieve the impossible.
- Prioritise **important** and **urgent** tasks.
- Be flexible. Allow extra times for emergencies. Don't leave important assignments until the last minute.
- Decide where you are going to work. If it affects other people, make sure that you get their co-operation.
- Organise your files and notes so that you can easily look back at work you have completed.
- Find a safe place to keep your books, files and equipment.

Remember: Good work methods save time!

- **Page 111: timetable plan**
- **Page 115: important/urgent grid**



DRAWING MY DAY

The aim of this activity is to highlight your goals and to help you develop your own learning style. It is particularly useful for people who are “allergic” to calendars and diaries. This activity is best done in a group where people can discuss their situations with each other. However it could be completed alone, as an exploration of self discovery.

You will need:

- a large sheet of paper
- coloured pens
- coloured buttons or beads
- glue



Activity

Draw a picture of your day:

- Try to use drawings and symbols using only a few key words to show what you do in a day.
- Think about what shape your day has (a line, a wave, a circle...).
- What do you do during the day from start to finish?
- What times of day do you enjoy the most?
- What times of day do you not enjoy?
- Where does time to study fit into your day?

Activity continued

Can you create more study time in your day?

Alter your drawing to see how it looks.

Pin your picture on the wall, either at home or work. Return to it occasionally and see how your work pattern changes. You may need to draw a new picture after a while.

If you can, show your drawing to colleagues and discuss how different people manage to organise their routines. If you are studying on your own, show your picture to a friend or to someone in your family and tell them about it. Maybe you will inspire them to draw their own pictures!

(We owe the idea for this calendar to Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods from Development Co-operation (Laitinen-Voipio-Gronqvist: Yhteison aani, Kepa, Helsinki 1995).



Activity
continued



What you
have learned

Evaluation Questions

Did you learn anything from this activity that will help you to organise your workload?

Write about it here:

STORING INFORMATION

- Are you attending a course?
- Are you learning on your own?
- Are you a member of a committee or a board?



In all these situations you gather information, a lot of it on paper.

What do you collect?

Activity 1

Read the list below, mark any items you collect and add anything else you can think of:



- books
- photocopies
- lecture notes
- handouts
- articles from newspapers/magazines/books
- exercises
- computer lessons
- leaflets
- memos
- minutes of meetings
- floppy disks

What do you do with it?

- Throw it away.
- Recycle it: use it for other purposes.
- Keep it.

If you want to keep information, it is important to decide what to keep and what to throw away.

What makes something important enough to keep?

Some people never throw anything away. Are you one of them?

Ask yourself why you want to keep things.

- It looks beautiful.
- I might need it again.
- My tutor said I should keep it.
- It is interesting.
- I never know what to keep or throw away, so I keep everything.

If you want to keep information, it is important that you can find it whenever you need it again.

At first it seems quite simple, but the amount of paper can grow quickly. It doesn't take long to collect a lot of paper, very often in loose sheets. You also start producing paper yourself: exercises, notes, essays, summaries, etc.

Activity 2

How do you store your information?



Activity

Which methods do you use?

Ask colleagues how they store things. Have they got any new ideas for you to try?



Activity 2 continued

Here are some different ideas for storing things. Can you think of any others?

- plastic bags
- ring binders (with dividers)
- boxes
- card file
- files
- computer, word processor
- storage crates
- baskets

.....
.....
.....

It is a good idea to go into a **stationery shop** and look at the items on sale. This may give you some more ideas for ways of storing items.

How you store things depends on how and where you have to use them.

A **ring binder** will keep your notes together and is easy to carry around with you.

Use cardboard **dividers** to separate different sections of work.

A **card file** is easy to organise and is especially useful for revision because putting the information onto cards helps you concentrate on the most important points. But it is not so easy to carry around.

Boxes can be good for storing magazines, etc.

With a word processor you can edit your notes and reuse the information for other writing.

Perhaps none of these suggestions suits you. The most important thing is that you can find any items you need.

Evaluation Questions

In this section you learned something about storing information you collect and items you produce yourself.

This can help you to organise your study, or work, materials.

Did this approach help you?

Can you use any of these suggestions? Which ones?



What you
have learned

UNDERSTANDING THE QUESTION

Have you ever:

- written an assignment without really knowing what your tutor/employer wants?
- answered a series of questions without knowing what they were really asking you?
- had work handed back with corrections but you are still not clear what you did wrong?

Schools and colleges often have their own methods and don't always make these clear to students. The same thing can happen at work or in community meetings. People give instructions but don't always make it clear what they want or the way they expect things to be done.

What do you do if you are unsure of what is being asked of you?

- Do you ask your tutor or employer exactly what they want; how long it should be; what it should include; what you are being assessed on?
- Have you ever asked for a sample answer, or report, so that you know what is expected of you?
- Do you discuss your work with colleagues to share problems and solutions?
- Do you look up words in a dictionary, so that you are clear about their meaning?
- Do you underline or highlight key words and make quite sure that you know what instructions are being given?
- Do you check your work once you have finished to make sure that you really have answered the question being asked and all parts of it?
- Do you ever read through other people's work to see how they answered the same questions?

If you answered **NO** to any of the above and have difficulty answering questions, then it is time to become more assertive. Try any of the above suggestions that you would find useful and see if they help you to understand what you are being asked to do.

Remember:

If you don't understand the question, then you won't be able to give a good answer. Don't begin work on an assignment until you have received the explanations you need and you are absolutely clear that you know what you are expected to do.

The sections on **Planning Your Work** will help you to organise information so that you can answer questions clearly.

PLANNING YOUR WORK



There are many things in everyday life which require **planning**. In the section, **Organising Yourself** in this pack, you looked at different methods of planning your daily routine, trying to make the best use of your time. In this section, you will discover different ways of planning your work and organising information, so that it can be presented and understood clearly.



Activity 1

Think about your local supermarket. Plan a shopping list to take there. How can you make it easy to follow?

Try to visualise the layout of the store.

- Which goods are at the entrance?
- Which route do you normally take round the store?
- Do your shopping trips follow a pattern?
- Think about where different items are in the store: fruit and vegetables, meat, dairy products, cleaning materials etc.

Activity 1 continued



- (a) Make a shopping list: it could be 2 or 3 days' supply of food for your household.

- (b) Now rearrange your list so that you can collect each item as you walk round the store.

- (c) How does this planning help you to shop?



Activity
continued

Activity 1 continued

- (d) If you organised a shopping list in this way, would it be easy for someone else to understand? Could someone else do the shopping for you?

- (e) Can you think of any other ways that you could plan a shopping list that would be easy to follow?

This shopping exercise demonstrates how you can collect information (the food that you need to buy) and by **planning** it in a certain way, make it easily understood by others.

In the course of your work or study, you may gather a great deal of information on many different subjects. **Taking Notes** in this pack, gives you some more ideas on organising and storing this information. However, it is also important that you know how to use your notes and present information from them clearly.

When You Need A Plan

There are many different occasions when you may need to plan some work and organise information that you have gathered. Here are some suggestions:

- reporting information back to a group
- giving a talk
- reporting back to colleagues on an activity you have carried out at work
- writing an article for a newsletter or magazine
- writing a letter of complaint
- completing an assignment for a course
- writing an essay

Activity 2

Can you think of any other situations when you might need a plan?





Activity 3

Planning a Fundraising Event

Imagine that you are on the Committee of a local youth football team and have to organise an event to raise money for new strips for the club. If the event is to be successful, you have to plan it very carefully.

Here is a list of some of the things that you will have to do to organise a Fair.

- find a location
- arrange helpers
- clear up litter
- bank the money
- arrange publicity posters
- decide on stalls and games
- order refreshments
- sell refreshments
- make sure each stall is manned
- write a speech
- set up the activities
- arrive on time
- pay expenses
- get ideas for stalls: what is popular? what makes money?

Can you think of anything else?

The list is quite long and confusing. It is hard to read and decide what needs to be done.

Activity 3 continued

Try organising the list under three headings:



Activity
continued

(a) Thing to be done **before** the Fair.

(b) Things to be done **on the day**.

(c) Things to be done **after** the Fair.



Activity
continued

Activity 3 continued

Does this give you a clearer picture of what needs to be done?

Could you use this as a **plan** to organise the Fair?

Planning any kind of work involves organising information so that it is easy to understand and makes sense.

Activity 4

Case Study



Fiona is a care assistant in a nursing home and there has been an accident at work. A colleague has injured her back helping a disabled patient from his bed to a chair. As a work team, they have been complaining for some time that there are not enough staff on duty to do all the work. This means that often one person has to do a job that really takes two. It was only a matter of time before someone was injured.

Fiona has complained to her employers and they have asked her to write a report on her working conditions so that they can decide what to do.

Where does she start?

Here are some suggestions:

1. Gather information from the work team.
 - What are their main problems?
 - What caused the latest injury?
 - Have any other colleagues been injured?
 - Check their contract.
 - Contact their trade union.
2. From this information Fiona can pick out the **key points** that she might want to include in her report. (A short list of 2-5 headings should give her something to focus on).
 - Ratio of staff : patients is too low.
 - Expected to work at too fast a pace to get everything done.
 - Expected to carry out more tasks than agreed in their contract.
 - One person is often left to manage a task that really takes two.
 - No time to chat or spend time with patients.



Activity continued

Activity 4 continued

3. Under each heading she can then give examples to back up each statement.

Staff : patient ratio

With the large number of patients that each staff team has to dress each morning, staff have to work on their own or the patients wouldn't be ready in time for breakfast.

Too fast pace

Staff always seem to be rushing, frequently have to work through their breaks. Recent increase in number of staff on sick leave, suspect they are exhausted.

More tasks than agreed in contract

- Contract states that care assistants should work in pairs.
- Often asked to prepare snacks for patients after the kitchen has closed; this is not part of care assistants' duties.

One person doing the work of two

- Staff injuries due to lifting patients alone.
- Staff having to make decisions on their own without support.

No time for patients

- Takes all shift just to do essential work.
- Patients are being neglected and isolated.

Already this is starting to look like a strong argument to take to the employers to demand a change in working arrangements. By giving examples of how the system is not working properly, the employers may recognise that it could be in their best interests to improve staff conditions.

Using this plan, Fiona should be able to present a clear report to her employers about the problems relating to working conditions.

Activity 5



Planning Exercises

Make a plan to tackle one of these problems:

1. Your child has a busy road to cross on the way to school. Make a plan of what you and other parents or teachers could do about it.
2. The women at your workplace always end up making the coffee, collecting the money, buying supplies, washing up etc. What needs to be done?
3. A local advice centre is being closed down. People in your neighbourhood will have no alternative help. Plan a campaign to keep the advice centre open.

Writing Your Own Plan

Now think about some work that you have to **plan**. You may have to write, or talk, about a project that you have been working on, or you may have an article or essay to write. Although the finished products will look or sound different, **the planning** can follow a similar pattern.

- The investigation
- The planning
- Using the plan

The Investigation

First you must decide:

- Your purpose:**
- the topic
 - what you want to say
- Your audience:**
- who will read it
 - how detailed you need to be
 - what tone, or style, you want to take
- Resources:**
- where you will get your information?
 - how you will organise it?



Activity
continued

Activity 5 continued

The Planning

Once you have gathered the information that you need, it is important to take time to organise it and to plan how you can use it.

List the main points you want to make. 3-5 should be plenty.

Add any examples, or additional information to support each heading.

Decide on the order in which they should be presented. Does it make sense? Does it make an impact?

Once the main part of your work is planned, you can add a suitable introduction, conclusions and recommendations as necessary.

While making your plan, keep thinking back to the purpose of your investigation, to check that you are doing what you set out to do.

Using Your Plan

You should now be ready to write up your report, article, talk, essay or project. You have done all the research and thinking in the *investigation* and *planning* stages, so now you can concentrate on making it sound interesting and easy to understand.

More information on writing reports, essays or letters, and preparing a talk are included in the **Keys To Communications** pack in this series.

Evaluation Questions



What you
have learned

How can these methods help you to plan your work?

Try some of the suggested planning methods and say which aspect, if any, you find most useful.

Can planning save you time? Why, or why not?

HOMWORK QUIZ

Answer these questions to find out how effectively you manage your homework. Discussing your answers with friends and colleagues may help you to work more effectively.



Accuracy

1. I write down all the tasks I have to do:
 - (a) often
 - (b) sometimes
 - (c) never

2. I make mistakes because I fail to read the questions properly:
 - (a) never
 - (b) sometimes
 - (c) often

Checking my Work

3. When I finish written work:
 - (a) I usually check it carefully
 - (b) I sometimes read it over
 - (c) I hardly ever check it over

4. I test myself or get colleagues to test me:
 - (a) often
 - (b) sometimes
 - (c) never

5. When I get an assignment back:
 - (a) I go over the mistakes carefully
 - (b) I quickly read any corrections
 - (c) just look at my mark

Activity continued

6. I review what I have learned:
- (a) often
 - (b) sometimes
 - (c) never



Activity
continued

Organising Work Space

7. I watch TV whilst working:
- (a) never
 - (b) sometimes
 - (c) often
8. I have a quiet place of my own to work at home:
- (a) often
 - (b) sometimes
 - (c) never
9. There are other distractions when I work at home:
- (a) never
 - (b) sometimes
 - (c) often

Organising Time and Work

10. I make a timetable and stick to it:
- (a) often
 - (b) I try but find it impossible to stick to
 - (c) never



**Activity
continued**

Activity continued

11. I have an arrangement with my family and friends about when I can work:
 - (a) yes
 - (b) no

12. When I work at home, I take short breaks to keep me fresh:
 - (a) often
 - (b) sometimes
 - (c) never

13. I usually spread a large assignment over two or more days:
 - (a) often
 - (b) sometimes
 - (c) never

14. Before I start homework, I decide how long the session will last:
 - (a) often
 - (b) sometimes
 - (c) never

15. I try to use what I learn in other areas of my life:
 - (a) often
 - (b) sometimes
 - (c) never

16. When doing homework:
 - (a) I save the hardest part until last
 - (b) I start with the hardest part
 - (c) I do not separate my work in this way

17. I give myself a reward or treat when I finish my homework:
 - (a) often
 - (b) sometimes
 - (c) never

Activity continued

Count up how many questions you answered

(a) ____
(b) ____
(c) ____



If you answered mostly (a): You have a positive approach towards your work, taking care to make the most of your time and resources. Keep up the good work and share any useful tips with colleagues.

If you answered mostly (b): Your score suggests that you are trying to work but may not always make the best use of your time and resources. Some of the sections in this pack may help you. See especially:

- **What kind of learner am I?**
- **Organising yourself**
- **Reading for different purposes**
- **Taking notes**
- **Concentration**

It may be that you live in a very busy household and find it impossible to find a quiet space. Is it possible to find somewhere else to work at other times of the day? Could you ask family or friends to help you organise some quiet time for you to work?

If you answered mostly (c): To study successfully you need to give more thought and planning to your study times. You may have some disruption in your life making it difficult for you to work. The sections in this pack, mentioned above, may help you to improve your results.



What you
have learned

Evaluation Questions

Did this quiz highlight any problems you have with homework?

How can you manage your homework more easily?

ASSESSMENTS, TESTS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

If you are taking a course, either at work, college or evening classes, it is likely that at some stage you will have to be assessed on your progress.

Sometimes this is done simply by looking at your class work or work records (continual assessment). But sometimes you may be asked to take a test, or to complete a learning outcome in a limited time, or without access to your notes.

Such experiences can often make adults feel particularly nervous, bringing back bad memories of school days and perhaps the fear of failure.

However, assessments should be seen as simply one more task to perform and like the other tasks mentioned in this pack, there are ways of tackling them and keeping them in perspective.

Activity

This short quiz is designed to find out your attitude to assessments and to highlight ways in which you can deal with them.



1. **What is the purpose of assessments?**
 - (a) To catch you out and to discover what you don't know
 - (b) To get you to try something you haven't done before.
 - (c) To confirm that you understand what you have learned so far.

2. **What do you expect to be asked to do in an assessment?**
 - (a) Some work that you have never done before.
 - (b) Work that is more difficult than you are used to.
 - (c) Similar work to what you have been doing.



Activity continued

In the following questions, which of the three possible choices best describe your feelings or attitude.

3. Before an assessment:

- (a) I have to remember everything I have learned.
- (b) I should choose a few topics that I really like and memorise them.
- (c) I should reassure myself that I understand the work done so far and know how to use it.

4. While working on the course:

- (a) I have attended classes but have not taken many notes.
- (b) I have some notes but they aren't very clear.
- (c) I have kept my notes up to date and look at them regularly, making sure that they make sense.

5. In course work, homework or practical experience:

- (a) I frequently struggle to get the work done.
- (b) I don't always understand what I'm being asked to do.
- (c) I usually get the work done and my supervisors seem happy with it.

6. If I have a problem with my work, or I don't understand something:

- (a) I ignore it and hope that it doesn't come up again.
- (b) I keep reading it or practising it until I feel I understand.
- (c) I discuss it with my supervisor, tutor or colleagues and ask them for tips and ideas that may help.

Activity continued



Activity
continued

7. **If I want to revise some work for an assessment:**
- (a) I have to start again as I have no notes.
 - (b) I never seem to be able to find the information I need, although I'm sure that I have notes somewhere!
 - (c) I try to keep notes and information organised so that I can find things easily when I need them.
8. **Before an assessment I feel:**
- (a) The assessors will just have to take me as they find me. I don't know why I have to do these tests.
 - (b) I never seem to have the time to look over notes beforehand.
 - (c) I try to make some time to check over work and to make sure that I understand what I've been doing.
9. **While on a course:**
- (a) I find I can't keep up with the workload.
 - (b) I just work at my own pace. I'll catch up towards the end.
 - (c) I plan my work carefully so that I keep up to date.
10. **Before an assessment:**
- (a) I haven't a clue what to expect, what I'll be asked to do.
 - (b) I just hope that I'll be asked to do things I can manage.
 - (c) I ask my supervisor or tutor for sample questions, so that I can practise and have some idea of what to expect.

If you answered mostly (a)s in the quiz, this suggests that you may feel nervous and threatened by assessments or tests. This accounts for your need to know everything before an assessment. If you haven't kept good records or notes of your work, then it is difficult for you to revise what you have learned so far, adding to your panic.

Your answers also suggest that you feel isolated with your problems. It is very important to remember that there are others to help you. Your tutor or supervisor should be able to help you with anything you are not sure about. If you are learning with other people, you can often learn a great deal by discussing issues with them. You may find that you share the same worries and can tackle them together.

Sections of this pack which you may find useful in preparing for assessments are:

- **Organising Yourself**
- **Taking Notes**
- **Underlining and Highlighting**
- **Thinking Clearly**

If you answered mostly (b)s, then you may feel threatened by assessments and anxious about what to expect. You feel that you have to work on your own, that it is your problem and only you can deal with it. Discussing problems about your work, or your workload, with supervisors or colleagues, can help you get things into perspective and help you to use your valuable time more effectively.

Keeping notes and paperwork up to date can also help you. If you do fall behind, or hit a problem, try to sort it out as soon as possible by asking for advice, rather than letting it grow.

The sections in this pack mentioned above may also be useful to you.

If you answered mostly (c)s, you appear to have a positive attitude towards assessments. This is probably because you feel well prepared. You have kept up to date with your work and practised what you will have to do in the assessment.

You realise that you can't be expected to remember **everything** you have learned, but you feel confident that you have a good **understanding** of your work to tackle most questions. You may still feel nervous about the idea of assessment but know that you are well prepared and confident that you can only do your best.

Evaluation Questions

How do you feel about assessments now?



What do you think?

Are there any suggestions in this exercise that you might try? If yes, which ones?

Do you have any other problems with assessments? Who can you discuss these with?

TAKING EXAMS



In this section you will:

- **find methods of organising your work and revision**
- **learn ways to prepare for exams so that you can enter the exam room feeling confident**
- **practise tips for revision and exams**

If you are studying for qualifications, you may have to take exams as part of your assessment. These require some preparation, as you usually have to be ready to complete them without assistance.

However, like other aspects of learning, you can organise yourself and prepare in advance. There are methods to help you do this.

Revision

The purpose of revision is:

- to make sure that you thoroughly understand the course so far
- to help to transfer information from short term to long term memory, to recall when required.

Revision Ideas

Revision should be done regularly and not just before an exam as it makes learning and understanding much easier.

Make a timetable of revision topics (see **Organising Yourself** section in this pack). Be realistic about how much you can do.

Decide how much time you have for revision. Remember, if it is important for you to do well, then revision should be given priority over other activities.

Take time to sort through all your notes and think about how you can use them. This will help you gain an overall picture of what work you have to do.

Find a quiet place to work. Don't give in to distractions.

Find your best time to study (are you a night owl or an early bird?), and plan to work then.

Try to keep to your regular sleep pattern, so that you don't get overtired.

If possible, work in reasonable blocks of time, perhaps two hours, so that you can become immersed in the subject.

Don't try to memorise course notes. It's more important that you **understand** the ideas behind them.

Give yourself short breaks to clear your head.

Try revising with other students, exchanging ideas and testing each other.

Ask your tutor for some old test papers or sample questions so that you have an idea of what to expect, and can practise timed answers.

Practise planning answers to sample questions and work out how you would tackle them. Your answers can also act as useful revision notes.

Revision Notes

Everyone learns in a different way. What works for one does not necessarily work for others. Find out what techniques work best for you. (see **Taking Notes** section in this pack).

Don't just read over course material, **be active**.

Pick out **key points** and make a note of them.

Use **highlighter** pens to draw attention to important notes.

When you are reading, ask yourself "What is this section all about?"
Try to jot down some headings.

Make a summary, in your own words, of each section.
(see **Summarising** section in this pack).

Try making very **condensed notes** on each topic.
(some people use postcards for these).

Make a Mind Map (see **Mind Map** section in this pack)



Activity

Practise answering sample questions.

Ask yourself:

- (a) What is the question getting at?
- (b) Which section of the course is it from?
- (c) What examples can I include?
- (e) What order should I answer in? (sketch an answer plan)

You don't need to write full answers to practise questions. Thinking about **headings** and **key words** will help you organise your knowledge in a useful way.

When You Have Finished Revising

Take 10-15 minutes to brainstorm everything you can recall about the subject you have been studying. Jot down headings, nuclear notes or diagrams.

Check your answers with your original notes and highlight or make a note of anything you had difficulty with. These sections may require a little more work next session.

Reward yourself with a treat:

- a snack
- your favourite TV programme
- a walk or exercise
- a night out with friends.

If you have worked hard, these things will seem all the more enjoyable and a reward will make it easier to sit down with your books at your next revision session.

Before An Exam

It is quite normal to feel nervous before an exam, but you can minimise this by being well prepared.

Know that you have revised thoroughly and not left things until the last minute.

Check the date, time and place beforehand. Be certain that you know where to go.

Be familiar with the format of the exam beforehand. Find out how many questions there will be, how much time you will have, what kind of questions to expect (essays, multiple choice, short answer questions).

Ask your tutor for some old test papers or sample questions to practise on.

Get to know some of the words and terms frequently used in exam and essay questions, so that you will understand what you are being asked to do. (See **question words** at the end of this section.)

Make sure that you have all the equipment needed for the exam. This will include pens, pencils, calculator, ruler etc.

During The Exam

Read the questions carefully. Highlight key words, and make sure you are clear about what you are being asked to do.

Check how many questions you have to answer. Mark which ones you think you can do well and those you can do parts of.

If you have a time limit, plan your time carefully so that you don't spend too long on each question.

Start with the questions you know best, as you can probably do these quickly and accurately and they should give you some confidence.

Remember that your assessors will not be expecting you to write everything you know on a subject: they are interested in your understanding of the subject. Make sure that you answer the questions accurately.

If you are taking an exam and have to write several essays, it can be useful to start by planning all your answers at the beginning of the exam when you are fresh. Then write the essays, starting with your best topic.

Make sure that your answers are clear. Assessors can only give you marks for what you have written down.

Write as neatly as possible, so that your paper will be easy to read.

Check the time as you go along to see how much time you have left.

Leave some time at the end to read over your work to correct any mistakes or fill in gaps.

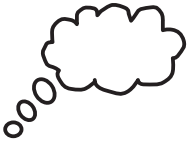
If your assessment involves memorising mathematical formulae, have these handy beforehand and read them over repeatedly before the assessment begins. As soon as you start, write them out while they are fresh in your mind. Then you know that you have them should they be needed.

If you have a time limit, use all the time given. You don't get extra marks for finishing early.

Make sure that your name or candidate number is on your paper.

Question Words

Word	Definition
Analyse	Look at the pros and cons in detail.
Assess	Make a judgement.
Compare	Look for similarities and differences between.
Contrast	Bring out the differences.
Criticise	Give your judgement on theories or opinions, backing you discussion up with evidence.
Define	Give the precise meaning of a word or phrase, don't be vague.
Describe	Give a detailed account.
Discuss	Investigate an argument giving reasons for and against.
Evaluate	Make an opinion of the worth of something. Can include some personal reasons.
Explain	Give details and opinions in your own words.
Identify	Show your knowledge of a topic.
Illustrate	Use diagrams or examples to explain a point.
Interpret	Give a clear and exact meaning of something, including your own judgements.
Justify	Show adequate grounds for decisions or conclusions.
Outline	Give the main features or general principles of a subject. Does not need to be detailed.
Relate	Show how things are connected to each other and to what extent they affect each other.
State	Give facts and details in full in a clear order.
Summarise	Give a brief account including main points.



What do you think?

Evaluation Questions

How do you feel about taking exams now?

Which methods mentioned in this section could you use to prepare for exams?
Explain why.

SAVE ENERGY

This activity will help you to:

- **reduce anxiety when starting something new**
- **concentrate on particular tasks**
- **improve your time management**

You will need:

- cardboard
- coloured pens
- any small objects that can easily be broken into pieces - small biscuits are best for this (you can eat them when you finish the activity!)

It's not easy to start something new, especially if you don't know people. Even if you feel good about starting something, for many it can cause a sleepless night beforehand. Even if you are used to working in a group, you may be worried about whether you will be able to accomplish everything you set out to this time.

Save Energy: Group Learning

To make things easier, try this exercise:

Think about how much energy you use for different situations in life. This is about your mental and physical energy, so try to be more ecological and learn to save your energy.

Take a very large piece of cardboard or paper and place it on the floor. (It's good if you are sitting in a horse-shoe.) Write the names of all the group members at the top. On the left, list as many tasks as you can think of that group members are involved in.

Think of as many situations as possible, some where you have to take risks, some where you need to concentrate, situations that make you nervous (beforehand), situations that make you feel good, as well as everyday situations that you can do with your eyes closed.



Discussion



Discussion continued

Once you have made up a good list together, consisting of all kinds of tasks from peeling potatoes to writing a letter; from taking the kids to the playground to going to an interview; from giving a speech to arranging a night out; from talking to your mother on the phone to meeting your mother-in-law; think about what percentage of your energy you will use in each situation.

Take a bag of biscuits, or some small and colourful pieces of paper that can easily be broken into pieces. Agree that each biscuit, or paper, is ten per cent (so you get 5 per cent by breaking the biscuit into two). Place the right amount of biscuits on your chart according to how much energy each task uses.

Now look at the chart together. Do you ever use 100% of your energy on anything? It is unlikely that you do.

Try to decide in advance, how much of your mental and physical energy you are going to use on the next day's tasks. Everyone will have their own priorities, and you will find that there are very few situations requiring 100% of anyone's energy. For example, if you have a meeting tomorrow, everything can run smoothly if you use 55% of your energy there. If you are going to meet your mother-in-law, you'd better keep 25% of your energy for that. However, if you're expecting a night out with friends, prepare to use up to 92% of your energy!

If you only have a limited time to do your homework, or to prepare a report, or any other task that's demanding but not that inspiring, make a decision only to use 25% of your time for this task, and the rest of the time you can do something you really like (read a newspaper, listen to music, sleep, eat, go jogging,...). The 25% should be enough, and the rest of the time you would only spend sharpening pencils or day dreaming; a waste of time anyway.

Task List

How much energy would you use to do these tasks?

Task	% of energy used
Reading a story to your children	
Going disco dancing	
Reading the newspaper	
Listening to the radio	
Writing a letter	
Making a Christmas presents list	
Going to an interview	
Cooking dinner	
Cleaning out cupboards	
Making the coffee/tea in the morning	
Organising a rota at work	
Learning to use a new piece of equipment	
Attending a meeting	
Writing postcards on holiday	
Trying to persuade a friend about something	
Celebrating your birthday	



What you
have learned

Evaluation Questions

Did this activity help you to see how you burn up your energy every day?

If so, what did you learn about yourself?

Is this a useful way for you to look at how you organise your workload?

Why, or why not?