



Coping with exams – Factsheet Phase 2: During the exam

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A. Suggestions for a successful oral examination

In general...

- Listen carefully to the questions.
- Maintain eye contact with the examiner.
- Make a note of some key words if necessary
- Try to turn the examination into a conversation.

Show the examiner that you haven't just learned the material by heart, but that you have processed and understood it. In concrete terms, this means:

- Present your thoughts and views.
- Explain your arguments or take a critical stance.
- Present different points of view and opinions.
- Illustrate these with examples.

Starting the examination

Examiners often start the examination with a rather easy or open, general question. This question is intended to enable you to find your way around the situation and to get started with the topic. These kinds of questions usually cannot be answered in one word or sentence. Take the opportunity and share what you know about the topic ("short speech" of about 1 to 2 minutes).

Outline your answer

Even in an oral examination situation, you have the opportunity to think for a short moment before you answer. Prepare an outline of your answer and, if possible, share it with the examiner. For example, in the form of "I will begin with.... and then I will...". Don't just settle for the minimum answer, show that you have a certain overview.

Always pay close attention to the question and answer the question specifically. Start with the general, the basic aspects, and then move on to the specific, the details or examples.



Preventing a mental block

If you don't have a perfect answer ready right away, start thinking out loud (so-called "verbal thinking") Let the examiner know what is going on in your head by saying, for example, "What comes to my mind is..." or "That reminds me of..." or "I read something about this in ...".

Try to remain as calm as possible, even if you cannot understand or answer a question straight away. If your fear or insecurity is so great that you can hardly think or speak, tell them about this. You can say, for example, "My memory is failing me now..." or "At the moment I am totally blocked". Often, just formulating the difficulty has a calming effect.

Understanding the question correctly

If you are not sure whether you have understood a question correctly, ask your interviewer to repeat the question or formulate in your own words what you have understood. The examiner can then see if the question was understood correctly and correct it if necessary.

If after this you are still not sure what the question is about, feel your way to the answer. Think aloud, for example, make a rough classification of the question, define terms or say what you generally know about the topic.

"I don't know the solution. "

If you are definitely not able to get on the right track or to answer the question, it is better to say so. Then you will not be wasting time unnecessarily and you have a chance of doing better with the next question. After all, you don't need to know everything to pass an exam!



B. Suggestions for a successful written examination

Read through the questions carefully

Be sure to read the exam questions carefully! Take your time so that your exam nerves don't lead you to act hastily and thus without thinking.

Plan your answers

Before you start writing, brainstorm briefly about the exam questions. What comes to mind spontaneously? What do you absolutely want to mention? What will you mention if you have time? You can use familiar strategies in this planning phase, for example:

- Mind mapping
- Making a keyword list
- Making clusters

In this short, creative phase, you develop a guide that leads you in your writing. You will also become calmer and more focused, activating the knowledge you have stored in your memory. So the time you invest in this exam planning (about 5-10 min) will pay off!

Tip: You can try out this planning method at home in the last few days before the exam. Ask yourself a possible exam question and develop your answer strategy. Incidentally, this also brings some variety into your learning routine.

Plan your exam timing

In addition to planning the content, it is also important to plan out the time during the exam. If you know the type of exam you can expect, you can make a rough schedule in advance. Also plan for a review period at the end (about half an hour for exams lasting 4 to 5 hours).

“Brainfood”

Don't forget that your brain also needs nourishment. Take liquids and energy-giving food such as nuts or (dried) fruit, for example a banana, with you to the exam. But don't eat too much or anything that makes a lot of noise.



C. Suggestions for a successful multiple-choice examination

The tasks of an MC exam are demanding and require a highly concentrated mental effort. Hence, you need a processing strategy that allows you to make the best use of the time and the given conditions. You should therefore adopt the following steps.

Preparation

Familiarise yourself with the procedure. You should definitely know the type of MC exam well ahead of time, be familiar with the different question types and know exactly about the conditions of execution.

- Is only one alternative correct at a time?
- Or is it possible to tick more than one answer?
- What is the effect of incorrect ticks?
- Does that mean that the whole question has been answered incorrectly or that points will be deducted?

It is also important to distinguish between MC tests with pen & paper or on the computer.

- Can you jump back and forth between questions in a digital exam?
- Or is it impossible to return to an initial question after clicking on "next question"?
- Who do I contact if the program does not work?

Make sure you have good timing

Use the time optimally! Approximately how many minutes do you have per question? Set up a time plan at the beginning of the exam. This will enable you to see at an early stage whether you are well within the time limit and to take countermeasures in good time.

Think about meaningful marks *before* the examination

For example, make two ticks for statements that are definitely correct, one tick and a question mark for statements that are probably correct, one "q" and a question mark for statements that are probably incorrect, and two "q"s for statements that are definitely incorrect. This means that you do not lose any thinking work you have already done.

Take breaks

Take a break of 3-5 minutes after every half hour. Make sure you actively relax. Put your documents aside and close your eyes. Do a small breathing exercise, for example, by breathing mindfully.



- Work on the tasks one after the other – from the easy to the difficult.

As a basic rule, it is advisable to work in the order of the tasks given. Read through all the alternative answers to the question and look for clues in the wording of the question as well as the alternatives. It is best to proceed as follows:

- In the first pass, you should answer all questions that can be answered immediately by ticking them off. The more difficult tasks, where you are unsure, should be left open for the time being. Do not waste time.
 - *Note:* This only applies if you have the option to return to questions. You may not have this option if you are taking the exam digitally.
 - On the second pass, go through the questions you skipped.
 - If you cannot solve a question, mark the most likely solution if there is no deduction for incorrect ticking.
 - Make a note of the questions you want to review.
 - If you have some time left at the end - or have planned time for a final correction pass – then only look at the questions marked for reconsideration.
- Transfer the solutions immediately to the answer sheet (computer sheet).

We recommend that you first transfer those solution letters of the answer alternatives identified as correct into the exercise book and then immediately onto the answer sheet. Errors in transcription can easily occur if you save the transcription for the end. In addition, the mechanical activity of transcribing gives you a short break each time.

- Beware “improving things for the worse”

At the end of the exam, if you still have time left, do not start leafing through aimlessly and correcting a few things here and there. This usually leads to mistakes rather than improvements because your concentration may have waned. Limit yourself to the answers you have marked and for which you have already done some preliminary work.

► For MC exams (as for all other exams), it is true that well-structured knowledge in your head is the best prerequisite for successful performance.

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