

B B C BITESIZE

Hello. I'm Dr Alex Lathbridge and this is Bitesize Biology

This series is a little bit different. We're not talking about facts and figures. This is all about exam techniques, tips, tricks and advice to help you get through your exams. I'm pretty much going to show you how to game them.

When I did my GCSEs, I was great in class, but I lost ten to fifteen percent of marks in my exams, because of stress. I knew the things, but I wasn't confident, and a lot of times ended up writing really sloppily and examiners couldn't read it. But that's not going to happen to you, because I've made the mistake for both of us.

Today, we're going to chat about things that you can do the night before and the morning of your exam, as well as some really good tips to remember, to make sure you don't throw easy marks away.

Really, I'm giving you great advice for any kind of exam you're going to sit ever, and it's generally good life advice.

I've also got some great insights from real students, who've already done their biology exams, so listen out for their helpful hints.

As someone who had a job at university marking exams, I want you to remember the following:

The examiner wants you to succeed. The examiner knows that you have been working extremely hard all year and learnt a ridiculous amount. The examiner wants to reward you for all that hard work with marks.

So, what can you do to make sure that you get as many marks as possible?

1. Make sure you get a good night's sleep the night before the exam, so you're feeling good and refreshed in the morning. Because if you're sleep deprived, you're going to have a bad time. This is good advice generally, but it's specifically important for exams.

- 2.

The night before the exam, don't cram, don't stress, relax, take your time, check over your notes carefully. Then before the exam you won't be really stressed because you'll have had a good night's sleep and you won't have been stressed the night before.

2. Equipment. Remember, you're doing a biology exam, so there's very important equipment to remember to bring; a calculator, a ruler, a pencil, a pen, even a rubber for any mistakes.

You might want to pack your bag the night before, otherwise the morning of your exam you might be freaking out trying to find the right calculator.

Have a full pencil case, so pen, pencil, calculator, ruler, they're all really essential, and they'll give you a great advantage, especially a calculator. If you don't have one of them for the maths questions, you'll most likely lose marks.

Student: I packed all my equipment the night before, and I made sure I had doubles, because if a pencil rolls off your desk, you have to wait for it to be picked up again, and you're just sat there losing time. So I's always get everything ready the night before and made sure I had everything I definitely need before I went to sleep.

3. Make sure you're fueled up. Now, if you've listened to any of the other episodes, you'll know how important food is to me. But also, how important food is to make sure that organisms survive.

Trust me, if you're normally a person that eats breakfast in the morning, don't switch it up the morning before an exam. Try to make sure that you give yourself time to have a bite to eat.

And stay hydrated, because you don't want to end up in the middle of an exam, with your tummy rumbling, while you're struggling to remember how the digestive system works.

Student: My biggest regret was not eating or drinking enough in the morning, because in the exams I would begin to have really bad headaches or my stomach would start to rumble, and you don't want that distracting you from answering the paper.

4. Don't be late. Get to school in good time before your exam starts. It will only make the whole thing more stressful if you don't. Set an alarm, set two, set three.

If you sleep through alarms, tell the people around you to bang on your door. There is no point sprinting into the exams super stressed, because you're just going to panic and miss marks that you would have otherwise easily received.

Student: If I had an exam early in the morning, I'd definitely get out of bed and get ready and go to school early, so you have time to prepare yourself mentally, so you're not going into the exam stressed, so you can get straight onto the questions.

5. Time management. Remember, it's important that you spend the right amount of time on each question. You don't need to spend five minutes on a one-mark question. People generally say that a good rule of thumb is one minute per mark.

You need to pay attention to the number of marks for each question, they really do indicate how much work you should do for an answer.

Leave a question if you're really struggling with it. You can't stare it out and magically get the answer.

Take a deep breath, and move onto the next question, you can come back to it at a later time.

And the brilliant thing about biology is that chances are, something said in another question, might trigger your memory and help you answer a question that you skipped.

6. Don't rush. Always read questions through carefully, read the whole question, look at the words in bold and read the question again and again.

Don't leap in to writing the answer, slow it down. If there's a big chunk of text, make sure you've read it all, make sure you have properly comprehended the information.

I know it's really tempting to speed through it all, but you don't want to lose marks.

Student: I remember a silly mark I lost was that I mixed up mean, median and range, and they're simple ones to get, and I mixed it up and lost the mark. I probably could have got the mark if I'd slowed down, and thought it through, and taken a breath and looked at it again.

7. Don't leave any answers blank. Because if you do that, you'll definitely get zero marks. Like I said, examiners want to pass you and reward your hard work. It makes them happy. Throw in anything that you can remember, scientific phrases that you think might relate, it could get you a mark.

Student: I'd always try to answer a question, even if it was just writing one key word, which I knew could get me a mark, or anything from the whole topic, anything I knew that related to any kind of word in there.

8. And finally, handwriting. Make sure your examiner can read your answers. You can have all the answers correct, but if someone can't read them, they can't give you the marks. Try to stick to the lines provided in your exam paper and try to write neatly.

And one more key bit of advice: check out the Bitesize website and more episodes of the Bitesize Biology podcast. There's actually really good advice there.

I'm Dr Alex Lathbridge and this is Bitesize Biology. Subscribe now on BBC Sounds.