How to Study One Day Before the Exam PDF

With one day left, you cannot learn everything, so aim to secure the most marks per hour. Spend 30 minutes mapping the syllabus against previous years' papers, pick the units and questions that repeat most, learn them in focused 45-minute blocks with self-testing, practise writing two or three answers by hand, revise formulas in the evening, and sleep at least six to seven hours. Sleep helps memory more than an all-nighter.

Key takeaways

- Previous years' papers tell you which questions and units repeat; start there, not with chapter one.
- Self-testing (answering from memory) works better than re-reading in the little time you have.
- Study in 45-minute blocks with short breaks to keep focus high.
- Sleep after studying helps the brain keep what you learned; avoid an all-nighter.
- One day can save an exam, but steady study during the semester is what gives top grades.

First, an honest note

This guide is for the day you realise the exam is tomorrow and you are not ready. It will help you get the most marks possible from the time you have. It will not replace weeks of study, and it cannot promise a score. Use it to get through this exam, then use the semester plan at the end so you are not here again.

Step 1: Calm down and set a target (15 minutes)

Panic wastes time. Take five slow breaths, put your phone on silent in another room, and decide on a realistic target. For example: "Clear the subject comfortably" or "Attempt every question with something meaningful."

Gather what you need:

- The official syllabus
- The last 3 to 5 years' question papers for this subject
- Your notes, class notes from a friend, or one standard book
- Rough paper, pens, water and a simple snack

Step 2: Map the paper (30 to 45 minutes)

This is the most important step. Do not start reading chapter one.

1. Read the exam pattern: how many questions, choices, marks per question.
2. Go through previous papers and write down every question by unit.
3. Mark questions that appear more than once. These are your priority.
4. Note which units carry the most marks and which give internal choice.

You will usually see that a set of topics repeats almost every year. That list is your plan for today.

Step 3: Make a priority list

Sort topics into three groups:

Group	What it means	Time share
A	Repeated questions, high marks, you know a bit	About 60% of your time
B	Repeated questions you do not know yet, but which look learnable	About 30%
C	Rare or very long topics	About 10%, only basic definitions

If there is internal choice, you can sometimes skip a whole hard topic. Check the pattern carefully before deciding.

Step 4: An hour-by-hour plan

This example assumes you start at 9 am. Shift it to your own time.

Time	Task
9:00 to 9:45	Map the paper and make the priority list
9:45 to 10:30	Group A topic 1: learn, then answer one past question from memory
10:30 to 10:40	Break: walk, water
10:40 to 11:25	Group A topic 2
11:25 to 12:10	Group A topic 3
12:10 to 1:00	Lunch and rest
1:00 to 1:45	Group A topic 4 or formulas and derivations
1:45 to 2:30	Group B topic 1
2:30 to 2:40	Break
2:40 to 4:10	Group B topics 2 and 3
4:10 to 5:00	Write two full answers by hand in exam time
5:00 to 6:00	Break, light exercise, dinner early if you like
6:00 to 8:00	Revise Group A with self-testing; Group C definitions
8:00 to 9:30	Make a one-page formula and diagram sheet, final self-test

Time	Task
9:30 to 10:30	Pack bag, relax, no new topics
10:30 to 11:00	Sleep

Step 5: How to learn each topic fast

For each topic, follow the same 45-minute block:

1. **5 minutes:** read the past question and decide what the answer needs (definition, diagram, steps, example).
2. **20 minutes:** learn from notes or the book. Make a short outline: headings, key points, diagram, formula.
3. **10 minutes:** close everything. Write or say the answer from memory.
4. **10 minutes:** check against the notes. Fix gaps. Mark anything you forgot in red.

Answering from memory feels harder than re-reading, but research on retrieval practice shows it improves recall much more. That is exactly what you need tomorrow.

Step 6: Subject-type tips

- **Theory subjects:** learn definitions, types, advantages and disadvantages, and one example for each topic. Comparison tables score well.
- **Numerical subjects:** learn the standard problem types from past papers. Solve one of each type yourself. Write all formulas on the one-page sheet.
- **Programming subjects:** learn the standard programs asked before. Write them by hand once; syntax errors on paper cost marks.
- **Diagram-heavy subjects:** draw each important diagram twice from memory.

Step 7: Protect your sleep

Staying up all night feels heroic but usually backfires. Sleep is when the brain consolidates what you learned during the day, and a tired brain makes careless mistakes in the exam. Aim for at least six to seven hours. If you must study late, stop at least 30 minutes before bed and avoid the phone.

Avoid large amounts of caffeine late in the evening. Eat a normal dinner.

Exam morning

- Wake up with enough time; do not rush.
- Eat a light breakfast and drink water.
- Look only at your one-page sheet. No new topics.
- Reach the exam centre early with your admit card, ID and stationery.
- Do not discuss "important questions" with others outside the hall; it only raises stress.

In the exam hall

- Read the whole paper in the first five minutes. Mark the questions you know best.
- Start with your strongest question to build confidence.
- Divide time by marks. Do not spend 40 minutes on a 5-mark question.
- For questions you know partly, write the definition, a diagram and the points you remember. Partial answers often earn partial marks.
- Leave five minutes at the end to check question numbers and labels.

If you have only a few hours, not a full day

Cut the plan down, but keep its order:

1. Spend 20 minutes on previous papers and pick the five most repeated questions.
2. Learn each one in a 30-minute block with self-testing at the end.
3. Spend the last 30 minutes on the one-page formula and definition sheet.
4. Still sleep. Even a shorter night is better than none.

What to do after this exam

Make a simple semester plan so the next exam is easier:

- 30 to 60 minutes of revision on each class day
- One weekly self-test per subject
- Previous years' papers solved one month before exams
- One-page sheets made at the end of every unit

Final checklist for tonight

- Priority list made from previous papers
- Group A topics learned and self-tested
- Two answers written by hand in exam time
- One-page formula and diagram sheet ready
- Admit card, ID, pens and calculator packed
- Alarm set and phone away from the bed

Frequently asked questions

Can I pass if I study only one day before the exam?

Often you can improve your chances a lot by focusing on repeated questions from previous papers and self-testing. It is not a guarantee, and steady study during the semester gives much better results.

Should I stay awake all night before the exam?

No. Sleep helps your brain keep what you learned and keeps you alert for the paper. Aim for at least six to seven hours.

What should I study first with one day left?

Start by mapping previous years' papers against the syllabus. Study the questions and units that repeat most and carry high marks first.

Is re-reading notes the best way to revise quickly?

No. Answering from memory and then checking, called retrieval practice, works much better than re-reading in the same time.

What should I do on the exam morning?

Eat a light breakfast, look only at your one-page formula sheet, avoid new topics and reach the centre early with your documents.

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Sources and further reading

- Roediger and Karpicke (2006), Test-Enhanced Learning, Psychological Science
- Dunlosky et al. (2013), Improving Students' Learning With Effective Learning Techniques
- Sleep Foundation: sleep and memory
- Retrieval Practice: research-based learning strategies

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