Mind games
- A little stress is to be expected but too much stress is debilitating.
- Make sure you get plenty of sleep. Staying up late reduces your mental stamina and your ability to retain new information.
- Have frequent breaks from your study. One hour at a time and 10–15 minute breaks in between. You will be most efficient in the first three hours; efficiency then drops off.
- Listen to your favourite music during breaks, go for walks, have a healthy snack, avoid caffeine, stimulants and artificial means of staying awake. If your body needs to sleep, listen to it.

Brain food
- Make sure you eat three regular meals a day. Don’t skip meals to study. Your brain needs energy and this is derived from what you eat. Athletes don’t eat junk food…nor, should you!
- Exercise regularly. It stimulates chemicals in your brain which help you stay alert and absorb information.
- Exercise relieves stress and is one of the best natural tranquilisers.
- Try to exercise outdoors. Fresh air and a pleasant environment help relaxation.

Our top tactics
- Just like in competitive sport, exam tactics are important. Study with a friend who may be more knowledgeable – something could rub off on you!
- Be efficient. Look at past papers and ask yourself what does the examiner really want to know? Training involves answering old papers and checking these with your friends and teachers.
- When you sit the exam, be concise in your answers. Remember examiners will be marking a lot of papers so make yours memorable.
- Give it your best shot so that you have no regrets. Everyone feels they can do better, so don’t punish yourself if you haven’t got the optimal score. No one is perfect.

“I think it is critical to revise material throughout the course, rather than trying to ‘cram’ as much material in the final days prior to the exam. The final days prior to the exam should be a time for you to reflect upon what you already know and revisit concepts and examples you are already comfortable with. Our brains can only take in so much information in a short period of time – my recommendation is to ensure you aren’t learning new material in the final days before the exam, but rather, re-visiting it.”

Dr Joseph Nicolazzo,
Senior Lecturer, Drug Delivery, Disposition and Dynamics,
Monash Institute of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science

monash.edu/pharm
Developing a preparation timetable

Develop a preparation timetable leading up to exams. To do this you will need to look at the exam timetable itself and work out what needs to be done first and what can be left to later. However, do not leave too much revision between the exams (you really should just be refreshing your understanding and maybe undertaking some practice exams at this stage) as doing the exams themselves is tiring.

In developing a preparation timetable, make sure you have a variety of activities in each day. So if you are doing six hours exam preparation, you should also be scheduling some physical activity and relaxation time. You should also take care of your diet (lots of healthy foods, including fish, and not too much coffee or coke) and getting a good night’s sleep (about eight hours). It is also important to make sure that you have the capacity to work at your best for extended periods of time. If you find it difficult concentrate for long periods of time, you need to engage in activities that require you to concentrate (and this could include some mental games) and increase this time so that it becomes longer than your longest exam period.

When going into exams it is important to feel calm, that you are prepared and that you are in a good position to do your best to convey what you know and understand. Don’t try to do too much just prior to an exam. It is much better to go into these situations well nourished, well rested and well prepared. Make sure you have read what you need to bring to the exam, where it is, what time and day for each exam.

Dr Safeera Hussainy, Lecturer and Stream Leader (Pharmacy Practice)

Tips for reading and note-taking

Your ability to read relevant material and take appropriate notes can often be the difference between getting great results for your exams. However, when it comes to exam time there is a load of material that you have to read, but how do you decide what is important and what is not? How do you make sure that you are covering the material you need to?

1. Be selective, systematic and recognise the main ideas. Only read the material that has been covered in class (extra material may be interesting but irrelevant).

2. Identify the purpose and function of the text. What is the purpose of your reading? Are you reading for a general understanding of the topic or for specific information relative to an assignment? Your aim is to identify potentially useful information by getting an initial overview of the text (chapter, article, pages) that you have selected to read. Ask yourself: will this text give me the information that I require and where might it be located in the text?

3. Identify how information is organised. Most texts use a range of organising principles to develop ideas. While most good writing will have a logical order, not all writers will use an organising principle. Organising principles tend to sequence information into a logical hierarchy, some of which are.
Words of wisdom from some of our top students

“Do practice exams at the same time of day which your actual exam would be at. This helps better mental preparedness especially for those late afternoon exams when your concentration isn’t at its peak.”

Pedram Rajabifard
Fourth Year Pharmacy Student

“Practice exams are definitely the best way to practice writing essays for VCE exams. Time yourself and complete the exam under exam conditions, and then get as many people to mark the same essay as you can. This way you will have various opinions telling you what you did well and what you need to improve on!”

Jeenal Patel
Third Year Pharmacy student

“Review practice papers you have completed. Compile all of the mistakes and errors you have made in an ‘error book’ and add the correct answer with the theory/reasoning behind it with the mistakes. This book then becomes your personal guide to the areas you make the most mistakes in. Review it before you complete another practice paper (and your actual exam) and hopefully you won’t make the same mistake twice.”

Kenneth Lee
Third Year Pharmaceutical Science Student

“Highlight questions you feel most comfortable in answering and prioritise answering them as comprehensively as you can. If you come across a question that throws you off, don’t let it influence the way you answer the remaining questions. Remember to breathe! Stress can turn your clear thinking mind into mush!”

Tom Day
PhD Candidate

“Study when you’re studying, and rest when you’re resting. Distracted study (e.g. having your phone next to you, having social networking sites open) is the most inefficient way to study, focus properly and you will understand and remember the information in no time.”

Nadine Tey
Third Year Pharmacy/Commerce Student

“Try not to focus too much on the marks you will get, but concentrate on knowing the content of your subject. Don’t ever feel that it is too late to start studying. What matters most is that you try your best from here on forward – wherever you are at. Don’t give up; you might just surprise yourself.”

Wei Li Chia
Second Year Pharmacy Student

“Practice exams are definitely the best way to practice writing essays for VCE exams. Time yourself and complete the exam under exam conditions, and then get as many people to mark the same essay as you can. This way you will have various opinions telling you what you did well and what you need to improve on!”

Jeenal Patel
Third Year Pharmacy student
Congratulations on finishing your VCE!
The next exciting chapter of your life is about to begin! Monash University Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science offer options for you. Visit www.monash.edu/pharm to find out more.

Your wish list
Consider your course choices. Have you met all the prerequisites? Do your research. You may want to add some more courses that you had not considered before.

Take your time!
You have until 12 noon, Monday, 23 December to finalise your preferences. If you need to discuss course options, we're here to support you with a range of services and events.
- Monash University change of Preference Expo: Wednesday 18 December, 3–7pm, Caulfield campus, Building H, ground floor.
- Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science course information booth and campus tours: Monday, 16 December – Wednesday, 18 December, 10am – 1pm at the student services foyer at our Parkville campus.
- Call us if you need any information on courses we are here to help.

Enjoy your break – you deserve it!
Offers come out 17 January 2014. We look forward to seeing you on campus soon. If you feel like you need a longer break from study, remember you can defer your offer and we’ll keep your place for you while you explore the world, get a job, or any other adventure you have on your gap year.

If you like Chemistry and Biology, you’ll love a career in primary healthcare or biomedical research.

Your brilliant career begins at Monash
- Bachelor of Pharmacy
- Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Science
- Bachelor of Pharmacy (Scholars Program)
- Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Science Advanced with Honours

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