



Tips for using your Extra Time in Exams

25% extra time is the most common access arrangement. It is provided to enable students with a slow processing, slow reading and/or slow writing speed to complete their exams. If used properly, extra time can help students pace themselves as well as compensate for difficulties.

1. Planning your Time in an Exam

Extra time gives you an opportunity to plan how long to spend on each part of the exam paper. To do this you need to:

1. Work out how much total time you have. To do this total the number of minutes for the whole exam including the extra time. (eg a 2 hour exam plus 25% extra time (30 minutes) is a total of 150 minutes).
2. Note the total number of marks on the paper. This is usually on the front of the exam paper.
3. Work out how many minutes you need to spend on each question (eg 100 marks / 150 minutes = 1.5 minutes per question).
4. This now gives you a guide how long you should spend per question (eg for a 2 mark question you should spend 3 minutes).

Practice timing yourself to answer questions in that time.

2. Read the question (carefully!)

Sounds obvious, but students frequently rush over the reading of the question, see the topic mentioned in the question and then just write what they know about that topic. This approach loses marks. Instead:

- ALWAYS read everything at least twice, the first time for content, the second time annotating key points
- Check that you understand what the question is asking you to do. You can jot down notes to help you plan longer answers
- Highlight or underline the command word (such as analyse, evaluate, describe, compare, outline) in the question. Then highlight the key words or topic words (what the question is about).
- Also highlight or underline any_key scientific terms or numerical information given

3. Plan your answer before writing it

Most marks are lost because either what is written does not answer the question or because of running out of time. Try to spend 30% of your time planning your answer and 70% writing it.

- Plan your answer. Marks are often lost for organisation and content
- Create mind maps to plan your answer and to write down all key information including quotes/statistics
- Spend some extra time planning a response carefully. It is worth using that extra time here as it demonstrates your knowledge Note down any quotes or key points you want to include in the answer or key points for each paragraph, try to get 4 quotes or key points planned before you start writing.

4. Write your answer

Write clearly and use good English, if the examiner cannot understand your answer you will not get the marks. The last couple of minutes at the end of each question should be proof reading time. Don't just leave all proof reading to the end of the exam, although you should still allow some time at the end to look through your paper and check it again.

5. Take short rest breaks between questions

At the end of longer questions use your extra time to 'refocus' for at least one minute before moving on to the next question. Have a stretch, have a drink and then read the next question once you have refreshed your brain.

6. Proof read your work

Make sure you go through the paper proof reading your answer. Also if SPaG marks are awarded, check for capital letters, full stops and key words.



7. Controlling Stress, Panic and Tiredness.

- Take as many breaks as you are allowed and you feel are useful
- Drink water - a dehydrated brain will work slower and you will feel more tired
- Ask if you are allowed have some food such as a banana or piece of chocolate
- Avoid at all costs fizzy drinks before an exam as well as crisps and other types of sugary or fatty foods. (They will make you sleepy). Eat protein, cereals, fruit
- Ask not to sit by a window - it can be hot and bright light tends to make dyslexic students more tired
- Between questions do a few exercises such as rotating your shoulders, neck and ankles, arching your back and deep breathing. Sitting in the same position for a long time can restrict oxygen intake and make you tired.
- Before writing anything down, close your eyes and visualise the answer. You will retrieve information more easily if you are relaxed. Try to visualise your books and notes as well as the room where you revised.

- If you start to panic because you don't know the answer close your eyes and take yourself into an imaginary "safe place" – a beautiful beach for example. Once you have relaxed your thinking processes will start to work again. The more you force yourself to remember something, the more stressed you will become and the less you will remember. Try holding the back of your neck with one hand and massage your forehead with the other – it will help you relax
- If you start to fall behind your time plan, go into note form or leave some space to come back to.
- After the exam, try not to think too much about it. It is not helpful. What is done is done, move onto the next exam.

