



Exams, exams, exams ..some useful tips!

Exams can be extremely stressful. Being fully prepared is important to succeed!

Anything done in accordance with Allah's Law and the Sunnah[way]of His Beloved Messenger Muhammad [peace be upon him] it is classified as *Ibadah*[worship]! A Muslim student puts his trust in Allah when facing the tests of this world and seeks Allah's help whilst following the prescribed means. While preparing himself fully in every permissible way for the exams that lie ahead, he should always endeavour to be obedient to the Commands of Allah.

Here are some useful tips to assist in preparing for the exams:

BEFORE THE EXAMS:

HOW TO OBTAIN THE HELP OF ALLAH

- Turning to Allaah by making du'aa' in any way that is prescribed in Islam. Dua is an extremely important tool to attain the desired results and more importantly the help of Allah. Read duas such as , "*Rabbiy ishrah li sadri wa yassir li amri* (O my Lord, expand my chest and make things easy for me)."
- Reciting the du'aa' for leaving the house: "*Bismillaah, tawakkaltu 'ala Allaah, wa laa hawla wa laa quwwata illa Billaah. Allaahumma inni a'oodhu bika an adilla aw udalla, aw azilla aw uzalla, aw azlima aw uzlama, aw ajhala aw yujhala 'alayya* (In the name of Allaah, I put my trust in Allaah, and there is no strength and no power except with Allaah. O Allaah, I seek refuge with You lest I should stray or be led astray, lest I slip (commit a sin unintentionally) or be tripped, lest I oppress or be oppressed, lest I behave foolishly or be treated foolishly)." Do not forget to seek your parents' approval, for their du'aa' for you will be answered.
- Mention the name of Allaah before you start, for mentioning the name of Allaah is prescribed when beginning any permissible action; this brings blessing, and seeking the help of Allaah is one of the means of strength. **Rasulullah [peace be upon him] is reported as saying that any du'a which begins with: Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim (In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful) is not rejected .**
- Remembering Allaah (dhikr) dispels anxiety and tension. If something is too difficult for you, then pray to Allaah to make it easy for you. Reading Surah Yaseen in the early part of the day brings blessings for the rest of the day!
- Performs 2 rakaats salaah and ask Allaah to make it easy for you. Two rakaats of Salatul Hajaat is an excellent means of having your needs fulfilled!

PLAN, PLAN, PLAN.....!!!!

- **Time management.** Plan. Before finals begin, get out your calendar and schedule as much of your finals week as possible. Then stick with the schedule.
- **Set study goals** - Set regular routines of study.
 - Daily goals
 - Weekly goals
 - Long-term goals
- **Time table.** Know your deadlines, exam dates and make a study timetable

- **Ask.** Your teachers want you to succeed; ask them if you are unsure!
- **Schedule in sleep.** Some people can function well on three hours of sleep a night. Most cannot. You'll do much better during exams if your mental state is good, and sleep is essential for this.
- **Schedule in study breaks.** Don't plan to study non-stop for the next five days. You'll go insane, and you'll be too fried to do well on the exams. When you write your schedule, include short study breaks to help you recharge. You'll feel so much better and will be able to concentrate so much more. Make Deen(Islam) as part of your study program. Schedule your study time using the five salaah(prayer) times as your markers.
- **Exercise.** It's a good source for stress relief. Just don't overdo it to the point that you're procrastinating heavily. Go for short, stress-relieving activities, like walk to the Mosque or jogging or any other light exercise.
- **Location.** Choose a quiet, well-lit and well ventilated place to study.
- **Prioritize.** You have limited time to study and will have to choose what to spend the most time with. You could spend hours and hours on that math exam because if you do really well, you might be able to pull off a C. Or you can spend hours and hours on a history exam because if you do well, you've got a good shot at an A. It's up to you.
- **Study groups.** Just don't waste your time with any group. Only where absolutely essential join one. Often time valuable time gets wasted in these groups. Always keep the laws of Allah in mind.
- **Diet.** Is extremely important in preparing yourself physically and psychologically for the exam (mentioned in detail below)

PREPARE, PREPARE,PREPARE.....!!!

- Go to all revision sessions for your subjects.
- Have up-to-date course notes. If you don't, ask your teachers for the latest versions.
- Practise assessments and examination papers.
- Know what is required for each achievement standard.
- Check the time and place for the exam.
- Do not cram at the last minute.
- Check that you have all you need for the exams.
- Put your equipment in a clear plastic bag the night before.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- Eat before the exam but not junk food.
- Avoid people who make you feel nervous.
- Stay calm and confident. Breathe deeply.
- Don't forget your equipment e.g. pens, pencils, calculators etc. Take out all required material well in advance.
- Be early for the exam. Allow time for traffic jams etc
- Avoid unnecessary talking outside the exam hall before the exam. It's too late to do anything now and listening to others about what they have revised, or not, might just damage your confidence
- Take spare pens/pencils
- **REMEMBER** : Your obligations to Allaah- salaah, reading quran , zikr etc Dont miss your salaah!

DURING THE EXAMS:

- Stay calm. Relax. Stay focused.
- Choose a good place to sit during the exam, if you can. Keep your back straight, and sit on the chair in a healthy manner.

- Have confidence in yourself.
- Begin with the name of Allah.
- Write clearly – the examiner cannot mark what they cannot read! Leave a line space between your main points/ paragraph to help the examiner mark your work.
- Look over the exam first. Studies advise spending 10% of the exam time in reading the questions carefully, noting the important words and dividing one's time between the questions.
- Answer the easy questions first, then the difficult ones. Whilst reading the questions, write notes and ideas which you can use in your answers later.
- Answer questions according to importance. Start by answering the easy questions which you know
- Do not spend too long on each question. If you have extra time at the end return to the question.
- Cross out mistakes with a single line.
- Don't leave any questions unanswered and never omit an entire question.
- Use diagrams to support your answer. Label clearly.
- Read questions twice. Circle/Highlight key terms.
- Do not bulk up an answer. Keep to the point!
- Proof read answers. Ask yourself – Have I written a complete answer? Have I answered the question that was asked?
- Match the length of your answer to the space provided.
- Watch out for plurals in questions. For example, 'Name features of graphs' means that you are required to write at least two features.
- Label extra pages clearly and attach them to your exam booklet.

GENERAL ADVICE:

- ✚ **FEAR ALLAH:** Fear Allah with regard to your classmates, and do not be affected by their anxiety or fear just before the exam, for anxiety is a contagious disease. Instead, make them feel optimistic by saying good words as prescribed in Islam. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was optimistic- when he heard the name of Suhayl (which means "easy") and he said: "Things have been made easy for you." So be optimistic that you and your friends will pass this exam.
- ✚ **RELAX** -Take breaks eg. Salaah[prayer] time is an excellent time to take a break.If stressed, ask Allah for ease.
- ✚ **DON'T HURRY**-Take your time to answer, for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "**Deliberation is from Allaah and haste is from the Shaytaan.**" (A hasan hadeeth. *Saheeh al-Jaami*, 3011).
- ✚ **MULTIPLE CHOICE**-Think carefully about the answer and choose the right answer when answering multiple-choice questions. Deal with them in the following manner. If you are sure that you have chosen the right answer, then beware of waswasah (insinuating whispers from the Shaytaan). If you are not sure, then start by eliminating the wrong or unlikely answers, then choose the correct answer based on what you think is most likely to be correct. If you guessed at a correct answer then do not change it unless you are sure that it is wrong - especially if you will lose marks for a wrong answer. Research indicates that the correct answer is usually that which the student thinks of first.
- ✚ **WRITTEN EXAMS:**In written exams, collect your thoughts before you start to answer. Write an outline for your answer with some words which will indicate the ideas which you want to discuss. Then number the ideas in the sequence in which you want to present them. Write the main points of your answer at the beginning of the line, because this is what the examiner is looking for, and he may not see what he is looking for if it is in the middle of the page and he is in a hurry.

- ✚ **REVIEW**-Devote 10% of the time for reviewing your answers. Take your time in reviewing, especially in mathematical problems and writing numbers. Resist the desire to hand in the exam papers quickly, and do not let the fact that some people are leaving early bother you. They may be among the people who have handed in their papers too early.
- ✚ **ACCEPT THE WILL OF ALLAH**- Perform 2 rakaats(units) of salaah(prayer) after the exam and make dua in gratitude to Allah and that He grants you success. If you discover after the exam that you answered some questions incorrectly, then take that as a lesson in the importance of being well prepared in the future, and not rushing to answer questions. Accept the will and decree of Allaah and do not fall prey to frustration and despair. Remember the hadeeth of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), "If anything befalls you, do not say, 'If only I had done such and such.' Rather say, 'Qadar Allaah wa maa sha'a kaan (the decree of Allaah and what He wills happened),' for saying 'if only' opens the door for the Shaytaan." (Hadith-Saheeh Muslim).
- ✚ **CHEATING**-Note that cheating is haraam. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, "Whoever cheats is not one of us." It is wrongdoing and it is a haraam means of attaining a degree or certificate, etc., that you have no right to. The consensus is that cheating is a kind of cooperation in sin and transgression. So do without that which is haraam, and Allaah will suffice you from His bounty. Reject all offers of haraam things that come to you from others. Whoever gives up a thing for the sake of Allaah, Allaah will compensate him with something better. You have to denounce and resist evil, and tell the authorities about any such thing that you see during the exam, or before or after it. This is not the forbidden kind of slander rather it is denouncing evil which is obligatory. Advise those who buy or sell questions or post them on the Internet etc., or who prepare cheat notes. Tell them to fear Allaah, and tell them of the ruling on what they are doing and on the money they earn from that. Tell them that the time they are spending in preparing these haraam things, if they spent it in studying, or answering previous exams, or helping one another to understand the subject before the exam, that would be better for them than doing these haraam things.
- ✚ **TAKE A BREATHER**- During the exams take a breather for a few seconds and praise Allaah and send blessings on his Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) this will attract Allah's mercy on you and will allow you to relax. Recite Subhaanallah, Alhamdulillah , Allahu Akbar and then say Allahuma swali ala Muhammad.[takes less then 12 seconds!]
- ✚ **BE CONFIDANT**-After the exams always be confidant and keep making dua. If asked by anyone how did the exam "go" start off by saying Alhamdullilah(Praise be to Allah) and then explain. Be positive!Dua is a great weapon for a true believer and it can make what seems impossible -possible with the permission of Allaah!. So dont loose hope. The heart of the examiner is in the hands of Allaah.
- ✚ **POST MORTEM**- Avoid the post-mortem analysis after the exam with friends and other students.
- ✚ **CONGRATULATE**-Congratulate those who succeed and say encouraging words to those who have not done so well this time. According to Hadith every good word is sadaqah[charity]Failure is stepping stone to success. Don't look down upon any person who does not do well. Whatever Allaah has willed cannot be changed. Therefore we should always be happy and content with the decision of Allaah. Allaah knows best and Allaah is All Knowing and Most Wise.
- ✚ **DON'T FORGET**-Remember what you have prepared for the Hereafter, and the questions of the examination in the grave, and how to be saved on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever is saved from the Fire and admitted to Paradise will indeed have succeeded.

DIET

When you're studying for finals, good nutrition often slides way down on the priority list. It's easy to get into the habit of gulping coffee and gobbling take-out pizza, because you don't want to waste time on food preparation. But, actually, good nutrition *should be* part of your study plan because it's going to help you ace those tests. The better the fuel your brain gets, the better you'll study. It's a...well...no-brainer...and Most Important...Eating healthy is a tradition of our Prophet Muhammad(peace be upon him).

Here are 10 tips for eating right during exams:

1. **How do I eat smarter?** Meeting daily vitamin and mineral requirements will make doing your best much easier. Iron and B vitamins are especially important to maintaining the physical and mental energy necessary to study well. Iron-containing foods include red meat, cereals and spinach; Foods that contain B vitamins include whole-grains, wheat germ, eggs and nuts. Fish and soy are other foods that are said to help boost your brain by providing the nutrients it needs.
2. **Dude, chewable Vitamin C is not a meal.** Dietary supplements are good, but real food is better. An orange contains not only Vitamin C, but fibre, phytochemicals, beta carotene and other minerals — so it can't be replaced by a pill. When you're heading for the library, pack whole-food items like apples, bananas, clementines, carrot sticks or dried apricots.
3. **Eat at regular intervals.** Eating regular meals helps keep nutrient and energy levels more stable, curbing the temptation of empty-calorie snacks in the vending machine.
4. **Big meals keep on turning ... in your stomach.** You might find that eating the standard three-big-meals-a-day slows you down mentally and physically. Consider 5 or 6 well-balanced, smaller meals, like toast spread with peanut butter, hummus or tuna, or a piece of cheese with fruit.
5. **Meet breakfast, your new study buddy.** While much is said about the reasons to eat breakfast, less known are the best ways to eat smart in the morning. Coffee and a donut just don't cut it. The idea is to get some protein, calcium, fibre and a piece of fruit or a vegetable in there. So, a bowl of cereal with milk and a piece of fruit would do the trick. Or try a cereal bar with milk.
6. **Going bananas? Good.** Fruit ranks high among the best foods you can eat for your brain. The natural sugars in fruit offer clean energy, so you don't experience the crash that follows consumption of refined sugar.
7. **Choose powerful vegetables.** Not all vegetables are created equal. The darker the colour, the higher the concentration of nutrients. A spinach has more to offer the mind and body than iceberg lettuce. Vegetable choices include bell peppers, broccoli and sweet potatoes.
8. **Smart snacking can enhance studying.** Snack smart while studying and you may find that you retain more. Try to get two food groups into your snacks to balance the nutrients and keep your blood-sugar level stable. Some smart snack examples are banana with peanut butter, a small baked potato with cottage cheese.
9. **Gather simple recipes for nourishing foods.** It's easy to feed the brain well. No-fuss recipes let you eat to succeed, without taking too much time. Combine scrambled eggs with toast, cheese or salsa. A little chopping is all it takes to construct a hearty salad.
10. **Stay well hydrated.** Choose your beverages well, though. Caffeine and sugar should be kept to a minimum. Since too much caffeine can make you jittery, try to drink moderate amounts: 400 to 450 mg per day, the equivalent of 2/2.5 cups, (16 to 20 ounces or 500 to 625 ml). Better choices include water, fruit juice, milk, and anti-oxidant-rich green tea.

We ask Allah to make us succeed in this world and cause us to be among those who are victorious and saved in the Hereafter, for He is the All-Hearing Who answers prayer.

To **subscribe** send a blank email to : e.islam.information@gmail.com
Prepared by www.elislam.co.za