

# Preparing for exams with TS – Revision Tips



Whether you are at high school, college or university, you may be taking your exams soon and be starting to think about how to arrange your time around revision. This is a tough task for anyone but with the added pressure of having Tourette Syndrome, this can be an almost impossible task at times. It may mean that you are having severe episodes of anxiety or that your tics have increased, making the most simplest of tasks impossible. We have made this factsheet in order for you to gain some tips on revision techniques with tics during this time of often heightened anxiety.

## Make sure you have exam access arrangements in place well ahead of time

It is important that your educational setting is aware of any additional needs you may have and how impactful having tics can be in anxiety driven situations. Speak with your SEN/ALN co-ordinator about finding out as soon as possible what support you may need during an exam so that they have plenty of time to put these arrangements in place for you.

Please see our [Exam access arrangements factsheet](#).

## Know and understand your personal limitations

Your tics may mean that you get tired quickly or that your concentration is limited. Pick your times to revise carefully around these to optimise your revision.

Make sure to give yourself movement breaks and plan in some time for calming activities, like meditation, to ease your anxieties.

Remember, you don't always have to revise in the same one place. It can get very depressing to stay in your room

all day, so make sure to try a different room, revise with a friend or family member or simply listen to something audio whilst having a soak in the bath or taking a walk in the park. Revision doesn't mean that you have to be stuck sat at a desk all day at home.

Don't compare yourself to others. We all have different learning styles and revision techniques, and what works well for your peers, may not work well for you. The amount of time we spend on revision may vary from person to person so be confident in knowing what your best ways of working are.

## Set achievable goals

Make sure your expectations are realistic and set achievable goals that won't increase stress levels. Going all in with a goal to achieve the top mark in a subject may place too much pressure on revising and can have a negative effect.

Naturally, you may not learn things instantly, so don't put too much pressure on yourself. Instead, focus on manageable tasks, such as completing a book chapter or doing a practice paper, as you will be able to build your confidence by reaching these objectives.

## Create a revision plan

A well-thought-out revision plan will help to give you structure and direction by clearly outlining the exam date and topics to be covered daily. Include small goals within the plan, such as a practice paper or a worksheet that can be achieved by the end of the session.

Make revision part of your day but don't let it be all consuming. Plan your revision around your day and make

sure you don't miss out on the usual things you like to do. Remember, consistency is the key.

Don't create a revision plan you're unsure you can stick to, as this could negatively impact on you and your learning progress.

Have things prepared so not to waste time finding 'stuff' to do.

### Break down the material into more manageable chunks

You may respond negatively to pressure and it can be daunting to face a mountain of notes when revising for an exam. A simple way around this is to break the material into smaller sections and refer back to them as needed.

By breaking the material down, you can focus on individual elements before bringing everything together.

### Remember to use narrative techniques and visual aids

Narrative techniques are a great way to help us remember and recall information. These can include anything from diagrams to mnemonics, which can be incredibly effective for some. For instance, if you are someone who struggles to retain facts, create story-based scenarios that you'll remember. This technique brings course material to life, makes it more interesting, as well as aiding with memorisation.

Using visual aids are especially effective if you are someone who struggles with retaining verbal information. Images, illustrations, diagrams and other graphics are great tools to help explain complex concepts in an engaging way.

### Be creative and make it FUN!

Learning doesn't have to be dull – there are plenty of ways to make it fun. Incorporate games or activities, such as puzzles, quizzes and flashcards, into each session to make the subject more interactive and to help you retain information. Try recording your own voice or a video of yourself or a friend and listen/watch it back.

Try using cartoons, videos, pictures, mnemonics, photos.

You can do so much, so feel free to get creative!



### Set yourself rewards

We all need incentives for doing things we may not always enjoy! It's important to have things to look forward to and know that there is an end to a piece of revision. It may be food, an activity, meeting with a friend or family member. Make sure to treat yourself with the recognition that you are doing a great job.

### Practice and be prepared

To alleviate any anxiety, make sure to have a run through and practice of going to your exam location. Ask staff if you can familiarise yourself with the room you will have your exam in, whether this is the big hall with your peers, or a room on your own. Go and visit it as many times as you like. Make sure it is a familiar and calm place to be. Ask to meet any staff members prior to the exam that may be supporting you. This could be an invigilator, scribe, reader etc.

Prepare yourself with a clear pencil case of everything you may need in your exam so that it is always ready and you don't need to do any last minute packing and preparation

### On the exam day

However much support you have had and however much revision you have done, preparations can be undone by stress and panic on exam day. Create a handy checklist for yourself, including:

- **Equipment checks** – do you have the stationery you need for your exams? Have you got your calculator?
- **Supplementary aids** – have you remembered to bring



any personal support items which you usually use when studying such as a wrist rest, coloured overlay, ear defenders/noise cancelling headphones or a fidget toy?

- **Eating and drinking** – have you consumed the right type of calories to fuel yourself for the duration of the exam? Do you have a water bottle with you?
- **Location** – are you clear where your exam room is and where you are going to sit? Is it possible for you (if appropriate and useful) to have the same seat for every exam?
- **Personal support** – would it be helpful for someone (a teacher or a friend) to accompany you to the exam room and meet you again afterwards? Would it reduce anxiety if you were first or last to enter the exam room?
- **Get a good night's sleep** – make sure to be well rested the night before your exam and get enough sleep

### Final thoughts

Remember, you are not alone. Many people find it very difficult to get motivated and have the skills to revise. You are doing a great job and all you can do is your best.

Remember to ask for help in planning your revision. This is a huge task for anyone and you are not expected to do this alone. There's no reason why you shouldn't have the same opportunities as your friends and other students, and with some understanding and extra support – you can!

Ultimately, don't lose sight of the fact that there is life after exams. This level of stress is NOT going to last forever, once exams are over you may find that many of your tics reduce and you should congratulate yourself for getting through a time which EVERYONE finds stressful!

### Signposting

If you have any severe concerns over your levels of anxiety or feel you need further help with stress and low mood, please take a look at the websites below.

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

[www.studentminds.org.uk](http://www.studentminds.org.uk)

[www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

[www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

If you would like some further advice and support around Tourette Syndrome and education, please feel free to contact [lucy@tourettes-action.org.uk](mailto:lucy@tourettes-action.org.uk) for further information.