

The background is a solid purple color with a repeating pattern of white icons. The icons include a stopwatch, a sun over waves, a dumbbell, a person running, a person meditating, a heart with a pulse line, a head with a heart inside, a smiley face, and a steaming cup of coffee.

2023

Destress Guide



By Elizabeth Manners

Let's Talk About...

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A Quick Introduction...

We all know too well the wide variety of feelings exam season can bring. Some students thrive on the pressure of a tight deadline, while others dread that 2-hour clock ticking down. Some of you are likely gearing up to sit 6, 7 or 8 short exams, while others are preparing a massive list of references ready for an alternative essay or report. Whatever this assessment period looks like for you, from preparing your portfolios to refining your scientific reports, we know that this can be stressful for any student. That's why I've put together my best advice as a seasoned exam-goer (and more accurately...stressed student) on how to power through your end-of-module assessment period and achieve your academic best!



1 Exams, Assessments & Revision

The most important part of succeeding in any assessment is to prepare effectively. Although everyone is unique and will have their own style of learning, there are some general tips you should use to make sure you feel prepared and what you want to stick in your brain stays there!

Make yourself a separate study space from your leisure space!

Whether you are studying in your university halls or at home, it is super important to separate your work from play, and physically dividing these can be a great step towards mentally doing the same. This can be in a separate room, or even just working at a desk and chilling in your bed. This rule should also be the same for your laptop if you have apps, like Netflix downloaded on your laptop, make sure they're closed whilst working so you're not tempted!



Take frequent, UNAPOLOGETIC, breaks!

Although we all like to think we are super human, the fact is nobody can concentrate effectively on one thing for too long. When making your study plan, factor in a break every half hour or so to do something you enjoy and grab a drink or snack or even 5 minutes of fresh air and most importantly, don't ever feel guilty for doing so! If you can feel yourself losing concentration or motivation, it's always better to step away for a short while and come back than try to push through and risk causing frustration and fatigue.



Know your study style!

We all take in information differently and have unique and special brains. Some of us prefer listening to content, while others prefer visual images. Knowing your own learning style will help you not only study more effectively, but also enjoy it! You may find more information sinks in when you listen to it, or if you're tested on it more. I used to sit and read textbooks for hours and wonder why nothing would sink in, but now that I know I am a visual learner, I make sure that my revision includes pictures, diagrams or videos, and it has helped me tons! There are loads of tools on the internet to find out your learning style, try it out and see if you can adapt your tools to suit your marvellous brain a little better!





Reward yourself!

Studying and completing assessments is hard work, and although in a few weeks' time I hope you'll get amazing grades which is of course the best reward, there's no harm in giving yourself a pat on the back as you go. Before you start revision, think of something that will make you smile, and set yourself a work-related target to earn it. Whether its eating a Starburst after every page of notes you write, or watching your favourite film with a takeaway after submitting your alternative assessment, it's important to recognise your hard work. This will also help you enjoy your time away from your revision without feeling guilty or that you should be working instead..



Divide your tasks!

We all have individual reasons why we might put something off. It might be because you don't enjoy the topic, something is too difficult, or maybe you just know it will take longer than your other tasks. To make sure you spread your workload evenly, and stop procrastinating on the bits that seem yucky, try making a get-it-done grid. Pick 2 factors that are most important to you when deciding what you are going to focus your work on. As an example, we'll use whether something is easy to do or more difficult, and if it will take a while or be super quick! Make yourself a 2x2 grid, with one factor along the top and the other to the side. Divide all your tasks up between the 4 quadrants based on where they best fit to match your factors. When setting your tasks for the day, make sure to pick at least one item from each section of your grid, so you know you aren't leaving the worst things until last! Doing tasks to the full and breaking down work and ticking it off also means you're less likely to feel guilty when you take breaks as there is proof that you have done the best you could. Don't worry, for all you visual learners out there, I've made an example below!

	Easy	Difficult
Short-time		
Long-time		



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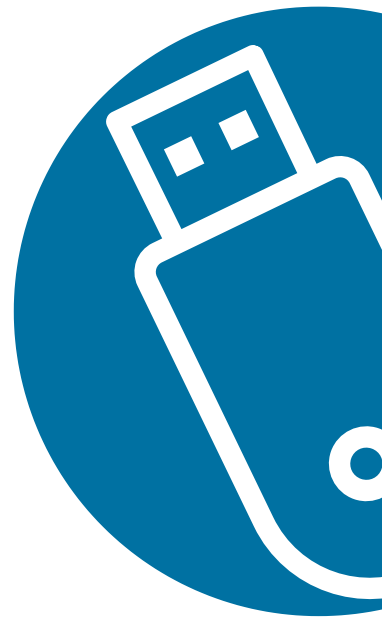
Memory Hacks

Our brains are powerful things, yet sometimes it still seems like the old information-station has completely shut down. Here are some tricks to help you get your memory into gear for those exams!

Make a memory palace

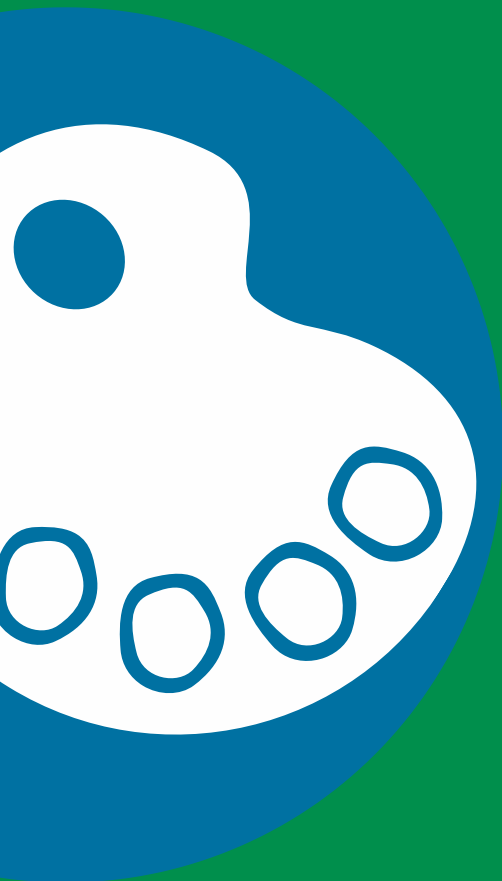
If you're a fan of Sherlock Holmes, then you'll probably be familiar with a memory palace. This a technique used to map out information such as lists or facts by associating each thing you need to memorise with a location or item in a place you know well. To make yours, check out this helpful article:

<https://litemind.com/memory-palace/>



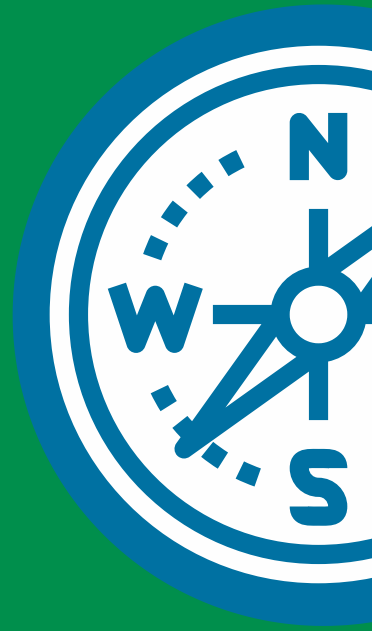
Colour Coordinate

When writing your notes, pick your favourite-coloured pens and assign each one to a theme or subject you need to cover. When recalling the information later, go through all the colours you used when revising in your head, this should help you not to leave anything out!



Make a catchy phrase

For anything short but important, using a mnemonic can really help. Pick the first letter of each buzzword you need to remember and make this into a catchy phrase (for example, to remember the directions of a compass, use Naughty Elephants Squirt Water). This also works great for equations like $e=mc^2$ could be Edgar (e) is (=) my (m) Cat(c).



Use association

Like the last few points, any kind of association is super powerful when it comes to memory! If possible, do your revision in the same work space you will sit your assessment, you will remember much more than you think! You can also try this by arranging your desk a certain way or wearing the same scent.

Repetition, repetition, repetition!

The other most powerful tool in your memory arsenal is repetition, (this is how information moves from short to long term memory)! You could do this by using the 'look, cover, write, check method which means you look at the information, cover it up, try and write as much as you can remember and then check to see how much you got! You could also turn your footnotes into a catchy tune, or just say them out loud a bunch of times. It's also helpful to test yourself or get someone else to test you; either way, eventually it will stick! Write your notes over and over again, turn your footnotes into a catchy tune, or just say them out loud a bunch of times.



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Combating Stress

Now that we've talked about somethings that will help you through your assessments, let's address something that most won't...STRESS. Stress is completely natural to experience, especially with the pressure of an assignment, but there are lots of things you can do to try to keep it at bay. Here are just a few:

Plan ahead

Knowing what your goals are and when you should have achieved them is a great way to keep on track and prevent last minute overload! Make a list of everything you need to cover and spread it out as best you can across the time you have until your assessment... If you have been putting off work over the break and have realised you've left it until the last minute. Just remember, it's never too late to start! If you suddenly remember at 4pm on a random Friday that you've left all your work to the last minute – get planning there and then! Even if it's on your phone to start with. It's better to start then than leave it until an even later date.



Make time for what you enjoy

We established that breaks are key, but how you use them is just as important. A stressed student with assignments due is still a human with hobbies and interests, and not participating in the things that make you smile will just add to the pressure you are under. Work-life balance is vital!



Take care of yourself

I know this is far easier said than done, but as has probably been drilled into you by now 'a healthy body is a healthy mind'. Without good food, a bit of exercise, and a decent amount of sleep, your brain won't be able to keep up with all the hard work you put into your studies. Take care of yourself and make your revision count!



Stay social

There are plenty of ways to keep in touch with your friends. Plan games nights, or even host a study session. Both of these things can even be done virtually if you've stayed at home to study! It is easy to isolate yourself when focused on assessments, so be sure to prioritise time to be with others



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Key Contacts

Although I stand by these tips for making your study season a little easier, there is no denying that this time of year can be tough. If you are needing an extra helping hand, here are a few key contacts you should know about:

Togetherall

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/sscs/wellbeing/togetherall/>

AberSU Advice Service

<https://www.abersu.co.uk/advice/>

Student Support Wellbeing Service

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/sscs/wellbeing/>

Subject librarians

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/is/library-services/librarians/>

Academic Reps

<https://www.abersu.co.uk/shapeaber/studentrepresentatives/findmyrep/>

Me! Your Academic Affairs Officer

suacademic@aber.ac.uk



@UMAbersU





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By Elizabeth Manners

That's everything
from me, for now!
Now get out there
and rock those
assessments! I believe
in each & every one of
you!

Good luck!
From, Elizabeth

