

HOW TO ACE YOUR EXAMS

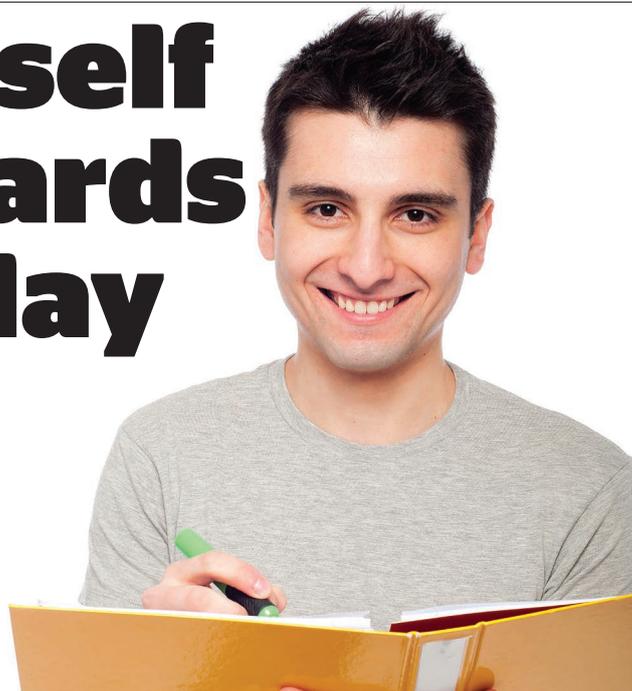
Your weekly guide to help you achieve your potential



Deal yourself the best cards on exam day

(PART 2)

The hacks that will deliver you a full house when you open those test papers



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Hello students, following on from last week's column, I will now talk you through another five of my top ten definitive exam hacks to help you ACE your exams. To be successful in exams, you need to develop an educational edge over your peers who similar to you, desire solid results, valuable college places and ultimately, great jobs. I will now countdown my definitive hacks from five to one which will hopefully give you a full house of ACE's come exam day:

5. EXERCISE:

Exercise is extremely beneficial in your exam year but it also sets in motion great habits for your future, making you stronger both in mind and body. With a little effort, you will discover many positive benefits of taking regular exercise. A 2014 study published in the British Medical Journal showed that exercise boosts the size of the hippocampus, the part of the brain responsible for memory and learning.

Exercise also aids sleep, boosts energy levels and being outside taking in fresh air will allow you think your way through the issues of the day and maybe even come up with some solutions. Exercise is an excellent stress buster and as with many things, once you get started, you may actually enjoy it.

4. STAY IN THE MOMENT:

Increasing awareness of the moment

you are currently in, given the amount of distractions these days, is really important. I really like the phrase "the future is now" - being aware and relaxed in the moment will reduce exam tension. Our generation is constantly searching for something extra in life, looking to the future for the next buzz. I believe we need to live and enjoy more the moments we are in to be fulfilled.

As a student, staying in the present will greatly improve the quality of your study. You can only control what you are doing in the existing study block and your focus needs to be on those notes in front of you now. Similarly, being aware of moments inside the exam hall is ultra-important, as you cannot afford to let time pass you by in there.

3. PILE YOUR NOTES:

During my own exams, I used to pile summarised notes in my study area, subject by subject, topic by topic. Like the monkeys, I am still 'a believer' in topic summaries. As a teacher now, I still pile notes neatly for my classes. From a preparation point of view, it gives structure, separates one topic from another and it allows one to find notes quickly for the next revision block. Afterwards, replace the pile back into its subject section. If you are summarising and rewriting your notes properly, your subject piles should get smaller as exams near.

2. BE POSITIVE:

You should always try to have a positive attitude around your studies, feeling content with what revision you have done thus far. It isn't a great idea to spend time with people who have a negative outlook around exam time. Many students are quite negative with talk of just "passing". I have actually banned the "F" word in my class totally; "Fail". Your future suc-

cesses are the limits of your goals and imagination. An ACE exam student needs more than just ability however, they need to apply themselves well to learning and working hard; so be heartened by the fact that you don't need to be the best academic to reach the top of your class.

1. USE MEMORY TECHNIQUES:

MEMORY techniques are a much under-utilised way of helping you recall important information. In my experience, they are your secret weapon on exam day. Here are two examples of memory techniques to get you started without too much effort:

a) **Chunking:** An average person can hold seven items (a chunk) in their short term memory. A chunk can be further broken down into seven topics with seven subtopics within, written as bullet points. This list in itself would almost constitute a full course summary which you could transfer on to an A3 sheet, mind map or flash cards. If you are learning off a list, for example, seven characteristics of a metal in Physics, the most efficient way is to learn the first three off, then the other four and finally put the seven together.

b) **Creating an association:** Creating a link between a topic and an experience in your life will help you remember it better. Here are some examples:

- Drawing on your own life experiences and applying it to a question on the paper.
- Sticking a list of quotes or facts on your bedroom wall.
- Sitting out in your garden for thirty minutes to learn a specific subtopic.
- Doing a simple activity when recalling a specific list, for example, brushing your teeth.
- Drawing out a mind map in the shape of a skeleton to represent specific content.

Joe McCormack has taught Maths, Geography, ICT, Technical Graphics, CPSE, Woodwork and Science in various secondary schools in Ireland for the last fifteen years. In addition to correcting exams for the Dept of Education and Skills and Dublin Examining Board he has worked in Ireland's top school for tuition, the Dublin School of Grinds. Through his experience and research, Joe has gained a unique understanding of the struggles and obstacles students face when it comes to Junior and Leaving Cert exams.

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HOW TO ACE LEAVING CERTIFICATE



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- Health Service Skills
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- Pre University Liberal Arts (English) *New
- Language & European Studies
- Pre-University Law
- Pre-University Business
- Human Resource Management *New

Pre-University Science Courses

- Pre-University Science/ Agricultural Science
- Animal Care
- Equine Business & Horsemanship *New

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- Airline Studies *New
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- Beauty Therapy
- Hairdressing

Food

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- Food Science

Sport

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- Sports Injury Prevention & Massage Therapy *New

- Sports Coaching / Sports Science

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Interview dates:
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