

20 Exam Tips for Students

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By: Sheikh

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Praise be to Allaah and peace and blessings be upon the Messenger and upon his family and Companions.

The Muslim student puts his trust in Allaah when facing the tests of this world, and he seeks His help while following the prescribed means, in accordance with the words of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*: **“The strong believer is better and is more beloved to Allaah than the weak believer, although both are good. Strive to attain that which will benefit you and seek the help of Allaah, and do not feel helpless.”** (Reported by Muslim, 2664)

Among those means are the following:

- Turning to Allaah by making *Du'aa* in any way that is prescribed in Islaam, such as saying: *“Rabbiy ishrah li sadri wa yassir li amri* (O my Lord, expand my chest and make things easy for me).”
- Getting used to sleeping early and going to exams on time.
- Organizing all the required or permitted equipment such as pens, rulers and setsquares, calculators and watches, because being well prepared helps one answer the questions well.

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- Reciting the *Du'aa* for leaving the house: "*Bismillaah, tawakkaltu 'ala Allaah, wa laa hawla wa laa quwwata illa Billaah. Allaahumma inni a'oothu bika an adilla aw udalla, aw azilla aw uzalla, aw azlima aw uzlama, aw ajhala aw yujhala 'alayya* (In the name of Allaah, I put my trust in Allaah, and there is no strength and no power except with Allaah. O Allaah, I seek refuge with You lest I should stray or be led astray, lest I slip (commit a sin unintentionally) or be tripped, lest I oppress or be oppressed, lest I behave foolishly or be treated foolishly)." Do not forget to seek your parents' approval, for their *Du'aa* for you will be answered.

- Mention the name of Allaah before you start, as mentioning the name of Allaah is prescribed when beginning any permissible action; this brings blessings and seeking the help of Allaah is one of the means of strength.

- Fear Allaah with regard to your classmates, and do not be affected by their anxiety or fear just before the exam, for anxiety is a contagious disease. Instead, make them feel optimistic by saying good words as prescribed in Islaam. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was optimistic when he heard the name of Suhayl (which means "easy") and he said: **"Things have been made easy for you."** He used to like to hear the words '*Yaa Raashid*', when he went out for any purpose. So be optimistic that you and your classmates will pass this exam.

- Remembering Allaah (*Thikr*) dispels anxiety and tension. If something is too difficult for you, then pray to Allaah to make it easy for you. Whenever Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, found something too difficult to understand, he would say: "*O You who taught Ibraaheem, teach me; O You Who caused Sulaymaan to understand, cause me to understand.*"

- Choose a good place to sit during the exam, if you can. Keep your back straight, and sit on the chair in a healthy posture.

- Look over the exam first. Research studies advise spending 10% of the exam time in reading the questions carefully, noting the important words and dividing one's time between the questions.

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- Plan to answer the easy questions first, then the difficult ones. While reading the questions, jot down notes and ideas which you can use in your answers later.
- Answer questions according to their order of importance.
- Start by answering the easy questions which you know. Then move on to the questions which carry high marks, and leave the questions to which you do not know the answers to the end, or which you think will take a long time to calculate an answer or which do not carry high marks.
- Take your time to answer, for the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: **“Deliberation is from Allaah and haste is from the Shaytaan.”** (A Hasan Hadeeth. Saheeh al-Jaami, 3011).
- Think carefully about the answer and choose the right answer when answering multiple-choice questions. Deal with them in the following manner. If you are sure that you have chosen the right answer, then beware of *Waswasah* (insinuating whispers from the Shaytaan). If you are not sure, then start by eliminating the wrong or unlikely answers, then choose the correct answer based on what you think is most likely to be correct. If you guessed at a correct answer then do not change it unless you are sure that it is wrong – especially if you will lose marks for a wrong answer. Research indicates that the correct answer is usually that which the student thinks of first.
- In written exams, collect your thoughts before you start answering. Write an outline for your answer with some words which will indicate the ideas which you want to discuss. Then number the ideas in the sequence in which you want to present them.
- Write the main points of your answer at the beginning of the line, because this is what the examiner is looking for, and he may not see what he is looking for if it is in the middle of the page and he is in a hurry.
- Devote 10% of the time for reviewing your answers. Take your time in reviewing, especially in mathematical problems and writing numbers. Resist the desire to hand in the exam papers

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quickly, and do not let the fact that some people are leaving early bother you. They may be among the people who have handed in their papers too early.

- If you discover after the exam that you answered some questions incorrectly, then take that as a lesson in the importance of being well prepared in the future, and not rushing to answer questions. Accept the will and decree of Allaah and do not fall prey to frustration and despair. Remember the *Hadeeth* of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*: **"If anything befalls you, do not say: 'If only I had done such and such.' Rather say: 'Qaddar Allaah wa maa sha'a fa 'ala (the decree of Allaah and what He wills He does), for saying 'if only' opens the door for the Shaytaan."** (Reported by Muslim, and the first part of this *Hadeeth* was mentioned above).

- Note that cheating is *Haraam* whether it is in foreign language tests or any other tests. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: **"Whoever cheats is not one of us."** It is wrongdoing and a *Haraam* (unlawful) means of attaining a degree or certificate, etc., that you have no right to. The consensus is that cheating is a kind of cooperation in sin and transgression. So do without that which is *Haraam*, and Allaah will suffice you from His bounty. Reject all offers of *Haraam* things that come to you from others. Whoever gives up a thing for the sake of Allaah, Allaah will compensate him with something better. You have to denounce and resist evil, and tell the authorities about any such thing that you see during the exam, or before or after it. This is not the forbidden kind of slander; rather, it is denouncing evil which is obligatory.

Advise those who buy or sell questions or post them on the Internet etc., or who prepare cheat notes. Tell them to fear Allaah, and tell them of the ruling on what they are doing and on the money they earn from that. Tell them that the time they are spending in preparing these *Haraam* things, if they spent it in studying, or answering previous exam papers, or helping one another to understand the subject before the exam, that would be better for them than doing these *Haraam* things.

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- Remember what you have prepared for the Hereafter, and the questions of the examination in the grave, and how to be saved on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever is saved from the Fire and admitted to Paradise will indeed have succeeded.

We ask Allaah to enable us to succeed in this world and cause us to be among those who are victorious and saved in the Hereafter, for He is the All-Hearing who answers prayers.