

THE ULTIMATE



EXAM REVISION STRATEGY GUIDE



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IB Survivors

The Ultimate IB Exam Revision Strategy Guide

Generally speaking, students are terrible at prioritizing and effectively organizing information, as well as sticking to decisions, schedules and study plans. The IB throws a lot of information at you: You take six subjects, each of which most likely has multiple papers, and on top of that, you have to write Internal Assessments, an Extended Essay, do CAS, and finish TOK.

The exam period (both in May and November) is the time when all of your hard work, two years of grueling, high-intensity effort comes to the test. Are you going to let all this effort go to waste by spreading yourself too thin, slacking off, and not adequately managing your time? Or are you going to stay focused, optimize your study schedule, stay disciplined, and rock those exams?

The purpose of this short guide is to help you achieve the latter. This guide was made by IB Alumni that performed exceedingly well on their exams, and were able to maximize the output they got from studying. Here, we've shared various strategies, techniques, and pointers that may help you effectively consolidate all the information you've learnt, and most importantly, to stick to an amazing study routine. Let's get into it:

Credit for this study technique goes to Reddit User llosa; you can see his original posts here:

Post1:https://www.reddit.com/r/IBO/comments/3zgjxa/guide_to_getting_45_a_new_free_tutoring_system/

Post2:https://www.reddit.com/r/IBO/comments/3zm6s7/guide_part_2_ias_and_your_mental_health/

1) Study Schedule + Recording Data

It is of course possible to do very well in your examinations without having constructed a study schedule, but cases such as these are rather uncommon. We suggest that you highly consider making one of these. So, here's a technique that is really useful for time-tabling:

10.	11	12	13	14	15	16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> French Paper 1 #1 French Paper 2 #1 Physics Unit 4 (notes + mitch complete) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Econ Paper 3 #1 Math Paper 1 #1 Math Paper 2 #1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geography Unit 3-4 Physics Unit 6 w/ Unit 7 Physics Paper 1 #1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Econ Micro Notes Review French Paper 1 #2 Geography Paper 1 #1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physics Unit 3 Physics Paper 2 #1 French Paper 2 #2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geography Paper 3 Notes Math Paper 1 #2 Econ Paper 1 #1 	R E S T D A Y
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> French Paper 1 #2 Econ Paper 2 #2 Physics Paper 1 #2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geography Unit 1 Notes Geography Paper 3 #1 Math, Integration Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economics supply side + Demand side Policies Worksheet Math, Binomial Theorem Review French Paper 2 #3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geography Paper 2 #2 Physics Paper 1 #3 Physics Paper 2, #2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English Paper 1, #3 English Paper 2, #2 Economics Paper 3, #2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Math Paper 2 #2 Math Unit Circle Review Physics Option C Review (Notes + peers) 	R E S T D A Y

There are a few things to note:

1. This is an A4 Sheet of Paper that has been divided into 14 days, or Two Weeks. First thing to note is that you're going to have many of these sheets (unless of course if you only plan to study for two weeks); I had about 3.
2. Each day only gets three 'chunks' of revision. These chunks are what you must complete each day. Note that there is no time assigned; you don't necessarily need to do these at a specific hour of the day. This is important because students sometime miss a 'time' and then never actually get that stuff done. Instead, your only requirement is that you have to finish the three chunks before midnight.
3. Be specific about the units that you want to study; don't just write down 'study physics'. Write down 'study physics unit 2 + unit 3'.
4. Try not to establish a pattern, and do different subjects together. This is because if you have an established pattern (for example if you only do Physics on Tuesdays and Maths on Thursdays), your brain will shift into a cycle that will be very hard to disrupt. During exam time, however, there will be a lot of disruptions so this isn't ideal at all. On the other hand, if you're constantly mixing different subjects, your brain must make that extra effort to remember information, which will come in very handy when you're taking your exams.
5. Most Important: Now you must stick to this schedule. This is the hardest and most important part. Do not skip any of the days; literally skip your friend's birthday party if you must but do not miss a single day (I have actually done this before...). This schedule is now your life; you will abide by it if you want to do well in your exams. Also, do not aim to do anymore than your three chunks each day. This will cause burnout and will be detrimental. Further, the Rest Days are very important; during these days, you should aim to do whatever you feel like. What will invariably happen is that since you've been working so hard, you will automatically want to keep the cycle going and you'll most likely end up doing more work. This is a nice little psychological trick that has worked for a lot of people.

Now that you've got this schedule, here's the procedure when it comes to taking Past Papers. You want to go on Excel and make something like this for your subjects:

	Paper 1 (90)	Paper 2 (84)	Total (174)	Percentage	Weaknesses
May 2013, TZ1	68 out of 83	77 out of 84	145 out of 167	86.8	sketching graph Check binomial properly, making sure that x starts from highest and goes to lowest, fraction dx must have ln and use ax +b rule, if inverse fraction exists for all real numbers it must be positive, no point of inflection - no change in sign on either side, S shaped graph around point of inflection, variance is SD squared, 2 separate equations for dx when graph has an intercept/ negative area
May 2012, TZ1	72 out of 84	65 out of 78	137 out of 162	84.5	Fundamental theorem of calculus when finding distance travelled, make sure n in binomial pdf is correct, watch calculator when keying in area under curve
Nov 2010, Tz0	77 out of 83	76 out of 90	153 out of 173	88.4	When finding x value of tangent, find point of intersection of tangent and graph.

Figure 1 Image Source: <http://imgur.com/1DG3002>

As you can see, this particular excel spreadsheet has been made for Math. The most important column, of course, is the weaknesses column as it is where you're able to exactly pinpoint what you can improve on. Such a spreadsheet works best for quantitative subjects, but I've seen it being used for English and some of the Humanities as well. The main point is to record your progress. This serves as motivation, as you're likely to see how much you've improved, and it will allow you to study smartly. Note that this really isn't that much work: All that it requires is patience and discipline. This is what will get you those 7s.

2) Passive Studying vs Active Studying

This is something that may seem obvious but it is remarkable to see so many students just reading their textbooks without actually writing anything down. You may think you're learning something and you may think that your brain will remember everything you've read, but the truth is that you'll forget everything you just looked at in 10 minutes. Alternatively, however, if you're actively taking notes, you have a much better chance of retaining your information. Here's an example:

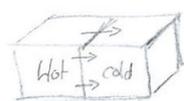
Thermal

1) Objects placed in thermal contact will experience a flow of thermal energy from hot object to cold object until thermal equilibrium is reached

determined by temperature

objects have same Temperature

transfer of thermal energy



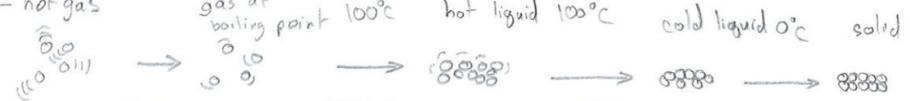
2. Thermal energy = average KE of particles in the system → (changing thermal energy affects temp)

Heat = Transfer of Thermal energy (changing heat does not necessarily change temp, but can affect state)

↳ from higher to lower temperatures

Internal Energy

Phase - hot gas → gas at boiling point 100°C → hot liquid 100°C → cold liquid 0°C → solid 0°C



remove heat remove heat remove heat remove heat

KE PE KE PE

- Temp. is related to average particle KE ($\frac{1}{2}m\langle v^2 \rangle \propto T$)

Above, you can see some very good Physics notes. Why are these very good notes? They are condensed, they can be easily understood, they offer nice flow, and are based on pattern matching. Only the key points are noted; if one tries to write too much, notes lose significance. Also, it is preferable to make notes on sheets of plain paper as that allows you a non-restricted (lines can sometimes restrict thought) way of connecting your information. These notes were made whilst reading a textbook and demonstrate just how important it is to constantly seek active studying. If you're looking for IB Physics Notes by the way such as these, hit us up (via email).

Now, after you're done taking notes, it is essential that you try to do some past paper questions to test whether you've actually understood everything you just read. Here's for instance what I'll usually do:

Read Chapter X whilst taking Notes.

Take a 10 min Break (walk around, lay down, but don't stay seated and don't do stuff related with the internet).

Re-read notes, aim to thoroughly memorize key ideas.

Go to Question Bank, make myself a mini-worksheet of some past paper questions (2-3) that test my knowledge, and then do those questions. Do not look at mark scheme. This is going to be hard, but you really want your brain to sweat and hurt before you take a look at the answers.

What you usually find is that what you just read wasn't enough to answer these questions, but that is completely fine and expected. The only way to get good at answering IB questions is to do IB questions! So keep practicing past paper questions, and you will eventually start to find patterns in the way that they are written. Again, it is very important to remember that your note-taking and textbook reading was to consolidate your fundamentals. The question answering is heavily based on this theory, but it normally asks you to apply this knowledge in a new, unfamiliar way (by perhaps showing you a new graph or configuring an atypical situation).

You can't do well solely by taking notes or by answering past paper questions. That is why it is essential to do both, and consequently, start your revision early.

I personally don't like to take notes via typing, but this seems to work for some people so I guess it's based on preference. Another very useful thing to do is to often paste your notes around the house. A favorite of mine was to paste some diagrams right outside my shower, so that every time I went to wash my beautiful body, I'd subconsciously take a look at my notes. By the end of my exams, I could still draw some pretty complex diagram perfectly.

3) Time Management

I'm sorry to disappoint, but there is no magical potion here that will ensure you don't procrastinate or that you don't waste your time. What I'd recommend, though, is that you read this blog post: <http://www.ibsurvivors.com/new-blog/discipline>

It's a really good blog post because it stresses this idea of discipline being everlasting, whereas motivation can desert us at anytime. Literally force yourself to do your work; don't let your brain tell you that it's a choice. It isn't. That being said, don't fool yourself by working on stuff that you're already good at or that it isn't going to require your brain to go to high intensity. This is just another way of procrastinating. Be hard on yourself.

Timing yourself can also be a very good idea. When I timed myself once, I realized that out of the 5 hours I had spent sitting on my desk, only 1.5 had been used to do work. The rest were all me playing with my pencil, checking Facebook, and watching Cat Videos. Invest in a timer and you will see how much output you actually generate from studying. Use this data that you collect to find at what times you study the best, and also feel free to experiment with different locations (the public library, the school library, your dinner table, your desk, your floor, your bed, etc).

The Pomodoro Technique is also something that you might want to look into; I haven't personally used it, but some of my friends claim that it is highly effective. I hope what you've realized by now is

that there is no one technique here; do what works for you best, but ensure that you're being honest with yourself.

4) Healthy Life

It is absolutely vital that you maintain a healthy lifestyle during your exam revision period. Yes, it is true that you're going to be putting in a lot of hard work and that your main aim of course is to learn as much as you can. But the only way to do that is to get enough sleep, to exercise regularly, and to stay happy. That last one can be especially hard to achieve; I mean, let's be honest: all you're going to be doing for the next few weeks is studying. Well, try to find happiness in the little things. Smile a lot, be positive- with all the terrible things happening in this world, is studying for your exams really that bad?

Also, have fun with your friends studying! One of my friends who is currently at Oxford used to go to my house to study Physics every Friday; we'd fool around a bit of course and go out occasionally, but we also used to get a lot of work done. Learning through your friends is awesome, provided that you both are dedicated and want to get better at something.

Remember that your teachers care about you, and that they are there to help you. Ask for feedback, what you can improve on, exam techniques: the truth is that they know best. If I were to find one common denominator between all the super smart students that I have known, well, it'd be that they all weren't shy of asking a lot of questions to their teachers. They were curious, driven, and not afraid of what others might think. Do the same, and you will succeed.