Dr Andrew Dawson’s top ten study tips

Dr Andrew Dawson is a lecturer in the area of exercise and sport science. He teaches sport and exercise psychology and sport and health coaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Preparing for exams is just like preparing for any other performance. Athletes, actors, musicians and students alike need to prepare for big events like exams.

Below are ten ways to tune up your exam preparation.

1. Study the way you are examined: if your exam requires solving problems or writing essays make sure you can answer those types of questions under time pressure.

2. Exam conditioning: get hold of any exam papers that have been used in previous years and practice by completing them in exam situations, either at school or at home, where you have to concentrate for 2–3 hours. Doing so will help train your concentration, test your exam skills and your knowledge.

3. Set daily and weekly study goals that are realistic, attractive and achievable. Break your learning down into small chunks of information and get to know each chunk so well you don’t need to look up the answer.

4. The best way to test your knowledge is to teach someone who doesn’t know anything about what you have learned. It shows you understand what you have learned. Teach your parents something.

5. Sleep is essential: avoid changing your sleep patterns during exams; you need at least 7–8 hours sleep a day. Missing out on sleep not only affects your mood, it reduces your brain’s capacity to function effectively.

6. Eat a balanced diet: avoid foods that contain caffeine and sugar. These two mess with your energy and concentration levels.

7. Exercise is essential: for physical stress relief and to keep the body feeling strong and alert do at least 20–30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each day. Some suggestions include taking the dog for a walk, going for a swim, hitting a tennis ball against a wall, shooting some hoops or going to the gym.

8. Relaxation is essential: relaxing is like exercise for the mind, it helps keep your stress levels in check. Find a way to tune out or switch off for 20–30 minutes a day. Some suggestions include having a bath, listening to some music, meditating or doing some yoga.

9. Avoid watching television after studying. Research shows TV interrupts the transfer of learned information into the long-term memory.

10. Quality versus quantity: focus on the quality of the study you are doing rather than how much you do. Staring at a page full of highlighted words is not as effective as working with someone who asks you questions that you need to answer. When you find that you don’t know something go and do the necessary research.
Associate Professor Tim Crowe’s top ten diet tips for successful study and for life

Associate Professor Tim Crowe is a Senior Lecturer in nutrition and also an Accredited Practising Dietitian. Tim teaches in the areas of nutrition and dietetics, as well as the applied role of nutrition in disease prevention and management, particularly diabetes and cancer.

• Breakfast really is the most important meal as it fuels both your body and mind well into the day.
• Water is the best drink bar none. Milk comes a close second and juices and soft drink a distant third.
• Before an exam, go for protein foods over carbohydrate foods as they can help keep your mind more alert.
• Fish really is brain food so eat a few serves each week.
• Colour is nature’s guide to food variety, especially for fruit and vegetables. The more natural colours in the foods you eat the more nutrient variety you are getting.
• Smart snacking will make you less likely to binge. Eat something nutritious, including a fruit or vegetable, every three hours.
• Go with the grains. Grains are the fuel to power you through your hectic day and provide needed nutrients and fibre.
• Bone up on calcium. For healthy bones that you will take well into later life, aim for three serves of dairy, soy, green leafy vegetables or canned fish with bones each day.
• Five vegetables, two fruit: too easy!
• Enjoy tea: it’s healthier for you than coffee.

Professor Rod Snow’s exercise tips for study and life

Professor Rod Snow lectures in the area of exercise physiology and sports science. He teaches at undergraduate and postgraduate level and also supervises research students.

The most important advice from the research carried out in the past few years, is not new breakthrough drugs, not life-saving surgery, but the simple fact that an hour of daily exercise may be the most important single factor to increase general wellbeing, prolong a healthy life, increase fitness and self esteem, as well as helping you maintain strong bones and a healthy body weight.

Here are some more tips:
• Move more: walk, run, cycle, throw, catch and jump.
• Increase play: particularly outdoors.
• Take the stairs rather than the lift.
• Can the car culture! Walk or cycle locally.
• For stronger bones and weight loss assistance include weight bearing activities like ball games, running and weights.

Web links
To calculate your heart rate training zone, visit www.heartmonitors.com/zone_calc.htm.

Do the hard work now and you will avoid the last minute panic.
Cramming is the most inefficient way to study.

Success will not lower its standards for you; you must raise your standards to meet success.
START STUDYING FOR YOUR EXAMS NOW!