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## How to help your child (and you!) through end-of-year exams



Exams are a time for kids to study and prove what they know. It is also time for parents' blood pressure to rise as they attempt to deal with their children's stress and lack of enthusiasm for their final exams. It's a balancing act between supporting your child, knowing their limits, and making sure they don't destroy their own academic future.

**Here are some tips on how to help your child (and yourself) through final exams:**

### **Set up a study schedule**

Sit down with your child and plan out how to tackle the exams on a calendar:

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- List all the exam subjects and the amount of time they will need to study each one
- List the time it will take for your child to make study notes for each subject
- Fill in their regular commitments on the calendar
- Plan time carefully by assigning more time to difficult subjects
- Make sure that they have time to revise often. Try to do a little everyday rather than an overwhelming amount at once
- Work with your child's circadian rhythm - if they are more alert and study better at night rather than the morning, then schedule most of the study time in the evenings to make use of this concentration boost
- Place the plan somewhere visible so that everyone in the household can see it

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## Study breaks

- The human brain can only focus for a set period of time before it needs to take a break.
- Make sure that your child takes a five minute break every 30 minutes to walk around.
- After two hours of studying, 30 minute break (at least!) is needed to recharge.

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## Support don't scare/threaten

Your child will already be stressed when exams come around. Comments such as “If you fail you will be grounded for the rest of your life” or “You will not get anywhere in life if you do badly” only heighten anxiety.

Rather support your child with comments like:

- “If you study really hard I know you can achieve your best in these exams.”
- “If you put in the effort now it will take pressure off later.”
- “I know it is difficult but you can do well if you put in the effort to get that reward.”

## Be realistic

If your child has performed poorly in a subject before, do not place pressure on them to achieve a really high mark in their exams.

This will place pressure on them and make everyone disappointed when the mark is not achieved, reinforcing their belief that they cannot do it.

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Rather explain that you wish to see an **improvement** from the previous mark, and be happy with a steady increase. This will show that they are progressing and developing at a pace that will see good results in the future.

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You can also congratulate them on the improvement, which will help to motivate them to improve on their results again.

## **Let them have fun**

Make sure that the study schedule includes some time out with friends and general fun and relaxation.

Our bodies and brains function better when healthy and relaxed.

A child who spends all their time studying will overload and actually perform badly. If the study schedule is done well, then socialising will not interfere with your child's ability to study, but actually enhance it.

## **Sleep is very important**

Studies show that children with good sleep habits perform better academically. Help your child avoid late-night cram sessions and ensure that they get 8½ - 9 hours' sleep a night.

Studies have shown that teens who sleeps at least 8 ½ - 9 hours a day have better memory retention and retrieval.