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FREE RESOURCE — CHECKLIST

Exam Day Checklist

Everything to do in the week before, the night before, the morning of and the first five minutes of an exam, on one printable sheet.

4	5 min	3	0
STAGES	READING PROCEDURE	PER-EXAM COPIES	FORGOTTEN CALCULATORS

FINAL WEEK · NIGHT BEFORE · EXAM MORNING · FIRST FIVE MINUTES

PREPARED BY	CATEGORY	EDITION	LATEST VERSION
BrightStudy	Exam preparation	2026, A4 PDF	brightstudy.ai/resources/pre-exam-day-checklist

What is inside

Exams are lost to forgotten calculators, misread questions and panic in the first five minutes far more often than to a gap in knowledge. This checklist removes the avoidable mistakes. It covers the final week (what to revise and what to stop), the night before (equipment, logistics, sleep), the morning (food, timing, the top-three mistakes card) and the first five minutes in the hall (reading the paper, allocating time, starting with a question you can do). A blank copy per exam means nothing is left to memory on the day.

SECTIONS

1 The final week
2 Night before and exam morning
3 The first five minutes
4 Exam 1 checklist
5 Exam 2 checklist
6 Exam 3 checklist

WHO IT IS FOR

Anyone sitting a formal exam: GCSE and A level students, undergraduates, and candidates for professional and driving-theory style tests.

WHAT IS INCLUDED

- Final-week checklist: taper, recall sessions and what to stop doing
- Night-before checklist for equipment, logistics and sleep
- Exam-morning routine with timings worked back from the start time
- First-five-minutes procedure for reading the paper and allocating time
- Three blank per-exam copies

01

The final week

Stop learning, start consolidating. The aim is to arrive rested with the material you know retrievable.

- [ ] No new topics from Monday. Recall only: flashcards, questions you previously got wrong, summaries from memory.
- [ ] One timed paper early in the week; none in the last two days.
- [ ] Error log reviewed and the top-three mistakes card written.
- [ ] Same bedtime and wake-up time as exam day, all week.
- [ ] Exam timetable checked against the official one: date, time, room, length.
- [ ] Social media and group chats about the exam muted; other people's panic is contagious.

PER-DAY PLAN

DAY	MORNING (SHORT RECALL)	AFTERNOON	EVENING (LIGHT, ENDS BY 9PM)
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			

02

Night before and exam morning

NIGHT BEFORE

- [ ] Equipment packed: black pens (two), pencils, rubber, ruler, calculator with fresh batteries if allowed, clear pencil case, clear water bottle
- [ ] Candidate number, seat number and room written on a card in the pencil case
- [ ] Route and travel time checked; leaving time set 30 minutes earlier than needed
- [ ] Clothes laid out; layers in case the hall is cold
- [ ] Alarm set, backup alarm set on a second device
- [ ] Top-three mistakes card read once
- [ ] Screens off an hour before bed; lights out at the usual time

MORNING TIMINGS (WORK BACK FROM THE START TIME)

STEP	TIME
Exam starts	
Seated in the hall (15 min before)	
Arrive at the building (30 min before)	
Leave home	
Breakfast (something with protein; not just sugar)	
Wake up	

BEFORE LEAVING THE HOUSE

- [ ] Breakfast eaten and water drunk
- [ ] Pencil case, ID and candidate card in the bag
- [ ] Top-three mistakes card read once more
- [ ] Phone charged for after, switched off before the building

03

The first five minutes

Do these in order, every exam. They take five minutes and win marks.

1. Read the instructions on the front: how many questions, which are compulsory, where to answer.
2. Read every question once, quickly. Tick the ones you can definitely do.
3. Work out minutes per mark (total minutes ÷ total marks) and write a finishing time beside each question.
4. Start with a ticked question, not question 1. Get marks and momentum first.
5. Underline command words (describe, explain, compare, evaluate, calculate) as you reach each question.

DURING THE EXAM

- Over time on a question: write the next step you would take, move on, come back at the end.
- Blank on a question: write what you do know about the topic; partial marks exist.
- Calculation questions: units and working on every line, answer underlined.
- Last five minutes: check names, question numbers, and that nothing has been left blank.

04

Exam 1 checklist

Subject and paper _____ Date _____ Start time _____ Length _____ Room _____

NIGHT BEFORE

- [ ] Equipment packed (pens, pencils, calculator if allowed, clear case, water)
- [ ] Candidate and seat numbers on a card
- [ ] Travel checked; leaving time _____
- [ ] Alarms set
- [ ] Top-three mistakes card read
- [ ] Lights out by _____

MORNING

- [ ] Breakfast
- [ ] Bag checked
- [ ] Phone off before the building
- [ ] Mistakes card read once more

MY TOP-THREE MISTAKES CARD FOR THIS PAPER

1.

2.

3.

TIME PLAN (MINUTES PER MARK: _____)

05

Exam 2 checklist

Subject and paper _____ Date _____ Start time _____ Length _____ Room _____

NIGHT BEFORE

- [ ] Equipment packed (pens, pencils, calculator if allowed, clear case, water)
- [ ] Candidate and seat numbers on a card
- [ ] Travel checked; leaving time _____
- [ ] Alarms set
- [ ] Top-three mistakes card read
- [ ] Lights out by _____

MORNING

- [ ] Breakfast
- [ ] Bag checked
- [ ] Phone off before the building
- [ ] Mistakes card read once more

MY TOP-THREE MISTAKES CARD FOR THIS PAPER

1.

2.

3.

TIME PLAN (MINUTES PER MARK: _____)

06

Exam 3 checklist

Subject and paper _____ Date _____ Start time _____ Length _____ Room _____

NIGHT BEFORE

- [ ] Equipment packed (pens, pencils, calculator if allowed, clear case, water)
- [ ] Candidate and seat numbers on a card
- [ ] Travel checked; leaving time _____
- [ ] Alarms set
- [ ] Top-three mistakes card read
- [ ] Lights out by _____

MORNING

- [ ] Breakfast
- [ ] Bag checked
- [ ] Phone off before the building
- [ ] Mistakes card read once more

MY TOP-THREE MISTAKES CARD FOR THIS PAPER

1.

2.

3.

TIME PLAN (MINUTES PER MARK: _____)

Keep going

BRIGHTSTUDY

This resource covers the part of studying that happens away from a screen. BrightStudy does the rest: upload your notes, slides or recordings and it turns them into Study Docs, flashcards and exam-style questions, then schedules your reviews with spaced repetition. There is a free plan to get started.

PAIRS WELL WITH EXAM PREPARATION

FEATURE	WHAT IT DOES	LINK
MCQs	Exam-style questions with answer explanations.	brightstudy.ai/features/mcqs
Progress Analytics	Track your study activity and performance.	brightstudy.ai/features/progress
Topic Analysis	Find stronger topics and areas that need attention.	brightstudy.ai/features/topic-analysis
AI Tutors	Ask questions and explore difficult concepts.	brightstudy.ai/features/ai-tutors

RELATED RESOURCES

RESOURCE	LINK
Past Paper Strategy Guide	brightstudy.ai/resources/past-paper-strategy-guide
Essay Plan Framework	brightstudy.ai/resources/essay-plan-framework
Exam Error Log	brightstudy.ai/resources/exam-error-log

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